

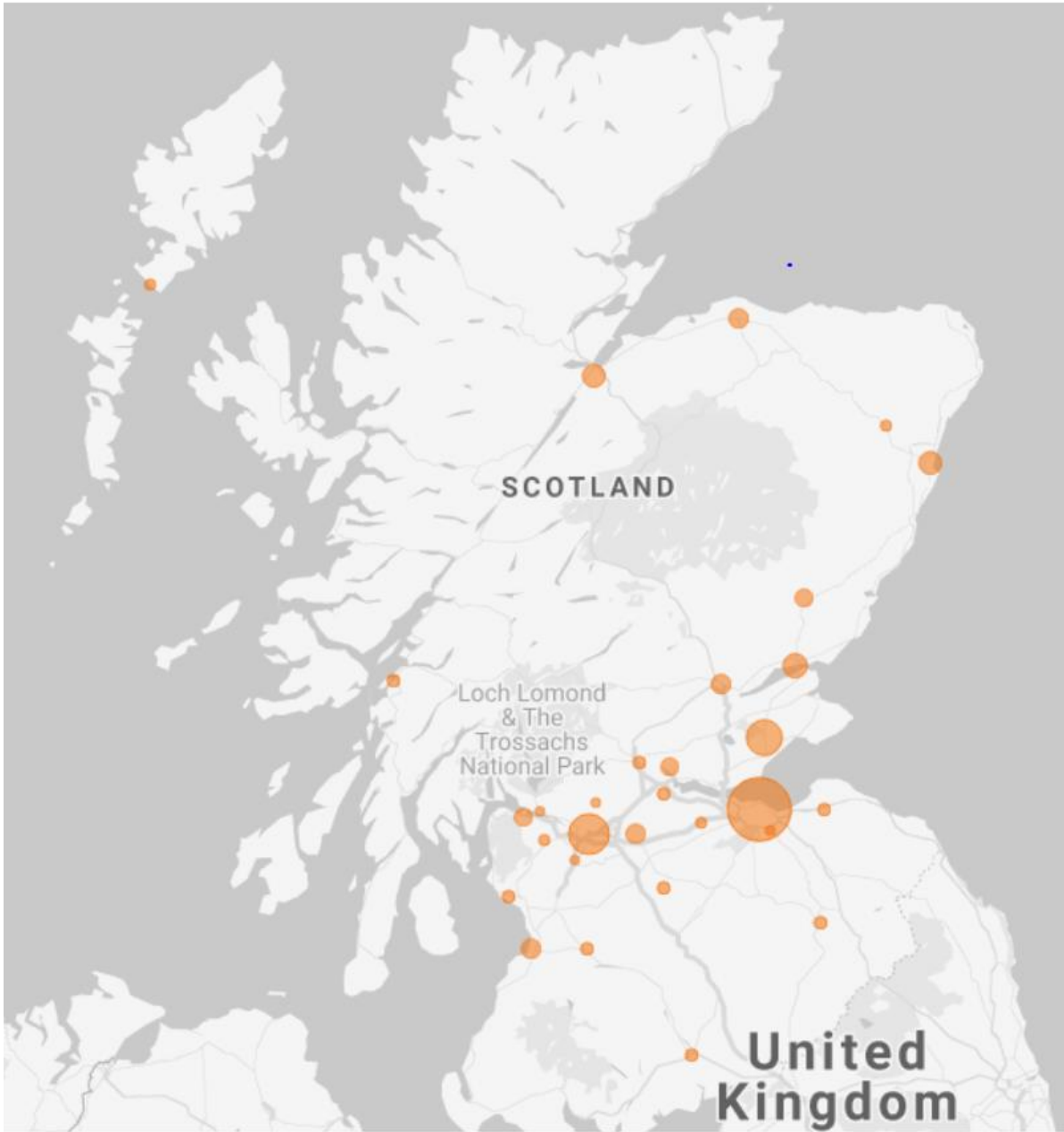


Map of Gaps

A look at befriending
service provision across
Scotland



Befriending
Networks



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Introduction

Map of Gaps (2020)

Over the last five months, I have been working as a research intern for Befriending Networks. I am partaking in this internship as part of my Marketing Management degree at Edinburgh Napier University.

The map of gaps document will be of use to befriending organisations, local authorities as well as the government to illustrate where there are gaps in provision of befriending and will help make sure befriending is in place for those who need it most. This will tie in with the Connected Scotland social isolation and loneliness strategy

As a research intern, I have been working on updating the 'Map of Gaps' of befriending services in Scotland document. The research has found there remain significant gaps in provision of befriending for specific groups. It also found that there are disparities in befriending provision between local authority areas.

It must be mentioned that the Covid-19 crisis has had a substantial impact on the work I have been doing towards putting this document together. I began working on this in late January 2020 with the main information gathering period being during February and March and was therefore in the process of contacting, through phone and email, all our member organisations and other non-members also delivering befriending. This was to gather the necessary data for this document. Unsurprisingly, this became much more difficult to gain responses from organisations when many were in the middle of preparing their services for transition to distance models and the increased demand due to the Covid-19 crisis. This led to having to gather the data from other sources such as gathering as much information as possible from the organisations' website.

It must also be mentioned, in this time of crisis, we experienced a significant increase in membership applications in Scotland. This was due partly to new befriending projects starting up during the pandemic and, also due to existing befriending projects looking for the support and resources offered by Befriending Networks.

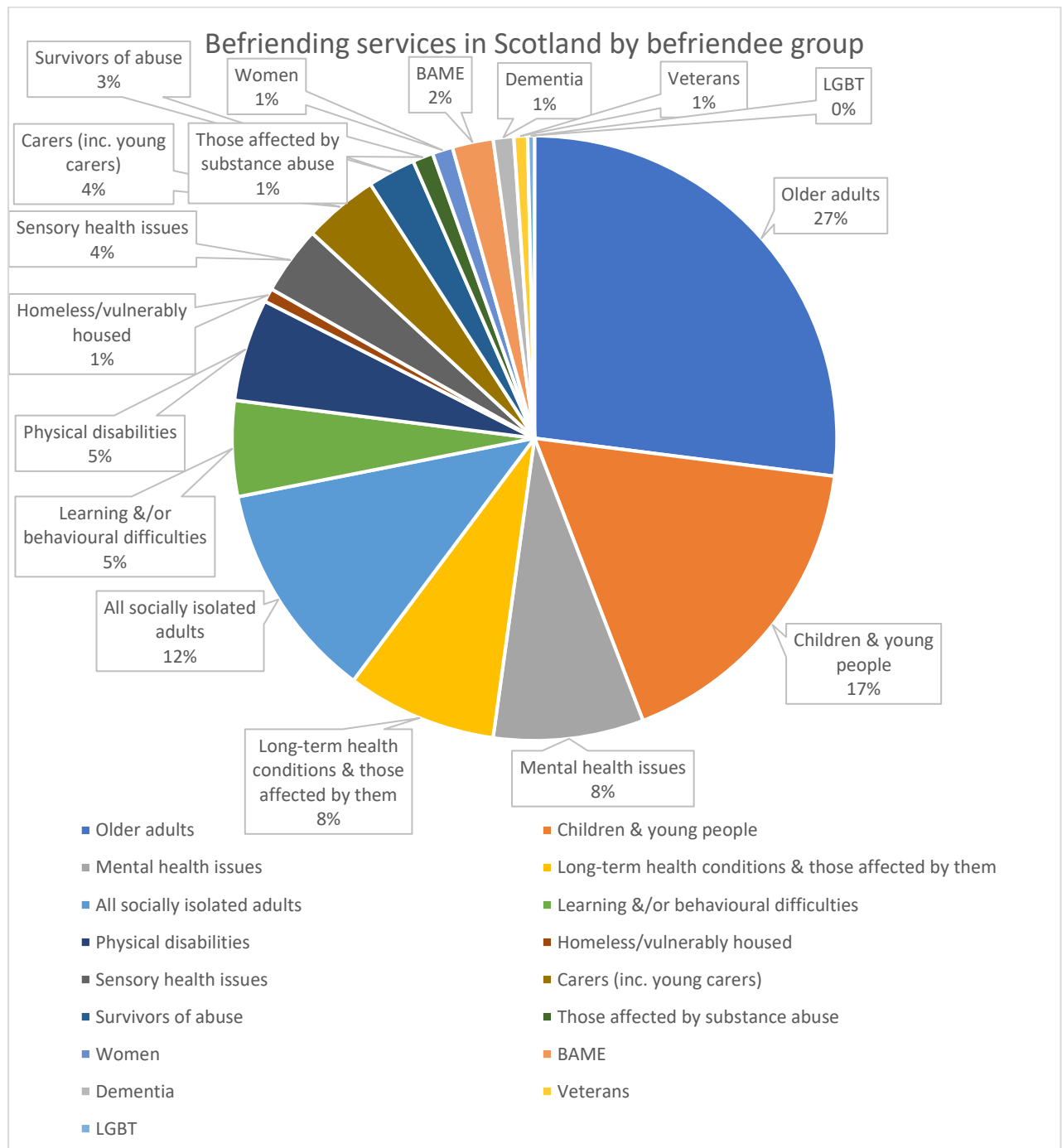
Alex Hempton, June 2020

Mapping the Gaps

In order to map the gaps, a database of befriending services in Scotland was created through collating data from the Befriending Network's member database and researching online for non-member services. The research has found that there are currently 177 befriending services in Scotland – this is a slight decrease from 2014 when there were 186 befriending services operating in Scotland. These services deliver befriending for 17 different groups. Some of the befriending services cover more than one group and this has been represented in the pie chart below.

It must be noted that the Covid-19 lockdown had a significant effect on the number of befriending projects starting to offer methods of remote befriending such as telephone,

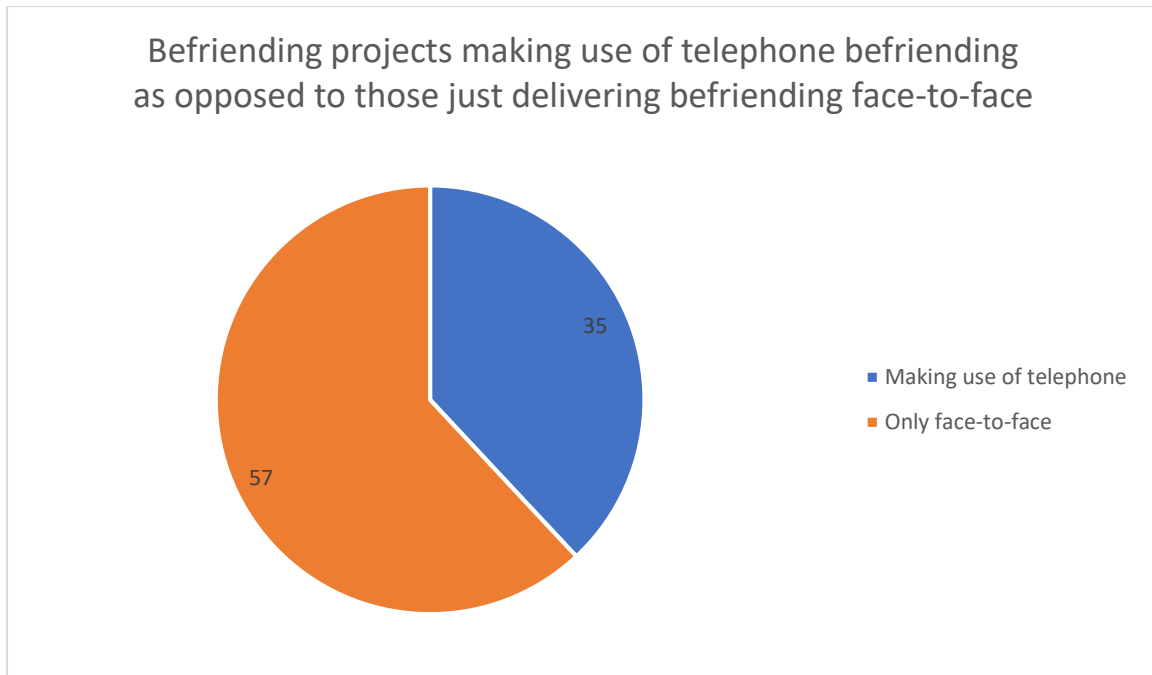
digital and letter writing. It is likely that, due to the pandemic, remote befriending has increased in popularity since 2014 when there were only 21 instances of this being provided. As a result of the pandemic most projects, previously offering face to face matches, are, as of Spring 2020, offering telephone and other remote befriending. This is likely to become increasingly common in the coming year due to the uncertainty regarding the spread of the Covid19.



With regards to the 32 local authority areas in Scotland, there are 227 befriending services available (the number of services is higher than the number of projects as some projects provide services in more than one local authority area). There are also 14 befriending services which cover the whole of Scotland of which 11 are members of Befriending Networks. Overall,

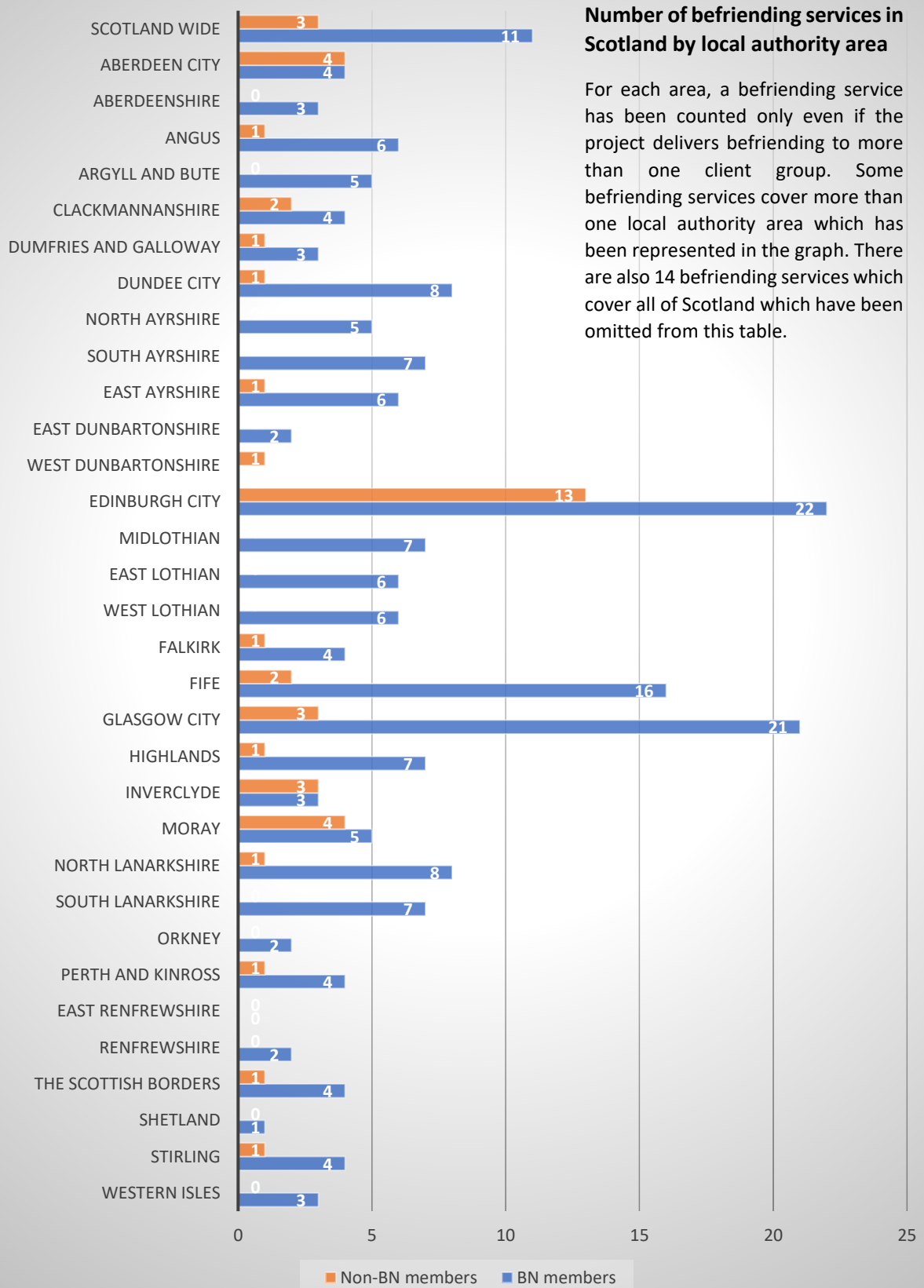
153 of the befriending services are members of Befriending Networks (as at May 2020) – which amounts to 75% of all befriending services across Scotland. The percentage of befriending services registered as Befriending Networks members will be higher than when this data was collected as, due to the Covid-19 crisis, many more befriending projects have applied for membership looking for additional support and resources during a period of increased demand for many befriending services.

Pie chart illustrating the proportion of befriending projects delivering telephone befriending as well as face-to-face befriending as opposed to those projects only delivering face-to-face befriending. These figures are based solely on the returns received and apply to the situation as before March 2020.



Since the Covid19 outbreak all befriending projects continuing to deliver befriending during the pandemic cannot provide face to face befriending and are using telephone and other forms of remote befriending. One befriending project has put their service on hold during the pandemic.

Number of befriending services in Scotland by Local Authority area



By combining the data sets, an analysis can be made of the service provision by befriender group in each Local Authority.

Column	Aberdeen City	Aberdeen-shire	Angus	Argyll & Bute	Clacks	Dumfries & Galloway	Dundee	E Ayrshire	E Dunbarton shire	E Lothian	E Renfrew shire	Edinburgh	Falkirk	Fife	Glasgow	Highland
OP	4	2	2	2	1	1	5	2	1	1	0	6	0	6	10	5
CYP	3	0	1	3	0	3	3	2	0	2	0	11	1	6	6	1
MH	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	2	1	1
LTHC	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	2
SIA	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	3	1	1	0	1	1	3	2	1
LD	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	5	0	0	2	0
PD	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
H	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
SHI	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	1	3	0	1
SOA	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	0
SA	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
BAME	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	0
D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
LGBT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
V	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Column1	Inverclyde	Midlothian	Moray	N Ayshire	N Lanark shire	Orkney	Perth & Kinross	Renfrew shire	The Borders	Shetland	S Ayrshire	S Lanark shire	Stirling	W Dunbarton shire	Western Isles	W Lothian
OP	6	2	1	4	5	2	3	1	2	1	4	3	1	1	1	2
CYP	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	2	1	4	1	2	0	1	1
MH	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
LTHC	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
SIA	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
LD	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	1
PD	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
H	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
SHI	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	1
C	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SOA	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
SA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BAME	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
D	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
LGBT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
V	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Key

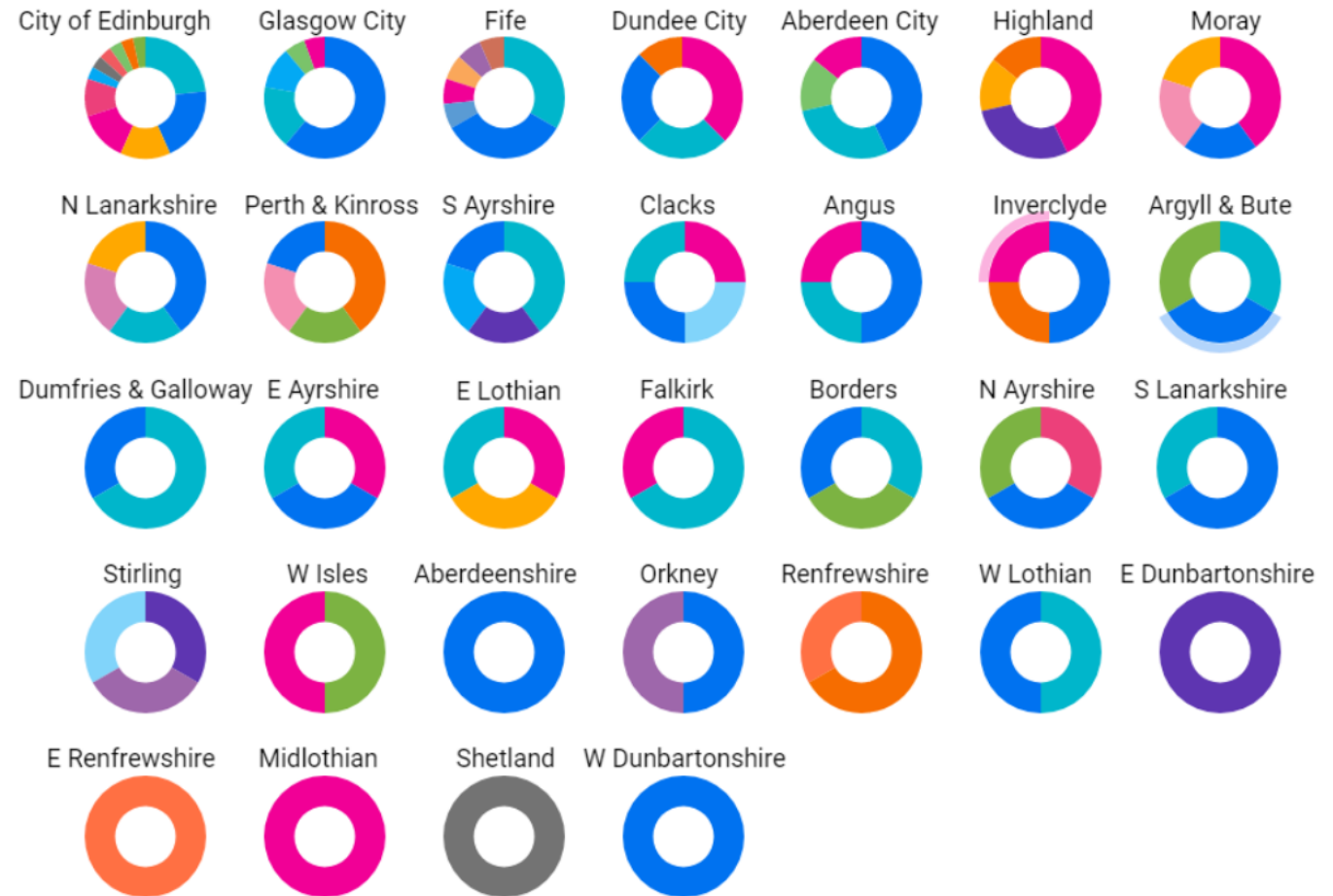
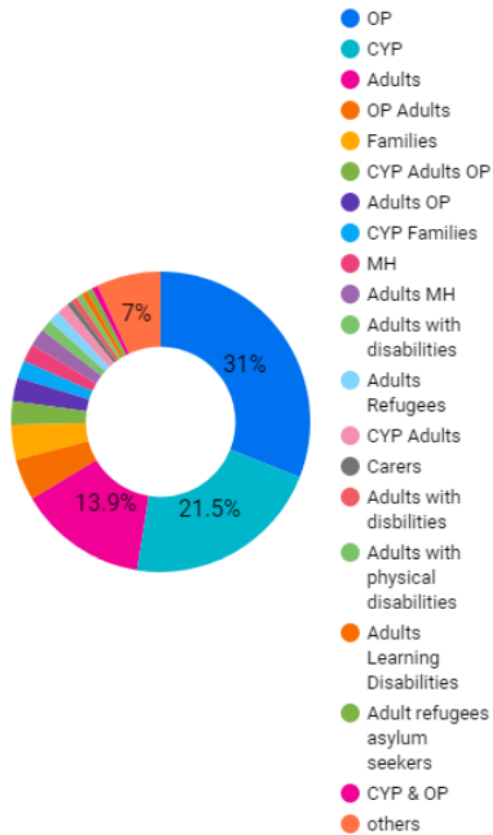
OP	Older People	CYP	Children & Young People	MH	Mental Health
LTHC	Long Term Health Condition	SIA	Socially Isolated Adults	LD	Learning Difficulties
PD	Physical Disabilities	H	Homeless	SHI	Sensory Health Impairment
C	Carers	SOA	Survivors of Abuse	SA	Substance Abuse
W	Women	BAME	Including Refugees	D	Dementia
LGBT	Adults	V	Veterans		

Some of the services work with more than 1 client group so totals for any area may be higher than the number of distinct services.

The graphic below illustrates the proportion of identified groups per local authority area.

Overall split by client groups

Each Locations by Org



Impact of the coronavirus pandemic on befriending services

The Coronavirus outbreak has had a widespread impact on befriending. One befriending service has been suspended as the project concentrates on some of the other services it offers. All befriending projects have had to adapt what they offer to provide remote befriending and, in some cases, to provide a shopping and delivery service to the most vulnerable – this is due to social distancing rules and the need for shielding of vulnerable clients. Befriending Projects were asked to provide information on their experience of transition. Responses were received from 25 projects; all had transitioned to a telephone or digital means of providing befriending. Many had received increased numbers of referrals; some expressed some concern about the referrals they were potentially not receiving from the most isolated individuals. While, to some extent, the workload is increasing, projects report that their volunteer befrienders can increase the number of befriendees they are contacting.

The recognition of increasing levels of loneliness and social isolation created as a result of the pandemic has led to many new, and informal, befriending services being set up in local communities and churches. Both new and existing projects setting up remote befriending have all selected methods in response to the needs of the befriendees e.g. telephone for older individuals; telephone, email, or facetime for younger service users – and also letters to take account of issues such as hearing impairments. Examples of Scottish services who joined as Befriending Networks members in light of the coronavirus crisis include: Gien a Haund, Angus Carers' Association and North Berwick Coastal Community Connections. Other organisations based outside of Scotland have also joined Befriending Networks during this time of crisis.

In response to the pandemic hundreds of thousands of people have stepped forward to volunteer. Over 21,000 Scots signed up to volunteer to support vulnerable people, living in their area, through the Ready Scotland website.

Projects spoke about the need to adequately support volunteers, helping them to manage anxieties about their role and any concerns about those they befriended. One organisation reported setting up a WhatsApp group for their befrienders to help them communicate with each other and be supported in their volunteering.

In terms of taking on new referrals, the majority of projects reported that they were taking on new referrals, these new referrals came from Local Authorities, other third sector partners and directly from individuals, their family and friends. However, some projects were not taking new referrals for a variety of reasons – a few were concerned about staff being able to cope with the increased demand, while others had firm policies in place which required a face-to-face meeting for assessment before taking a referral. Some of the projects not taking referrals, or not going through the matching process with those referred, reported that staff were now calling those referrals awaiting a befriender to check that they were OK. Many of those that had new referrals also had new volunteers. However, some mentioned that current volunteers had more time available to allow them to befriend more than one befriendees, so they did not need additional volunteers at the time.

Gaps in Provision

The project has identified significant gaps in befriending provision for specific groups and also by local authority area. The key findings from the research are:

Older adults: While there are 74 befriending services for older people in Scotland, there are no befriending services advertised specifically for this group in East Renfrewshire and Falkirk (although there are four Scotland-wide projects for this group).

Children and young people: Although there are 47 befriending services for children and young people in Scotland, there are no advertised befriending services specifically for this group in 7 of the 32 local authority areas.

Mental health: There are 22 befriending services for people with mental health problems but there are no befriending projects available for this group in 17 of the 32 local authority areas

Long-term health conditions: There are 22 befriending services for people who suffer from a range of long-term, including those affected by spina bifida, HIV and epilepsy. There is no evidence for befriending services for this group in 15 of the 32 local authority areas, however there is one Scotland-wide befriending service for this group – Marie Curie helper service, which caters towards all terminal illness.

Learning and/or behavioural difficulties: There are 14 befriending services overall for those with learning and behavioural difficulties. However, there are no advertised befriending services for this overall group in 15 of the local authority areas.

Physical disabilities: There are 15 befriending services for the physically disabled, however these projects are unevenly spread across Scotland, meaning 25 local authority areas have no befriending services advertised specifically for this group.

Homeless/vulnerably housed: There are only 3 befriending projects for adults who are homeless, ex-homeless or vulnerably housed, this is a significant decrease from the 10 services which were operating in 2014. One of these services covers just Perth and Kinross, whilst the other two cover Edinburgh and the Lothians, and Shetland. This leaves 26 local authority areas with no befriending services for the homeless.

Sensory health: There are 10 befriending services for the sensory group covering 19 local authority areas. The majority of these projects are for people with visual impairments. There is one Scotland-wide project for this category, however it caters towards adults experiencing sight-loss only.

Carers/young carers: There are 12 befriending services specifically for carers or young carers in Scotland. These 12 projects are spread across only 7 local authority areas.

Survivors of abuse: There are 7 befriending projects currently running for survivors of abuse. These 7 projects cover 11 local authority areas. There are no longer any Scotland-wide projects for this group – there was one Scotland-wide group for survivors of abuse in 2014.

Those affected by substance misuse: There are currently only 3 befriending projects for people affected by substance misuse – this means the number of projects available for this group has halved since 2014. These projects cover 5 local authority areas.

Women: There are 3 projects providing befriending specifically for women, which include women from minority ethnic backgrounds, women with postnatal depression, and women affected by domestic or sexual abuse. Befriending services specifically for women are offered only in the local authority areas of Edinburgh City, Fife and Glasgow City.

BAME Population: There are 6 befriending services for people from BAME groups in Scotland, this is an increase of 2 from the 2014 figure of 4. These projects operate in 9 of the 32 local authority areas.

Dementia: There are only 4 services that deliver befriending specifically for people with dementia, these services cover 12 different local authority areas. However, many of the projects working with older people do work with people living with dementia.

Veterans: There are just 2 services providing befriending specifically for veterans. However, one of these services operates Scotland-wide.

LGBT: There is only one befriending service for this group. This is the same figure as in 2014. The project is run by LGBT Age and covers only Edinburgh City and Glasgow City and caters only to those over 50 years old.

Edinburgh City has the most befriending services in Scotland; 35 projects are delivered in this area and they cover every group. For Edinburgh this an increase of 6 from the 2014 figure. Glasgow City is second and offers 24 befriending services. East Renfrewshire is the only local authority area without any identified befriending service in this research. West Dunbartonshire and Shetland each only have one project – in the case of Shetland it should be noted that their service offers support to a range of befriended groups, the project in West Dunbartonshire offers support to socially isolated older people.

In the remaining local authority areas (besides Edinburgh City and Glasgow City), the number of befriending services found range from 2 to 18. The average number of befriending projects per local authority area is 7.1 – this is slight increase from the figure of 6.5 from the 2014 document.

In some cases, the statistics may not present a completely accurate view of the number of befriending services available, due to the complexity and variety of the projects and client group categories. For example:

- Three of the services for children also include befriending support for the child's family
- Some services offer befriending to specific people within a group. For example, Glenboig House offers befriending only to its service users rather than to all older adults in North Lanarkshire
- As shown previously, the numbers show there are only three services specifically providing dementia befriending across all of Scotland, however, several projects working with older people do provide befriending for individuals with dementia as well.

More detail can be found on the Befriending Networks website (<https://www.befriending.co.uk/>) about the services who are members.

Current trends in Befriending

As parts of the map of gaps research, member and non-member projects were contacted to gather information about the current situation of befriending services in Scotland. Of the projects contacted 63 provided current data regarding how many befrienders and befriendees they have, along with data on waiting lists and other aspects of befriending.

To give a more wide-ranged view of the data, it was decided to extrapolate the data collected from the responses received i.e. using the collected data and calculating what the average of these data will be Scotland wide.

From the information gathered, it was found the longest waiting list was 125 with only 13 befriending services reported having no waiting list compared to the 10 services with no waiting list in 2014. The average number on a waiting list was 21 which is an increase of three from the 2014 data. The average number of befrienders was 43 whilst the average number of befriendees was 63 – on average organisations had 33 befriending matches which is an increase of 5 from the figure of 28 in 2014. The highest number of current matches reported by a befriending service was 279 and lowest number was zero – this was due to the services having not been operational yet; and many of these projects with no matches already had a waiting list before actually launching.

There was also information gathered about other methods of befriending – It was found there were 14 services offering telephone befriending, however this number will have increased massively since the Coronavirus pandemic. It was also found that the average number of people supported through telephone befriending (of those projects offering a telephone befriending service) was 41. These services are for a range of befriendees groups although they are mainly focused towards older more socially isolated adults, for example The Macular Society offers Scotland-wide telephone befriending for those affected by Macular degeneration. There are also a few incidences of services offering letter and email befriending, these methods of befriending will also have increased since the Coronavirus outbreak.

It was found there was 16 befriending services providing group befriending and the average number of people supported through group befriending (of those projects offering group befriending) was 153. Two of these services offered only group befriending while the rest offered it alongside face-to-face and/or telephone befriending. These services cater towards a range of different groups, for example Orkney Befriending Service offers support for older people in Orkney. There is also additional befriending-like support available across Scotland in which charities provide one-to-one support for a range of groups; for example, Open Door in Stirling provides a buddy service for people with disabilities and mental health problems who have become involved in volunteering.

Furthermore, there was data collected about the hours of befriending provided in 2019 by organisations – it was found that the average amount of befriending provided by organisation in 2019 was 3248 hrs per year or 62.5 hrs per week; this works out to be an average of 1.9 hrs of befriending provided per match per week.

Good news story from the Coronavirus pandemic:

We thought it would be good idea to conclude the document with a good news story related to befriending throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. **Below is the story of how one of our organisations dealt with the pandemic:**

The organisation provides a service for adults (16+) who feel isolated, lonely or disconnected, perhaps as a result of disability, ill health or other circumstances. Their volunteer befrienders provide one to one support to enable adults and older people to improve their confidence, to try new activities and to make more connections with their communities and local services. When Covid-19 restrictions were put in place, they quickly moved to offering support via telephone, email, text or video conference calls, depending on the supported person's needs and wishes.

Graham, who his early 60s, was referred to the project in 2018 by a local area co-ordinator. Graham is a bilateral amputee who uses a wheelchair to get about. Graham struggles to get out on his own as he is unable to self-propel his wheelchair on the pavement. Until his amputations and sudden hearing loss, Graham led a full and active life, travelling and working. He asked for befriending support, saying, 'I feel I need to meet people as isn't doing me any good to be on my own.' He was matched with a volunteer befriender, Jim, and they started activities in the community together - going to the shops, going for a coffee, travelling to a local beach.

After the Covid-19 outbreak, Jim agreed that he would contact Graham via text and email as Graham is not able to hear people speaking on the phone. After a couple of weeks of lockdown, Jim became concerned about Graham as he was not able to get an online shopping slot due to the high demand. The co-ordinator was able to refer him to their local third sector Covid-19 Response team, who have now organised for support with his shopping and prescriptions.

Graham and Jim will hopefully get back to meeting face to face when the restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, they are working out if they can play online chess to pass the time!

Conclusion

The map of gaps research has revealed that there are significant gaps in befriending provision in Scotland with regards to provision available for particular groups and also by local authority area. Information from individual services has shown they are under increasing strain due to the increase of waiting lists (as mentioned earlier, waiting lists have increased by three on average since 2014) It must be said, however, that the Coronavirus pandemic will have a massive impact on how befriending is delivered in the future – we have already seen a big increase recently in remote befriending being provided due to the increased social distancing being observed in these times and if there is anything positive to come from this pandemic it will be the increase in much needed remote befriending services. That being said, there is evidently a need for continued befriending provision and more befriending services to meet the needs of vulnerable and isolated people living in Scotland. Befriending is more important than ever to support the increasing population of older and socially isolated individuals across Scotland.

Acknowledgment

I feel it is important to acknowledge that the production of this document would not have been possible without the cooperation of the Scottish Third Sector Interface organisations and the various befriending organisations who provided much of the data and statistics required to put together this document.

Alex Hempton

15/06/20

