



# **Evaluation of Shetland Befriending Scheme**

***Alongside to Help***

**November 2010**



Befriending  
NetworkScotland

*The scheme has been a wonderful help for me. I cannot praise the workers of the scheme as well as my match. I haven't met a far more honest and open person in my life like her. She is awesomeness! (young person)*

*It is like having a best friend but they are a lot older and you can trust them with anything (young person)*

*In my training, I joined 15 people who are now matched with 15 people who have got needs. I don't think these kids would have that support, that help, without the scheme, that good example, that one to one time - these are the things that change the world a wee bit (volunteer)*

*When he trotted that horse himself...that was just heaven. He was so happy. I was standing there freezing cold. I had a wee tear in my eye; it nearly froze to my cheek (volunteer)*

*A fantastic scheme! Very supportive to both myself and the young adults. A rewarding experience for me that I'm proud to have been part of (volunteer)*

*I can't say enough good about them. Everything is positive so far. At multi-agency meetings they (scheme staff) are there; concerned and involved (referral agency)*

*It is a well-organised scheme benefiting many young people and training befrienders to develop valuable skills (referral agency)*

*He feels more confident and also what is very important is he is developing communication skills because of somebody outside our family. He is also discovering he can be more independent and doesn't always need to have his mum (parent)*

*I have noticed a massive difference from start to now. His confidence has grown and he's a lot happier – he'll speak about things now. Before he didn't want to say things to me (parent)*

## Key Findings

Shetland Befriending Scheme is a well established service managed by a staff team of 4 and providing support for children, young people and young adults across three sections which operate with independent caseloads but which share many procedures.

The volunteers, parents and carers and referral agencies are all very positive about the scheme's procedures relevant to them. The staff of the scheme are providing a service seen not just as friendly, welcoming and supportive, but as organised and professional.

The project's thorough procedures for volunteer selection, training and support, for matching and for referrals and review all clearly fit with APS (the Approved Provider Standard for Mentoring and Befriending Projects) and staff enjoy the organised approach which has stemmed from the Project Co-ordinator's work since she ran the scheme as the sole member of staff.

Volunteers come to the scheme having heard about it through a range of sources and are very positive about their preparation to be befrienders, notably the training. The scheme has a clear impact on the volunteers who gain an opportunity to contribute positively in their locality and who gain a high level of insight, experience, enjoyment and reward in the process.

Referral agencies appreciate the way in which the scheme is run, the difference it makes for young people and the fact that it is there to complement other services. They see it as providing a unique 1:1 impartial service which they could neither replicate nor find elsewhere.

Parents and carers are positive about their experience of the scheme, which they often hear about through other agencies e.g. schools. They can give clear examples of changes in their children or grandchildren which they attribute to the befriending relationship. Whilst not offering a respite care service as such, in many situations volunteers and referral agencies do feel that befriending has an important role to play in family dynamics and this is confirmed by parents and carers, who see young people getting opportunities to get away and do new things, while they themselves get a chance for a break.

The scheme's impact on the young people themselves is seen by the majority of volunteers, parents and carers and referral agencies as resulting in improvements in young people's confidence, self worth, and life skills amongst other things. Some of the young people themselves agree with this, while all of them describe the chance to talk about anything they want to, and to meet someone who takes an interest in them as being what the scheme has given them. These opinions of the young people closely tie with the overall impression of volunteers and referral agencies across each of the three sections, who see one of the key strengths of the scheme in Shetland as offering young people the provision of an impartial, independent volunteer who provides a consistent relationship of trust. This in turn leads to young people achieving more because of the activities they are able to do, the communication they are able to practise or the decisions that they have the chance to talk through.

The scheme's challenges relate to individual young people and their situations which can at times be difficult for befriending to impact on, the recruitment and retention of sufficient volunteers and demands for a befriending service beyond the current criteria. The scheme has potential to do more given that staff are managing caseloads at the low end of the range recognised as good practice, however they are limited by volunteer recruitment and retention numbers.

Five years since its last external evaluation, this evaluation finds the Shetland Befriending Scheme to have developed into new areas with an expanded staff team, but to have done this with no compromise to its highly organised approach, its close regard to best practice, its professional and caring delivery of service to all involved, or the way in which it is viewed across the community.

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*on behalf of Befriending Network Scotland [www.befriending.co.uk](http://www.befriending.co.uk)*

## **1. Shetland Befriending Scheme: Project Information**

### **a) Background and Current Status**

Shetland Befriending Scheme has been providing services for children and young people in Shetland since 2000. The original scheme for children aged 7-15 years was set up as a result of the need for additional support identified by the Children's Panel. The result was the development of a pilot 1:1 volunteer befriending scheme staffed part-time. As the scheme's profile in the community developed over the years, demand grew and the scheme expanded twice, firstly in 2005 to provide support for young adults (aged 16-25), and then in 2009 for children and young people with additional support needs. The scheme achieved its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the summer of 2010.

At the time of the evaluation, the scheme therefore had three sections:

- children and young people at risk section (7 to 15 years)
- children and young people with additional support needs and/or disabilities (7 to 15 years)
- young adults section (16 to 25 years)

At the time of the evaluation the scheme had 60 volunteers (39 matched across all three sections, 8 in the process of being matched and 13 on a break) and the three sections were meeting between 60% and 78% of the demand for their services.

As a further future development, the scheme was undertaking work to identify need for support for older people in Shetland and exploring funding options relating to that.

### **b) Aims and Outcomes**

The outcomes of the three sections of the Shetland Befriending Scheme are all broadly about young people having more opportunities and achieving greater potential, whether that is in terms of increased confidence or life skills etc. However each of the sections has its own specific outcomes:

Children and Young People at Risk – the scheme will result in

- improved confidence
- improved self esteem
- emotional growth
- increased life skills
- greater capacity to form and maintain positive relationships with others
- greater feelings of achievement
- increased skills and abilities
- opportunities to experience new activities

Young People with Additional Support Needs – the scheme will result in

- improved ability for young people to take part in mainstream activities in the community on an independent basis
- young people building on their skills and abilities
- gaining a sense of independence
- being supported during a particular transition in their lives
- increasing their ability to make positive informed choices

Young Adults – the scheme will result in

- improved confidence
- improved self worth
- greater awareness of their skills and abilities
- building capacity to cope with new experiences

- young adults reflecting on the decisions they make in their life and considering the influences that have an impact on their decisions
- young adults changing an aspect of their lifestyle that they feel is detrimental and that they wish to change
- young adults developing the confidence to form and maintain positive relationships with others in the community
- young adults considering their future and their positive aspirations with regard to training and employability

### **c) Profile and Recognition**

Shetland Befriending Scheme is well-recognised locally in the community and within the network of social care agencies it complements, but also as a long-standing and innovative project within Befriending Network Scotland (the national network of befriending projects) and as one of the leading examples of practice for befriending projects supporting children and young people.

Shetland Befriending Scheme's practice has been recognised through the Approved Provider Standard (quality award for mentoring and befriending services) which it gained in 2009 for the second time. Two previous evaluations by Befriending Network Scotland have found the scheme to be well organised and very popular with all stakeholders.

### **d) Staff and Management**

The overall management responsibility for the Shetland Befriending Scheme is with the Project Co-ordinator, overseeing a team of Development Workers managing each of the three sections i.e.

- Children and Young People's Development Worker
- Additional Support Needs Development Worker
- Young Adults Development Worker

All of the posts are full time. The scheme as a whole is governed by Voluntary Action Shetland (VAS) and the Executive Officer of (VAS) line manages the Shetland Befriending Scheme Project Co-ordinator.

## **2. The Evaluation**

### **a) Purpose**

The purpose of this evaluation for Shetland Befriending Scheme was:

- to bring evaluation at the scheme up to date (the last external evaluation was undertaken in 2005)
- to provide a thorough evaluation that reflects the significant recent change across the scheme (previous evaluations were solely for the children and young person's section (2003) and the young adults section (2005)). This evaluation was therefore to look at practice and impact across the service as a whole
- to provide material which the scheme will use in seeking and securing future funding
- to provide the Project Co-ordinator with a means of checking whether the service being provided is of good quality, now that she has a managerial role rather than one managing a caseload and having the direct involvement in project procedures which that entails
- to check aspects of service delivery against the standards expected by the Approved Provider Standard (the quality award for mentoring and befriending projects)
- to provide analysis of the skills needed and the skills currently present in the Project Co-ordinator

### **b) Methodology**

The evaluation consisted of surveys designed to meet the evaluation purpose described above. These surveys looked at the scheme's practice and how stakeholders viewed that, the impact on children and young people and on the volunteers, and the role of the project in the provision of care for children and young people in Shetland now and in the future.

Where appropriate the same questions were asked across different stakeholder groups e.g. respondents' views on the impact of the service on young people, enabling opinion on the same issues to be cross-checked.

The evaluation sought to gather information from people involved in all of Shetland Befriending Scheme's three sections and consisted of surveys or discussions with:

- 22 volunteers across all three sections (6 by email, 1 by post and 15 by phone)
- 12 parents / carers across all three sections (1 by post and 11 by phone)
- 10 referral agencies across all three sections (2 by email and 8 by phone)
- 6 young people across all three sections (a 25% return from 25 postal surveys)
- 4 staff and the Executive Officer with overall management responsibility (by phone)

The volunteers interviewed were 16 women and 6 men and included those who had been involved with Shetland Befriending Scheme for a number of years, to those who had been involved in just a few months' worth of volunteering. The volunteers represented all 3 sections and therefore had different members of the scheme's staff as their first point of contact.

The referral agency representatives interviewed included Shetland Council social work staff, school staff including those with expertise in Additional Support Needs, youth agency staff and Shetland Women's Aid. Their experience of the scheme ranged from those who had had a connection with the organisation since it had begun solely supporting children and young people in the 7-15 age range, through to those which had become involved as the newer sections had begun providing services for young people with additional support needs and young adults. Some had seen involvement in one or two matches through to those who had referred many young people over the years.

The parents and carers (e.g. grandparents) interviewed and the young people surveyed included those involved across all 3 sections.

The staff interviewed were the Project Co-ordinator and the staff she has line management responsibility for; the Young Adults Development Worker, the Children and Young People's Development Worker and the Additional Support Needs Development Worker. In addition the Executive Officer of Voluntary Action Shetland who line manages the Project Co-ordinator was interviewed.

### **3. Results: Volunteers' Involvement with Shetland Befriending Scheme**

#### **a) Activities**

Volunteers were asked to describe the activities which they typically undertook with the young people who they were matched with. Matches take place weekly or fortnightly with one or two on a monthly basis. The matches which meet less frequently tend to do so because of a greater distance for the volunteer to travel to meet the young person, although occasionally this may also be about other factors e.g. volunteers' work commitments.

Some matches tend to focus on one activity in the main, but most matches have at least tried a wide variety from outdoor activities such as fishing and beachcombing to indoor sports, films, shops, cafes, museums and meals.

*I would do mostly sporty activities with my young adult like swimming, badminton, tennis...otherwise we would have lunch somewhere and go for a drive. We also did cooking together*

*I've got a sheet of possible activities on my fridge. We try to do something different each week. He loves going for a run in the car and eating out but we have also been to films, swimming, library, fishing, a concert at the Blues Festival and to the art gallery*

*The match was monthly. That way we could have a whole afternoon because of the distance. It was mostly cinema or things like the Christmas fayre in town or just going somewhere we can sit and talk*

*A lot of sports; mountain biking, indoor climbing, table tennis, football, basketball*

*Trying to vary it. Nothing physical. We tend to watch films or do crafts.*

*We might go for a meal or a coffee, go for a drive and have a good chat...go for a walk or pony riding or swimming*

*It has tended be going to playpark because that's what he wants to do. We might do that and get a cone of chips*

*We do different things. We go swimming quite a lot, we watch films, trampolining, go for a walk on the beach*

*He prefers horse riding – we sat and we spoke about it – he likes going for a walk along a beach – but then I learned as we spent time that horseriding was what he really wanted to do*

*We just have loads of fun. He loves doing activities outside; we might sail boats down the burn or he loves going to the beach. If the weather is really horrible we go to the Islesburgh and play pool and air hockey. This weekend we're hoping to make Halloween costumes together*

*Usually the young person and I go for walks round the town, go to the beach or for a run in the car and on the way visit a local cafe or a shop. Occasionally we will take part in a more 'unusual' activity such as horse riding or ones offered as part of group activity sessions.*

## **b) Choosing and Planning Activities**

Volunteers described how they try to get young people involved in some way in the decision making process about activities, for example at the very least by offering them choices, if not trying to get young people themselves to come up with the ideas for the activity that they do together. Some describe this choice as being an important element of befriending, but many find that it can be a struggle and on occasions when the young person has begun to be more involved in decision-making on activities, it has been seen as an achievement, a sign of growing confidence and a step in the right direction.

*We look at what's happening e.g. a film weekend, and decide if we'd like to go. We would do what the young person decided after talking about it together*

*We talk about what we will do the next time. We make a good weather plan and a bad weather plan*

*I would give him 2 or 3 choices of things to do and let him choose. I think it's for them to decide and for me to say "I'm here. You've got me. Where do you want to go?" It does give them control. Being blunt helps!*

*All of the matches I have had have found it hard to decide. They never know or some of them always say the same thing, like always swimming or going to the playpark. I'll try and suggest something different and when I suggest stuff they say 'ok'*

*At first he was quite tentative. One reason he was referred was that he didn't like to leave mum – he was nervous away from her. We met on neutral ground. Gradually we agreed to go swimming.*

*There is a sheet (produced by the scheme) where young people can circle stuff they enjoy; it's quite useful*

*I definitely try and get her to make a decision on stuff so she is in control. I give her suggestions*

*It's usually me that suggests it. If I ask him what he wants to do he doesn't seem to be bothered*

*We talk about the next time as we head back up the road. Usually she never comes up with anything. It was a massive achievement when she suggested an activity. That was really good*

*He never says he wants to do anything – I try to come up with options and try and encourage him to choose*

*We talk about it together and try to settle on something for each outing but most of the time it is me who has to come up with ideas. In my experience the young people though enthusiastic at one time about an idea can often change their minds on the day and choose to do something else. It is good to have something extra up your sleeve in case plans change. However, I always discuss with the young person so that he is the one who at the end makes a decision on what to do while we are together.*

*With both my young adults we were matched up well prior to meeting and after our initial meeting we both expressed a liking for sport/active things so agreed to do a variety of*

*different activities together. After the initial meeting we would decide on the next time we were meeting and what we were going to do together. This suited us both as it meant we knew what we were doing! If the young adult had something to celebrate or perhaps just wanted to meet to talk – then lunch together or a drive was good as it gave them time to talk. Cooking together was good as it built on their confidence and gave them a little independence. Sport was fun for both of us and not as intense a session, usually they didn't have as much to talk about and were happier with life!*

*If I try to organise it in advance he's better at deciding. If it's just on the day; it's not so good*

The project has tried to assist volunteers with activity choices by providing a list of possible activities which it encourages volunteers to talk through with young people as they start to meet. In addition they provide an Activities Handbook which lists opportunities on a geographical basis in Shetland. Furthermore, the scheme offers group activities which all matched pairs are invited to (see Section 8) and which often provide an opportunity for different activities as well as for group interaction e.g. archery, smoothie making.

### **c) Results: Becoming a Befriender**

Volunteers were asked how they had first heard about Shetland Befriending Scheme. Volunteers had found out about the scheme through a combination of three main factors:

- word of mouth from scheme staff (conversations with scheme staff who are their friends, neighbours and acquaintances which subsequently led to the person volunteering)
- word of mouth from friends or family members who have volunteered previously (conversations arousing interest and which brought encouragement from those who spoke highly of the volunteering experience leading to the person volunteering)
- widespread advertising from the scheme (promotion of the scheme and its needs and opportunities through radio, newspaper and emails e.g. through the Shetland Council intranet)

Many of the volunteers described the fact that it was a combination of these factors which had led to them volunteering e.g. they had been aware of the project's advertising, they knew someone who had already volunteered *and* they then had a conversation with one of the staff members informally outside of the scheme.

Other influencing factors which were mentioned for volunteers included having seen similar schemes working successfully in other parts of the UK before they moved to Shetland, or finding information at a volunteer fair at Market House.

*A friend started working there. I had seen the posters before and because I work for the council I get the emails*

*I lived down south and had friends who had done a similar thing. I had heard good things about it.*

*They are really good at advertising. There are posters everywhere and they send out emails all the time*

*I had seen the adverts but I worked long hours and couldn't commit. Then I changed jobs.*

*A colleague of mine had done it and raved about it! I was interested in doing something different so found out more about it and quickly became part of the next training group!*

*My mum used to do it years ago, then it came up on the intranet where I was working*

*A pal had done it (befriending) in Glasgow. I knew Lynn (Project Co-ordinator) and then got a flier through the Council email*

#### **d) Results: The Appeal of Shetland Befriending Scheme**

Volunteers were asked what had attracted them to Shetland Befriending Scheme as opposed to other volunteering opportunities which they could have done in Shetland.

This revealed a range of motivations for volunteer befrienders:

- those who had work experience which led them to want to continue working with young people in the role of a befriender (sometimes this was a case of 'branching out' and working with young people in a different way than they had experience of)
- those with personal experience of parenting or as a young person themselves which they felt they could apply to the role of a befriender
- those who had been attracted by some of the practical nature of the volunteering opportunity e.g. the fact that it was activity based or appeared to be flexible
- those with a belief that they could make a difference to an individual or within their community through volunteering for the scheme
- those with career aspirations in social care who wanted to gain experience towards this

##### ***Previous Work Experience***

*I enjoy working with children and wanted to do something different to my career and think that I was helping a child by just being there. I also thought it would be good for me to work with a different age group and push myself away from the normal so I got something out of doing this also. It sounded like fun and a very rewarding scheme.*

##### ***Previous Personal Experience***

*I myself come from a big family and so I could see how one on one for someone who needed help would be good*

*I was familiar with the idea from some friends doing something similar where I used to live. With the young person they helped I really saw a big improvement in him*

*I have experience of needing a shoulder from a significant adult in my own youth and young adulthood and can see the value. I feel that I have experience of my own and hence a great deal of empathy with a young adult trying to find their way in difficult circumstances*

*There were two small children where I live and I felt sorry for them and thought 'that's the kind of thing that befriending does'; if I could just help somebody....*

*I've always volunteered in charity shops or in big groups before. This was completely different; more individual. The more I'd looked into it, I thought it's what I could have done with as a kid*

*Principally because my kids are grown up now and away from home and I've still got some parenting left in me I guess*

##### ***Nature of volunteering***

*It was something different and was a one-to-one type activity and flexible as you can choose what you do.*

*Because you get to do fun things, things that I enjoy, try new things like sports and activities and have expenses paid and feel I'm making a difference to a young person's life*

### **Specific appeal of young people**

*It seemed just to stick in your mind. The fact that it was younger folk and because I am younger myself*

*I had an interest in working with children already*

*I had always thought that I would like working with young people, getting out and about doing stuff and helping people*

*I felt I was able to help young people who were being sidelined in the community*

### **Making a difference**

*It felt like quite a real thing to do and that I would be making a difference*

*I just really liked the idea of helping somebody who didn't get out to do things and I work with children anyway. It's a shame there are young people out there who don't get out to do things*

*I've always done things in the past with kids with disabilities which I've really enjoyed – they've got a section for that so I thought that maybe I could do something like that again*

*I like the idea of working with teenagers who were past the point where a lot of people care about them, for example if they hadn't made a success of their schooling they can often be forgotten about in life*

### **Career Aspirations**

*I always could see myself working more with that kind of thing, not as a volunteer but in terms of a paid job, so it was good to be seen that you have done volunteering.*

*It was much more challenging and rewarding than other opportunities*

*The training was good – it was giving a lot more than just a warm fuzzy feeling. I was at the point of looking at a social care environment to work in so it was useful to have on the CV*

## **4. Results: Experience of Procedures - Volunteers**

Volunteers were asked to respond to statements about the process of getting involved at Shetland Befriending Scheme, the training they had received and the support they receive on an ongoing basis.

Results are shown in Table 1. These show that all volunteers feel very positive about:

- the way they were received into the scheme
- the way they have been prepared for their role
- the way that they are supported in that role
- the matching process and the amount of choice they had in it
- the suitability/flexibility of when befriending activities take place

The clear majority of volunteers strongly agreed with the statements given to them, showing a high level of satisfaction in Shetland Befriending Scheme's processes. Volunteers feel particularly positive about the application process, training and support. With the exception of one volunteer for whom befriending activities are inflexible, no volunteers disagreed with any of the statements.

<b>Shetland Befriending Scheme Procedure</b>	<b>Volunteers' Responses</b>
<b>The process of contacting Shetland Befriending Scheme and registering my interest in becoming a volunteer was handled well</b>	20 strongly agreed 1 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<b>The training I received prepared me well for my volunteer role</b>	19 strongly agreed 2 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<p><i>The training was good and worthwhile</i></p> <p><i>It was quite thorough – some of the best training I've had in all the different jobs I've had and the different training I've done</i></p> <p><i>It (the training planned) put me off a bit (before I started) because I'd done a lot of it before, but it was so interesting and so well done – it was good to go over it again</i></p> <p><i>There were 8 sessions. It was really good. In the last session, two folk who are volunteers at the time came in. That was really really good.</i></p> <p><i>There are other opportunities to keep doing training....it makes you more confident generally</i></p>	
<b>The support and supervision I receive is at the right level for my volunteer role</b>	17 strongly agreed 4 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<p><i>The befriending organiser has kept in touch with me regularly and updates me with relevant information which may affect my meetings with my friend and their needs</i></p> <p><i>When my first match was going through a particularly difficult time, the scheme got in touch with me frequently via email (my preferred method of contact) to ensure I was ok as it was a difficult situation to handle!</i></p> <p><i>Strongly agree. Because of my level of experience I maybe didn't need as much (support) as some, but still they kept in touch. I felt trusted and valued and touched base as much as I needed but was given independence</i></p>	
<b>I had a sufficient level of choice in the matching process</b>	13 strongly agreed 8 agreed 0 disagree or strongly disagreed
<p><i>Finding me a match did not take long and they were great at ensuring that we were similarly matched otherwise it would not have lasted so long!</i></p> <p><i>In each match there has been an element of choice... most of time they have two</i></p> <p><i>There were two options and I was not pushed into either of those</i></p> <p><i>I liked the way they gave me a few different options - they took on board what I'd asked. It fitted perfectly</i></p> <p><i>The only notes of caution relating to this part of the procedure was from volunteers who felt uncomfortable about being in the position of having and making a choice (i.e. they felt that choosing between children felt wrong or meant that they were already letting a child down in some way)</i></p>	
<b>The timing and flexibility of when befriending activities takes place is good for me</b>	15 strongly agreed 5 agreed 1 disagree or strongly disagreed
<p><i>Most volunteers were very positive about the ease with which activities could be arranged to suit them. One volunteer experienced inflexibility due to family constraints on when activities took place</i></p>	

**Table 1. Volunteers' Experience of Shetland Befriending Scheme Procedures**

Volunteers were asked if there was any other support which they had needed before being matched. Two volunteers identified that they would have welcomed more preparation relating to additional support needs and what this might mean for the young people who they were being matched with (these volunteers noted that they had not been 'held back' in any way by *not* having this, and that they did have the option to approach staff for more support).

Most volunteers felt that the training had been sufficiently thorough and that there was an element of 'on the job' learning which had to be expected as volunteers got used to the person who they were matched with.

*We're all on a learning curve – the befriending team is on a learning curve and the young man I befriend is on a learning curve – we all have to input positively to this changing experience. It's difficult to say how people are going to cope. This is not a science, it's to do with relationships and feelings; you're on a journey*

*No other training was needed but the refresher training and continuing courses offered are welcome*

Volunteers were asked if there was any other support which they needed other than what the scheme had provided. No volunteer identified a need for more support. One volunteer felt that there was too high a level of support and that if things were going well then there was little to report back on and less of a need for a face to face meeting.

*They are very proactive in supporting us and they always say if people can think of things they ought to be doing differently to let them know*

*Even when a staff member left, Lynn (Project Co-ordinator) contacted me to check everything was ok*

*My first match was really difficult and I did struggle. The circumstances were really difficult with a lack of support from the family. I felt totally supported (by the scheme). They (staff) were brilliant at discussing options to try. They were really good*

*The scheme is accessible and there for you whenever you need them. They were a great support for me and both my young adults*

## **5. Results: Experience of Procedures – Referral Agencies**

Referral agencies were asked to respond to statements about the process of getting involved at Shetland Befriending Scheme and their perception of the scheme's staff and systems.

Results are shown in Table 2. These show that all referral agencies feel very positive about:

- the information available on the scheme
- the professional manner of the staff
- the scheme's referral and information sharing procedures

Respondents strongly agreed that the Shetland Befriending Scheme was easy to find out about, with some noting that the scheme was very good at advertising locally in various ways. All respondents strongly agreed that Shetland Befriending Scheme staff worked in a professional manner. While one respondent felt that they didn't know enough detail of the Scheme's recruitment and selection procedures to comment, all of the others strongly agreed that these were of sufficient quality, in fact one noted that they felt 'very strongly' that this was the case. The experience of referring was that the procedures which the scheme has in place are straightforward and referral agencies felt that they were given enough information. It was noted

that even though the referral process is straightforward, it would not necessarily result in a match, depending on the volunteers who the scheme had available to be matched.

<b>Shetland Befriending Scheme Procedure</b>	<b>Referral Agencies' Response</b>
<b>I have found Shetland Befriending Scheme an easy project to find out about</b>	9 strongly agreed 1 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<i>We deal with a lot of different agencies. One of the things we have found with befriending staff is that they are always efficient. They get back to you quickly, they are pleasant and knowledgeable, they are 'on the money' all the time. They are one of the best that we deal with</i>	
<b>I have found Shetland Befriending Scheme staff to work in a professional manner</b>	10 strongly agreed 0 agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed
<p><i>Very much so</i></p> <p><i>What they do is they come and attend children's co-ordinated support plans and reviews. Although they are miles away, they are very much in contact with people</i></p> <p><i>They are absolutely excellent – they could not be better</i></p>	
<b>I am confident that Shetland Befriending Scheme's procedures in recruiting and selecting volunteers are of sufficient quality</b>	9 strongly agreed 1 unable to comment 0 agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed
<i>They do a lot of vetting training etc. before people are working with children</i>	
<b>I have found the process of referring people to Shetland Befriending Scheme to be straightforward</b>	10 strongly agreed 0 agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed
<p><i>I have always found the system easy to use and staff helpful and efficient.</i></p> <p><i>It is straightforward (to refer) but doesn't always get one</i></p>	
<b>I am given the right level of information about matched clients on an ongoing basis</b>	3 strongly agreed 1 agreed 1 unable to comment *
<p><i>They paying a lot of attention to matching</i></p> <p><i>I trust in the process. None of the clients I have referred have come back and said that they were not getting on. I confidently think if they came back and voiced concerns that the staff there would be very willing to hear that</i></p> <p><i>The updates are good</i></p> <p><i>The Befriending Scheme staff attend pupil's annual reviews and provide update reports</i></p> <p>*this question was inadvertently missed off the first 5 surveys completed</p>	

**Table 2. Referral Agencies' Experience of Shetland Befriending Scheme Procedures**

## 6. Results: Experience of Procedures – Parents and Carers

Parents and carers were asked to respond to statements about the process of getting involved at Shetland Befriending Scheme and their perception of the scheme's staff and systems.

Results are shown in Table 3. These show that parents and carers feel very positive about:

- the professional manner of the staff
- the matching process

Most of the parents and carers had been told about the scheme and their chance to be referred to it by schools or social work staff and to a large extent had not been involved in a referral process. However they had appreciated the contact from staff once this had come and had a positive view of the scheme. The only comment from one parent on a possible change was for some basic information to be presented to parents on what their role was and what expectations there were of them as the befriending match got underway. (The project notes in response that they do provide written guidance to all parents on these matters).

Shetland Befriending Scheme Procedure	Parents and Carers' Response
<b>I have found Shetland Befriending Scheme an easy project to find out about</b>	5 strongly agreed 5 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<b>I have found Shetland Befriending Scheme staff to work in a professional manner</b>	10 strongly agreed 0 agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed
<i>Very professional, sympathetic and accommodating. They take whatever you say on board and do their best to get the best match</i>	
<i>The staff are always very very open – always easy to contact – it's never difficult to get in touch</i>	
<b>I have found Shetland Befriending Scheme volunteers to work in a professional manner</b>	10 strongly agreed 0 agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed
<b>The matching process which linked my child with a volunteer was handled well</b>	7 strongly agreed 2 agreed 1 unable to comment
<i>It was like a jigsaw puzzle - we couldn't believe it when we put the two forms together – they both liked the same thing. There have never been any problems</i>	
<i>They came to us rather than expecting us to go to Lerwick</i>	
<i>You get quite a bit of info. I knew her occupation, basic hobbies, expertise she had and why the match was being set up in the way it was</i>	
<i>We all met up together – that was good because my son doesn't like 'spur of the moment' – the meeting gave me such hope</i>	
<b>I am confident that Shetland Befriending Scheme's procedures in recruiting and selecting volunteers are of sufficient quality</b>	8 strongly agreed 2 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<i>I saw adverts in the Shetland Times about training and know that they really carefully choose people and give appropriate training. This is fantastic – nobody who shouldn't be allowed to be with adult</i>	

<i>with special needs is taken on – so the person dedicated to my son will be appropriate</i>	
<i>They do an excellent job. They advertise on a regular basis and do their very very best within such a small population</i>	
<b>I have found the process of referring people to Shetland Befriending Scheme to be straightforward</b>	6 strongly agreed 4 agreed 0 disagreed or strongly disagreed
<i>It was generally speaking absolutely fine but of course I would be happy if it was quicker but I can't complain that it was very long</i>	
<i>They were very quick in getting a match for him. They tried to see if (name of young person) could get a male. They were always very pleasant to talk to, to see how things were going</i>	
<i>It was pretty painless as referrals go!</i>	
<i>We waited a while for a male volunteer</i>	

**Table 3. Parents and Carers' Experience of Shetland Befriending Scheme Procedures**

## 7. Results: Experience of Children and Young People – Volunteers

Volunteers coming to the scheme described a diverse range of levels of experience in working with children and young people:

- “Zero. Non-existent,” or “I don't even really have friends or family who have young children”
- low e.g. being involved with apprentices in a work setting
- medium e.g. a lot of contact with young people through family connections
- high e.g. those with significant work experience with young people

Whilst there is a range across the board for the scheme as a whole, the sections differ e.g. for the majority of the young adults matches, volunteers said they had a 'low' level of experience of working with that age group prior to being matched.

The extent of the impact of the scheme on volunteers' after some time of being matched with children and young people depended to a large degree on the volunteers' prior level of experience in this area. Those with a higher level of experience were less likely to feel that they had been challenged or surprised by working with young people. Those volunteers with little prior experience were the ones who felt they had experienced an 'eye opener'; gaining an insight into how other people live in Shetland or feeling more grateful for their own current situation or their upbringing as a result of volunteering.

The majority of volunteers said that they had experienced a medium or high level of impact on their views and understanding of children and young people as a result of volunteering.

*It certainly has challenged me*

*It's given me a view of how many children and young people are out there who don't have a lot or who don't get to access many things. It's different from my job as with the scheme I am going to someone's home to pick them up. It's opened my eyes to how many people are out there who need help*

*In all honesty I'd never really realised what having someone with 'ASN' means. It's been very good in that I never realised how much fun it is and I enjoy as much if not more than*

*the young person; that is an unexpected bonus. I never thought that I would enjoy it that much*

*It's shown me a different side to life. I worked in a busy youth club with lots of young people; when I came to meet my young person it was the complete opposite, I have learned a lot about the art of patience. It's peerie steps at a time.*

*Prior to doing this I was perhaps naïve regarding some aspects of young adults mainly as I don't have much experience with this age group! The training helped me think differently by role play and examples of different situations that you had to discuss! Also working with the young adults fortnightly allowed me a better insight into their lives.*

*Definitely. I often think that I can make a difference but I now realise it takes a lot more than just me... but they definitely need folks to give them time.*

*I realise how easy I've got it compared to them; you sit and you think 'God!' I'm hoping it's made me less judgmental*

*I got what I expected but it made me realise what I took for granted from my upbringing – the discussions that I had with young people you realised they had never had that chat with anyone before*

## **8. Results: Group Activities**

The Shetland Befriending Scheme organises and runs group activities whereby volunteers and the young people they are matched with can come together for themed activities. The scheme's experience has been that the interest in the idea of group activities does not always translate into numbers attending. They currently run these events approximately every 2 months on a Saturday or on a weekday evening. At the time of the evaluation the scheme staff had recently completed an in-house evaluation of the value of group activities because of concerns caused by low turnout. While this was carried out group activities were 'on hold' and so none had been organised for a few months at the time of this evaluation, which provided an opportunity for independently gathered feedback about group activities, looking at any reasons why they might not be successful and asking for any suggestions for ways in which this area of the scheme's work should change.

Of the volunteers surveyed, 8 had attended a group event and 12 had not. These represented volunteers across all three sections with the majority being from the young adults section.

Volunteers described 3 reasons why they might not attend activities with their young person:

- the day chosen or the specific date doesn't suit the young person and/or the volunteer
- the young person finds group activities difficult
- the activity on a given date is not of interest

*I haven't come because I haven't been able to make the times or my young person wouldn't have been interested in them*

*I haven't had time or they haven't been activities which suited me*

*The problem is that most are on Saturdays when they go to their grandparents*

*The young person works so it would have to be after 6pm*

*Whenever there's been one, either he's got something on or I've got something on. It's not been good timing but the activities have been interesting*

*It's quite a new match so we've not had the opportunity and also she lacks confidence*

*It was difficult to get to that level, as group activities were the biggest difficulty for her*

*I'm there saying 'I want to go!' but it depends who you are matched with and their comfort level*

*The young person was reluctant to take part in groups; also possibly the fact that they are weekend based and he wanted to hang out with his mates then*

*He is not keen on group activities. I do suggest them but he doesn't want to. He was so nervous to start with – I didn't push it*

*I think it's down to the young person as an individual. Also she likes her time with me – that seems to be what she wants*

*If it was something which interested my match I would have done that, for example fishing because I would be unsure about doing that alone*

*It depends on the activity – arts and crafts don't go down well (with my young person) but it is a good idea to pull groups together; a good opportunity to meet other volunteers*

Volunteers and young people who had done the group activities had mostly positive comments to make, and some had clear intentions to use the activities in the future:

*The chef one was really good. If it was something (an activity) that she liked that comes up again she would go. A healthy meal that doesn't cost a lot; she would enjoy that*

*I am really keen to do some because it can be difficult to think of things to do – or to do activities I don't know how to go about doing*

*The two matches that went to group activities have met people and have enjoyed being with other young people*

*I intend to use the group activities – if my friend would like to*

*I only did one group activity in the whole time I was matched! Coasteering was brilliant!*

The responses around group activities did suggest a few organisational issues for the scheme to consider, namely around the frequency of group activities (i.e. shorter matches feel they currently have few chances to access activities when they are just 8 weekly) and in one case the amount of notice provided for a given date

*I never felt that there was that many (offers of group activities) that came through*

*It sometimes feels not a lot of warning about them to be honest*

*A monthly frequency would be better because the match can be quite short*

*It seems a long time ago since there was one maybe before summer?  
I thought there would have been more of them.*

*Maybe more frequent sessions would be good as it's reassuring for both the volunteer and the young adult to meet up with other people on the scheme.*

## 9. Results - Personal Impact on Volunteers

Volunteers were asked what impact befriending with the scheme had had on them personally. All of the volunteers were able to name some personal impact and these responses could be categorised into broad headings of:

- making a difference and what that meant to them personally in terms of feeling positive
- an increased awareness of the issues young people face or the situations they are in
- skills gained from what happens in the course of relationship building
- doing new activities and gaining a general level of enjoyment from the experience

### ***Making a Difference (including a difference to the volunteer)***

*It's a bit overwhelming to be honest. The whole process of building up a relationship and seeing the benefit that's had on my match because he was in a dark place. I mean 'overwhelming' in a positive way.*

*It has made me feel that I'm giving something back into the community and just helping families that need the help*

*I've contributed to increasing a young person's decision-making skills, confidence and ability to interact with people*

*A massive impact. A really good feeling within myself to keep making a difference; I can notice that she is building confidence*

*Working with young people brings me joy and confidence that I am doing a worthwhile job - spending time with someone who needs it, encouraging them to learn new skills, to develop their knowledge of self and others*

*Great impact. Really positive – more of a benefit for me in some ways – you go into these things with an open heart and when do that you get so much back*

*I had thought that 'make a difference' was a bit of a nonsense phrase but I can see it happen. It's really nice to see, very rewarding. I have a strong interest in this type of work. It's something I may want to continue*

*I thoroughly enjoyed both matches! It was a rewarding experience knowing that I'm part of the reason a young adult has blossomed! I grew in confidence as it's something completely different to what I normally do!*

### ***Increased Awareness / gaining skills***

*Being aware of issues and problems facing many young people in Shetland today and I hope I've been able to help one of them*

*It's made me look at things differently. I'm 45, he's 15. I try to put myself in his place. It's been my first experience of working with someone that age – that was a challenge – finding out about the problems that he had and the situation at home. It's been a bit of an eye opener*

*It has just opened my eyes to the needs of people. It just makes you think more about how many children and young people are out there where they are not in a situation to go out*

*I have really enjoyed the contact with the young adults. It's made me realise not to take anything for granted about how I was brought up. It's made me realise how important it can be to give that sort of stability to someone*

*It has made me more aware of the needs of young people in Shetland in particular*

*It's been really good for getting me out and speaking to folk. It's kind of given me a wee bit more confidence to try a career, or maybe start learning or some sort of training towards a move in this direction. I've gained confidence in working with the young adults I've worked with. I've really enjoyed working with them*

*I'm definitely more confident in the fact that I'm able to cope with young people*

*Quite a big impact. It has boosted my confidence that I can cope with situations like this.*

*It's given me more confidence in working with younger people and helping me decide if I would like to pursue a job in that regard*

*It's opened my eyes to what young people have to go through in Shetland at the moment; the alcohol and drug situation here. It's an eye opener to what's going on*

*It's certainly helped me deal with things far more calmly with people I'm matched with. You are trained how to work with the young adults in a better manner, more calmly*

### **Doing New Things / Enjoying It**

*I've had the chance to try different activities. It's got me out doing things and feeling good helping somebody*

*I just enjoy it. I look forward to going and doing stuff. This match has been brilliant, there's loads of support from the family*

*We go out and act like kids!*

*I've enjoyed it. It's great when you find something he really enjoys. He almost surprises himself how much he enjoys it. He can get so engrossed in some things and suddenly all this imagination comes out*

*It's been great going out and meeting people*

## 10. Results: Impact of Befriending on Young People – Children & Young People at Risk

The impact of befriending on the children and young people at risk is seen to be positive in many ways by referral agencies, volunteers and parents and carers, across the various outcomes for this section of Shetland Befriending Scheme.

<b>Improved confidence</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xxx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>xxx</b>	<b>xx</b>		<b>x</b>
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	<b>xx</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>When we first met there had been a family break up and he felt that he was the cause. He felt that everything he did or touched went wrong. He thought he was useless at everything. Now he'll comment on things he might be quite good at (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>There's definitely a change. He didn't really mix well with people. He didn't like hanging out with girls; by the end he was a lot better around people (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>His general behaviour is a lot more comfortable. He was initially hunched up and aggressive. He seems a lot more open and less like the pissed off teenager – whether that's just relaxing into the relationship or whether that's stuff happening elsewhere its hard to say (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>He independently suggested an activity that we do (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>Now he'll say, "I'm off today and I'm going to do...." whatever it is. And really without a doubt it's definitely down to the volunteer. It's the street cred of meeting up with a cool guy (parent)</i></p> <p><i>He would be very quiet if anyone came into the house and if they asked a question he would look at me and expect me to answer. Now if someone asks him he'll answer it and not look at me. (parent)</i></p>				
<b>Improved self esteem</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xxx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>xx</b>	<b>xx</b>		<b>xx</b>
<b>Parent / Carers</b>	<b>xxxx</b>			<b>x</b>
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>It was good for her to have time on her own, doing stuff for herself. It gave her quality one on one time. This didn't happen with her family (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>He was able to teach me an activity as we played a sport that the young person was experienced at but was totally new to me (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>They were at the sports centre. He said "Mum, I seen boys from school and I was beating the befriender!" He was happy to be seen out with him; proud of it. (parent)</i></p> <p><i>He feels a lot better for it. He feels a bit bigger instead of being trod on (parent)</i></p>				

<b>Emotional growth</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xxx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>		<b>xxxxx</b>		<b>x</b>
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	<b>xxxx</b>			<b>x</b>

### **Evidence of Impact**

*For one young person they became a lot more confident. They were very needy and tearful a lot of the time. They became more resolute and persevered a bit more (referral agency)*

*The scheme in partnership with other supports has made a difference (referral agency)*

*He used to throw tantrums; maybe when he was out of his comfort zone. That has changed now (volunteer)*

*She had had to deal with a lot; she seemed to enjoy the chance to talk about it (volunteer)*

*Matured? Yes she's definitely matured a bit. It's really hard to tell the impact of befriending but I think it has contributed to this (volunteer)*

*They are starting to plan what they want to do in the future and sharing their plans with me (volunteer)*

*Greatly improved. Previously he didn't understand why he was being rejected (parent)*

### **Improved life skills**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xxx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>xx</b>	<b>xxx</b>		<b>x</b>
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xx</b>		<b>x</b>

### **Evidence of Impact**

*They have improved social skills (volunteer)*

*He's communicating with people more and being a bit more patient. Before he had to do everything at 100mph but that kind of thing is changing (volunteer)*

*Little things like ordering in restaurants or asking questions in social situations. She's happy to go off ahead and then she's pleased she's done it. She takes control now and bosses me about! (volunteer)*

*His decision making has improved and his communication with myself and others, for example with staff at leisure centres has improved (volunteer)*

*He's depending on me less. He was back at school today and he was sorting out his bag for PE. I thought "Oh my god that's a total first!". It's helped with his organisational skills, like if they were going birdwatching he was set with his binoculars. (parent)*

*He's been interested in sport , so he went to the gym and he's found out about an apprenticeship there and has applied to go for that....he would never have done that or thought about that before – he wouldn't have had the confidence or said I don't know anybody there (parent)*

<b>Improved capacity to form and maintain positive relationships with others</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xxx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xxxx</b>		<b>x</b>
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	<b>xxxx</b>			<b>x</b>

**Evidence of Impact**

*For all 3 of the young people I've been matched with this has been a big change for them (volunteer)*

*There was a situation in a group where from previous experience I expected her to be rude, but she handled herself really well. She can be absolutely charming (volunteer)*

*The volunteer got him to open up. He would tell me "I told him (the volunteer) about school or about some guys there..." (parent)*

*He seems more confident and will speak to new people (parent)*

<b>Greater feelings of achievement</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>xx</b>	<b>xx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>xx</b>	<b>xx</b>		<b>xx</b>
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	<b>xxx</b>	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>

**Evidence of Impact**

*The ones who play a sport with a befriender and are doing well with that, often report a sense of achievement (referral agency)*

*They were very unsure of things to begin with, so anything new that they tried that went ok was great (volunteer)*

*Being able to instruct me in how to play an activity/sport gave them a feeling of achievement (volunteer)*

*He himself thinks he's grown up a bit – he's a bit more sensible about things (parent)*

*He managed to maintain a successful relationship for 6 months. He was very pleased with way he handled the end of the relationship (parent)*

<b>Improved skills and abilities</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	x	xxx		
<b>Volunteers</b>	x	xxxx		x
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	xxx	x		x
<b>Evidence of Impact</b>				
<i>I've seen young people gain a lot more confidence in going to the shops and other activities like that (referral agency)</i>				
<b>Experiencing new activities</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xxxx			
<b>Volunteers</b>	xx	xxx		x
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	xxx			xx
<b>Evidence of Impact</b>				
<i>We tried a number of different and activities that were new to both of us and the young person handled these new situations and experiences well (volunteer)</i>				
<i>She isn't sporty but got quite into squash. It's something she wouldn't have tried without the volunteer (parent)</i>				
<i>For my son the activities were less important. It was more about how he learned about relationships (parent)</i>				
<b>Opportunities to consider their future and their positive aspirations with regard to training and employability</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Didn't Comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	x	x	x	x
<b>Volunteers</b>	x	x	xx	xx
<b>Parent/Carers</b>	xx	x		xx
<b>Evidence of Impact</b>				
<i>They began to discuss with me what their plans were for the future regarding work and other things (volunteer)</i>				

Respondents were asked what they believed to be the biggest impact of Shetland Befriending Scheme on the child/young person's life. The key areas were seen as being:

- opportunities for going out / doing different things which home circumstances would not allow
- opportunities to meet someone new, different and independent from other relationships in their lives
- opportunities to improve skills e.g. communication, socialising, general behaviour

*Young people just having the experience of being taken out to places, having someone who is prepared to spend that time doing things that mum and dad are not doing. Someone who is*

*prepared to be there for them and even the financial support for activities gives a bit to the families (referral agency)*

*Just an opportunity to build a relationship and go out and experience different things but with someone different. Going out and meeting other people. Even going out for something to eat when they don't know the protocol for doing that. It's a slow process but it will make a big difference. Befriending definitely contributes (referral agency).*

*It's given a sense that there is someone out there to help, to take them out and break up the monotony and difficulty of home life. It opens avenues. It's escapism for some children because there is an acrimonious separation or a parent with a drug or alcohol dependency and they are not getting much care or support (referral agency)*

*Some young people find it hard to form any attachment. A person willing to spend time with them; for them to feel worthy of this especially as it is a volunteer who wants to meet them for who they are and not for any other reason (referral agency)*

*Self esteem and self confidence – having something going on in his life that is totally for him. We had used a camera to produce a scrapbook; until the last meeting it was a secret between me and him – but then he wanted to show his mum (volunteer)*

*Getting out and mixing with other people, trying new things and being in situations they wouldn't normally be comfortable in (volunteer)*

*1 on 1 time for her and being able to do stuff she wanted (volunteer)*

*It's nice to see she has been so much nicer in social situations. She has been charming as she can be rotten. I'd like to think that speaking to her about more sensible down to earth intelligent options might have rubbed off on her (volunteer)*

*Being able to try activities that they would otherwise not have done due to cost implications or confidence problems (volunteer)*

*Chillout time with someone who will do what the child wants to do (parent)*

*The best thing is he's had a productive relationship he can use as a model and he's learned skills he previously didn't have and been able to practise those skills with another person (parent)*

*To have opened up a bit more and not be so shy. To be happier in himself – before he'd be off with his head down and wouldn't speak (parent)*

## 11. Results: Impact of Befriending on Young People – Additional Support Needs

The impact of befriending on the children and young people with additional support needs is seen to be positive in many ways by referral agencies, volunteers and parents and carers, across the various outcomes for this section of Shetland Befriending Scheme. The impact is seen particularly for young people being able to build on skills and abilities and gaining independence.

<b>Improving their ability to take part in mainstream activities in the community on an independent basis</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xx	x		
<b>Volunteers</b>		xxx	xx	xx
<b>Parents / Carers</b>		xxx		x
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>Outings to swimming pool, beach, café, creative opportunities for small scale construction (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>One example is a young man who has now got himself a Saturday job in a café (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>Young people are offered an opportunity to try new activities such as horse riding, fencing, climbing etc. but this does not mean that the young person will continue to participate in such activities as they are expensive and 'occasional' for many families. However, the experience of doing something unusual and exciting successfully builds up the young person's confidence and fosters a sense of achievement. (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>He suffers from severe lack of confidence – not sure if he's at the stage where he could just do it. Having said that there are things which originally he refused to do which he now does (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>I was challenging him a wee bit to work at communication with other people, to try. I left with him to contact the horse riding centre – 3 weeks had passed – nothing was booked - if this kept going it would never happen – I coached him through making the phone call – it took an hour – we had some fun, we had a laugh – it was a really fun event, then he was ready to make the call and he did it. He learned the skills - writing down what he needed to say (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>He's been going to a youth club – he seems more confident (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>She was going to youth clubs before but she has started to go to ones she really likes now (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>The befriender didn't come from our area so my son was able to show them things and take them around (parent)</i></p> <p><i>He just loves it - he just can't wait – he's sitting on the draining board watching for her coming. We can't take him to all these different places - she s a godsend to be quite honest – they've been to the beach , trampolining, horses, up at the burn and sailed their boats, she's taking him to a cooking thing this coming week (carer)</i></p> <p><i>It gave him a chance to see that some people are nice people (carer)</i></p>				

<b>Building on their skills and abilities</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to Comment / Disagree</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xxx			
<b>Volunteers</b>	xx	xxxxx		
<b>Parents/Carers</b>	xx	xx		
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>Pupils being given the opportunity to choose activities and be guided to make good choices. Pupils being given the chance to share experiences on a 1:1 basis with an adult they trust (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>We had a young boy who was on the croft – he didn't tend to go anywhere. Mum could only get him to go to one place on holiday. The befriending scheme did help him to get confidence and he came on a school trip to Edinburgh and was going to all sorts of things – I don't think his mum thought he would ever go anywhere. It was the fact that he went off on his own with his befriender. It gave him the confidence of going off without the parents. I think that really really helped him for the very first time to go somewhere different ...now they've gone somewhere different on holiday (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>The activities the young person and the volunteer get involved in can help the young person to recognise and develop his/her skills and abilities. Young people realise that skills are transferable and that having confidence in one's own ability and a desire to learn can help them adapt and tackle things in ways they did not consider possible (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>One of the things written in his profile was he didn't like eating in public. He doesn't have any problem now (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>His interpersonal skills...he's got a little more respect (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>Doing different things that they hadn't done before like swimming. He was not confident about at the start – he has improved a lot with my encouragement (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>She's better than what she was. She's better at talking to people. She's got more confidence and more independence (parent)</i></p> <p><i>He's the type of child that doesn't want to go anywhere. You have to persuade him to go. She's taken that out of him a wee bit – we'll go and try it and he goes now. (parent)</i></p> <p><i>Every night he comes home he's like a wee boy; he's that excited about it. It's given him a chance to meet a proper person and speak to him in the way his family members do – they just chat away together (carer)</i></p>				

<b>Gaining a sense of independence</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xxx			
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxx	x		xxx
<b>Parents / Carers</b>	xx	xx		
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>Very, much so. Accessing the wider community has been extremely positive for some of our pupils who would otherwise be socially disadvantaged and lack the ability to develop valuable skills in developing independence (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>I believe that worthwhile relationships based on trust and mutual respect help people to become more confident in themselves and ultimately more independent. I do hope that the encouragement and the positive experiences which the young person shares with the befriender will be helpful and useful in their road to adulthood (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>He has learned to ride a horse. For him this is a wonderful accomplishment as it took 10 weeks just to hold the reins correctly for the first time (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>Definitely – he doesn't worry at all about coming out now (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>When we were first matched she would never ask any questions. She has started to ask more questions about people and ask questions about other things. It shows she is taking things further in her own time; there are things we have talked about which she has then followed up (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>He most probably would do it himself now. It's changed his outlook (carer)</i></p> <p><i>I think so – he has someone he can speak to. A man. He can be himself (carer)</i></p> <p><i>They tried to do things that my son found interesting and for him to sometimes lead the way gaining confidence (parent)</i></p>				
<b>Being supported during a particular transition in their lives</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Referral agencies</b>	xxx			
<b>Volunteers</b>	x	xxxx		xx
<b>Parents/ Carers</b>			xx	xx
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>When a parent is in prison and the child is experiencing loss. During separation of parent and loss is also experienced (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>A befriender can be valuable at the transition stage to adult services from school. They can provide an element of continuity and familiarity (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>Having to deal with the loss of a close family member can be very traumatic for anyone. It is always helpful to have someone you trust outside your immediate family whom you can unburden and talk to. Often it is easier to open and reveal your</i></p>				

*thoughts to someone with whom you do not share strong and complicated emotional history (volunteer)*

*A close family member died – we did talk about it. Also his dad lives far away; he’s been home for quite a while and it’s different when he went away again. We talked about that a lot (volunteer)*

*Some of the difficulties his mum was having were making him worse. That’s changed now. Things are settling. (volunteer)*

*She is moving into her teenage years and is enjoying it very much. Her time with a volunteer is time to be a teenager (volunteer)*

**Increasing their ability to make positive informed choices**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xxx			
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxx	xxx		x
<b>Parents/ Carers</b>		x	x	x

**Evidence of Impact**

*By widening experiences our pupils can then make choices based on concrete experience, which is essential for them.....they either cannot or have limited ability to make abstract choices (referral agency)*

*I can only hope that our discussions about the importance of personal choice in shaping our own lives and the example which I can offer as an individual who strives to develop and be of service to others have proved useful (volunteer)*

*Even if we are just having a snack, I encourage him to go and give him money to pay for it (volunteer)*

*He’s more reasonable. At one point I was quite concerned because he was running off. Then he went to do it again and pulled himself up; he’s more likely to consider what he’s doing (volunteer)*

*In choosing activities – at first she was very reluctant to choose. She is much better now at choosing, suggesting or saying no and wouldn’t have done so before (volunteer)*

*There are things he’s told me about school – situations he has been in. I’ve tried to be a positive role model so he’s tried not to make things worse – he’s made good choices (volunteer)*

<b>Consider their future and their positive aspirations with regard to training and employability</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>xx</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>		<b>xxxxx</b>		<b>xx</b>
<b>Parents / Carers</b>			<b>x</b>	<b>xxx</b>
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <p><i>Although our pupils are young, good habits, building trust etc should start early on a child's life. For children to feel nurtured and thus have confidence in themselves it is very positive that they share time with positive role models as provided by the Befriending Scheme (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>Befriending is part of the overall package for our pupils (referral agency)</i></p> <p><i>I've tried to coach him through it – talking about leaving school and trying to get a job – he's more realistic now (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>He's young so this is not so relevant but he has talked about a particular ambition that he has (volunteer)</i></p> <p><i>We do talk about it in an abstract way – although it's probably still not anything in the real world (volunteer)</i></p>				

Respondents were asked what they believed to be the biggest impact of Shetland Befriending Scheme on these young people involved in the ASN section. The key areas were seen as being:

- opportunities for going out / doing different things which home circumstances would not allow\*
- opportunities to meet someone new, different and independent from other relationships in their lives\*
- opportunities to be valued and listened to

(the first two\* are the same as those for the responses from the volunteers and referral agencies linked with the 'Children and Young People at risk' section)

### **Activities**

*The fact that we go and do stuff – he lives with his grandparents and they are limited in what sort of activities they can do with him... I know he looks forward to going and doing stuff – the more lively the better – walking through the hills, being outside; just the opportunity to do different things, to go in the car and go different places. Even his car sickness isn't as bad (volunteer)*

*The social and personal development opportunities that are provided for individuals who sometimes have little or no opportunities outwith the family and who need support to access activities e.g. going swimming (referral agency)*

### **A New Kind of Relationship**

*The child knowing someone is there for him or her. Knowing that the person is reliable and building a trusting relationship with them (referral agency)*

*I think probably about learning new things; being open minded. Even simply being a man; he's been brought up with his mother and granny; he finds it difficult to integrate. A male influence has been good...(volunteer)*

*Just meeting other people. Normally he only has his mum, a grandparent and close neighbours. I was a complete stranger, not from Shetland and an old woman to boot. I think it's broadened his mind and he's more trusting (volunteer)*

*Doing things with someone closer to her age (volunteer)*

*Confidence gained from being able to ask any question (volunteer)*

*Talking to somebody different instead of being stuck in with me. The volunteer can talk to her. She was so quiet and didn't talk to anyone before (carer)*

*Giving him time away from his normal environment to be himself (parent)*

### **Being valued**

*Being a good role model and increasing self esteem and providing him with undivided attention - listening to him (volunteer)*

*It's the fun aspect of life. It's a couple of hours a week to do whatever she wants to do (volunteer)*

## **12. Results: Impact of Befriending on Young People – Young Adults Section**

The impact of befriending on the young adults is seen to be positive in many ways by referral agencies and volunteers across the various outcomes for this section of Shetland Befriending Scheme. There are less parents linked with this section as the young adults are often living independently. The parents' results are not shown numerically but are represented within the comments boxes. The impact is seen particularly for young adults gaining in confidence and this section of the scheme has a much stronger impact on helping people to think about the future with respect to employment and training than the other sections (relating to the age of the young people).

<b>Improvements in confidence</b>				
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>xx</b>	<b>x</b>		
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>xxxxx</b>	<b>xx</b>		
<b>Evidence of Impact</b>				
<i>She has been able to introduce me to her peers and is happy to tell them I am her befriender (volunteer)</i>				
<i>I saw a huge difference from the start to when we ended. She thought that she didn't look pretty. I could see a huge difference later as she was going to school happy, with a better outlook on life (volunteer)</i>				
<i>They didn't want to go in group areas but by the end would think about trying to take more risks (volunteer)</i>				

*Things don't knock his confidence as much as they would have done (volunteer)*

*She didn't want to come in Lerwick unless with someone due to personal reasons but after a couple of months of meeting, talking and listening and doing a variety of activities she now has a job in Lerwick! (volunteer)*

*After several meetings, my young person had a school prom/party and we arranged to have her hair put up at the hairdresser. She looked great and you could see her confidence grow and she had lots of positive comments from peers which seemed to be a new thing (volunteer)*

*Exactly – he feels more confident and also what is very important is that he develops communication skills. He also discovers he can be more independent – not always needing to have his mum (parent)*

**Improvements in self worth**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xx	x		
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxxx	xxx		

**Evidence of Impact**

*Basic healthy relationship which builds confidence and self esteem; having opportunities to explore those areas where they had experienced quite a significant trauma (volunteer)*

*I've received feedback from her that I made her think more positively about some of her experiences – in that the experiences have given her skills she didn't realise she had and that some of the negative things that had happened gave her skills she could use in the future (volunteer)*

*He's a lot more positive about himself (volunteer)*

*You can hear him saying things. Like we were playing bowls for example and I would say, "That was a really good shot." He would say, "I did really well at that." He would be quite proud of himself (volunteer)*

*In the past he had a problem with contact with people and this is something that has been changing... these meetings with the volunteer are an important factor in these changes (parent)*

**Gaining an greater awareness of their skills and abilities**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xx	x		
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxx	xxx	x	

**Evidence of Impact**

*I've tried to encourage them at the right times about this as they can be quite down on themselves (volunteer)*

*She loves cooking and we've been able to talk about that and about recipes (volunteer)*

*Becoming more independent! She then went on a race round Ireland with people she didn't know! (volunteer)*

**Building their capacity to cope with new experiences**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xxx			
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxx	xx	x	x

**Evidence of Impact**

*One client commented it had given her the opportunity to try things that she would never have tried on her own (referral agency)*

*This is a big area which the scheme has an influence on (referral agency)*

*He came in on the bus to meet me and someone beside him had a fit. Normally a situation like this would have meant he would have retreated and not come out for a couple of weeks. It would have been a huge setback before, but he got on the bus the next day (volunteer)*

*They have got 3 jobs in Lerwick! (volunteer)*

**Reflecting on the decisions they make in their life and to consider the influences that have an impact on their decisions**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	x	xx		
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxxx	x	x	x

**Evidence of Impact**

*Didn't grill them about this area, but conversation was punctuated with it. In time they got to trust me about these things (volunteer)*

*The young person became pregnant during our match and had to reflect on the situation and live with it (volunteer)*

*She wanted to do hairdressing – I did it when I was younger so we were able to talk about it (volunteer)*

*A different person to the one I was matched with! Thinking much more positively about their future! (volunteer)*

*All she wanted was a baby, so we talked through if she did what would happen. I tried to help her understand how that would affect her; where she would live, who would support her (volunteer)*

**Changing an aspect of their lifestyle that they feel is detrimental and that they wish to change**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xx	x		
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxx	xx	x	x

**Evidence of Impact**

*My understanding is that it is a service that looks therapeutically that looks at where things all go wrong – things that have been mixed up that they have thought was normal. It does do that but not in a direct way; through the fact that there is a trusting relationship (referral agency)*

*One young lady had a history of family physical violence and abuse. That was the norm for her so there was some challenging of that (referral agency)*

*He's got a better handle on where he was going to go in his life – earlier he went with the flow a bit . Now he realises he could make good decisions that would benefit him (volunteer)*

*She's gone from being in fights and drinking to being an elegant and nice person. I saw a huge difference in her – whether it was her age or that she did find a really nice boyfriend? But she is happy just to be in at the weekends (volunteer)*

*The young person now sees that their lifestyle was chaotic and could have been detrimental with health problems or police intervention etc. They've made positive changes (volunteer)*

**Developed the confidence to form and maintain positive relationships with others in the community**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	xx	x		
<b>Volunteers</b>	xxx	xxxx		

**Evidence of Impact**

*The young person has calmed down considerably as they have grown up a bit and have a child to deal with so priorities have changed and they must treat others with more respect to receive it in return. Also because of them calming down due to pregnancy, they have developed a much better relationship with their mother who had thrown her out before (referral agency)*

*It gives him structure; he likes to plan things. Every Saturday he is thinking to himself about preparing to see the volunteer; about appropriate clothes to go to the town. He shares his news with the volunteer. I think that it's absolutely fantastic (parent)*

<b>Consider their future and their positive aspirations with regard to training and employability</b>				
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unable to comment</b>
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>xxxx</b>	<b>xx</b>		<b>x</b>
<b>Evidence of Impact</b>				
<i>We spoke a lot about what would happen after school and talked about summer jobs (volunteer)</i>				
<i>We would talk about how college is going, what they have done this week, seeing if they have enjoyed being out on job crews. We've talked about what they might do after Christmas and by this time next year (volunteer)</i>				
<i>They are looking to the future whereas they didn't think it was necessary before when they were living a chaotic lifestyle (volunteer)</i>				

Respondents were asked what they believed to be the biggest impact of Shetland Befriending Scheme on the young adults' lives. The key areas were seen as being:

- opportunities to meet someone new, different and independent from other relationships in their lives\*
- opportunities to consider decision making in their lives
- opportunities to grow in confidence
- opportunities to have

(the first one\* is the clearest match with the responses from the volunteers and referral agencies linked with the 'Children and Young People at risk' and the 'Additional Support Needs' section)

### **A New Kind of Relationship**

*Relationship and a friendship and the benefits that come from a positive role model (referral agency)*

*An outlet - someone else to meet up with, particularly at evenings and weekends. Someone to give them that time not to think about their problems – an escape (volunteer)*

*Reassurance that there are people there that can help. It's brave that someone can sign up for this (volunteer)*

*Companionship and somebody neutral (volunteer)*

*Somebody they can have fun with and be themselves with (referral agency)*

*With me she could do what she wants and not be judged in the way she was in other places – she had a bit of control and a sense of freedom (volunteer)*

*Having adult company and the ability to take her out and away from her usual places and do different activities (volunteer)*

*Having a friend. He looks forward to seeing a friend. He looks out the window for me waiting to come. He doesn't have a friend outside of his independent living project (volunteer)*

## **Enjoyment**

*We're having a ball – He says 'I cant wait' and 'Thanks I had so much fun'. I hope I'm having a positive impact (volunteer)*

## **Decisions**

*Hopefully they have just taken a bit more responsibility in their decision making – realising that the decisions they take impact on others and it's important to consider them (volunteer)*

*The young person is no longer in trouble with others and is blossoming in all they do! (volunteer)*

## **Confidence**

*Bringing up her confidence to go out (volunteer)*

*She would ask me about recipes then she would make it before the next time we met (volunteer)*

*Her confidence has grown; she's much more independent! (volunteer)*

## **13. Results: The Views of Children and Young People**

Young people described meeting up with their volunteer from a weekly to a monthly frequency, depending on circumstances:

*Usually once a week but depends if he is working*

*Roughly once a month. It depends on his work. Sometimes it can be twice a month*

*Every 2 weeks... sometimes every week*

Young people described the activities which they did with their befriender:

*Well I might suggest an idea or he might and we will do it*

*Swimming, library, walking*

*Horse riding, walks on beaches, car runs, trips to gardens*

*We go for drives in the car and go out for lunch and catch up*

*We go out for a meal, go to historical sites and chill*

*Go to Islesburgh, peerie café, swimming, go for a walk*

Young people were asked to choose their best memory of a time with their befriender and to say why this memory stood out. Young people appeared to describe activities which provided experiences they hadn't had before, experiences which were different from their norm or 'shared moments' or 'in jokes' with their befriender.

*Going to the Isle of Noss for a walk and taking pictures. It was good because we saw lots of different animals and went for a walk*

*Going to the library and being on a carnival float. I like going to the library because I get books read to me and I also really enjoyed being part of the carnival; I have never done that before*

*My film. Going to see Marmaduke*

*We were on the beach one day and I like to collect nice coloured stones when I noticed he was doing the same*

*Every time, but horse riding is the best. Everything we do is really good the whole time*

*When we spent the day in Lerwick. Because my befriender asked for some bubbles. You had to be there to get it*

*The last time we met up we both tried archery for the first time. That was good because neither of us had done it before and it was good fun both of us trying to hit the target*

Young people were asked to imagine they were describing the befriending scheme to another young person who was a bit nervous about the idea of being matched with a befriender.

*It is like having a best friend but they are a lot older and you can trust them with anything*

*It's not scary. You have lots of fun*

*It's fantastic. I wish I'd had one years ago*

*Amazing, fun and energetic. It has helped me and I'm sure it would help others*

*Everyone feels nervous about meeting someone new but the befrienders are really kind and laid back so it is much easier for you to get to know them*

*It is very good fun*

Young people were asked to identify statements which applied to them about the difference which the befriending scheme had made to them

	CYP	ASN	YA
<i>I feel more confident</i>	111	11	
<i>I feel better about myself</i>		11	1
<i>I like meeting someone who takes an interest in me</i>	111	11	1
<i>I get to do things I wouldn't normally do</i>	111	11	
<i>I get a chance to talk about anything I like</i>	111	11	1
<i>I have learned new things</i>	11	11	
<i>I get the chance to have fun</i>	11	11	
<i>Nothing much is different for me</i>			
<i>I think about the future and what I might do</i>	11	11	
<i>I've changed things in my life which I was finding difficult but which I really wanted to change</i>		11	
<i>I do more things on my own (independently) than I did before</i>		1	

**Table 4. Impact of Befriending - Young People's Views**

Young people were asked if they felt that anything needed to be changed about Shetland Befriending Scheme. Only one young person suggested a change that they would like which was to spend more time with their befriender (they were on a match which met fortnightly).

In a separate question about group activities young people made other comments

*I don't want to be nasty but all the children have a disability and I felt out of place. I have a disability as well (explained) but all the others had learning difficulties*

*Other group activities in the future could be a walk around one of the islands or a sporty thing or horseriding*

Finally, young people offered some final open comments on the scheme, all of which were positive:

*It is really good and I would recommend it to anyone*

*It could be helpful for children of all ages who are shy or have low self esteem*

*It is very good*

*The scheme has been a wonderful help for me. I cannot praise the workers of the scheme as well as my match. I haven't met a far more honest and open person in my life like her. She is awesomeness!*

*I think it is great to have a scheme like this in Shetland. I can see as it has really helped me. It could help so much more people*

#### **14. Results: Impact of the Scheme on Parents and Carers – Volunteers' View**

Volunteers usually have contact with parents and carers (e.g. grandparents) at the point of pick up and drop off and in some cases in terms of making arrangements for activities with the young people who they are matched with. Some of the volunteers were unable to comment on whether their time with the young person had any wider impact on the family, but in around half of the cases, volunteers felt that there was an impact from befriending on the carers:

*It gives them a break for a couple of hours because he is quite lively*

*I think they are quite grateful for it – they think it's a good thing – also they say they don't know why I bother with her which I find quite bizarre. They are grateful and apologetic that I take her off their hands. There is definitely an element of respite for them*

*I definitely think it's good for his mum. It gives her a break. She gets time to do other things and it gives her time with his younger brother. She has said it directly; thanking me for taking him away for a few hours*

*I think granny uses the time to do chores. She can get things done without bothering the young person*

*Yes – I know that when I take him out she uses that time. She goes and does her shopping at the supermarket. It gives her a little bit of time to organise herself because he is demanding. He would be wanting to buy things. I think she is more settled which is reflecting how things are going with him*

*I think it does make a difference but only if they are comfortable with me. It's good for her to trust me and to see him doing well.*

*Sounds awful to say but because she was a volatile person it gave them (her family) a bit of a break by taking her away and hopefully putting her back in a better mood than when she left*

*They (the parents) have said once or twice that it's good for them. Mainly just that they can see that it is good for the child and a break from the norm and time just for them. In a way it is respite for the child from the situation.*

At times there can be difficulties in parental attitudes to befrienders

*The young adult has indicated that her mother was resentful and angry at first. But that she (the young person) found my input positive and wanted to continue despite the negative comments*

## **15. Results: Impact of the Scheme on Parents and Carers – Referral Agencies' View**

According to referral agencies the extent of the impact of the scheme can vary greatly between the sections of the scheme and depending on individual families.

In the case of the young adults, some of those supported by the scheme are living independently and may have little ongoing contact with their families. The scheme therefore has no particular impact on the families involved. At the other end of the spectrum in the ASN section, referral agencies can perceive the scheme as providing a real break for carers to do practical tasks or simply to spend time with other children in the family. It is not the situation across the board in all matches however, and the overall emphasis of the scheme is very much focusing on the service for young people rather than a service of respite to the family.

*The breakdown of family is often so significant it has gone beyond that. I can imagine that it would do for younger people where this is not the case (referrer YA)*

*I feel the service is mostly for the young person however by having a couple of hours break and knowing that she (the child) is safe, does give them piece of mind (referrer - CYP)*

*By dedicating that fortnightly slot gives the carer time to be with the other ones (referrer – CYP)*

*I have worked with special needs children for a while. There can be huge pressure on siblings who have a brother or sister with special needs because they are always looking out for them. They often don't live their own life naturally because they can be embarrassed about the sibling or overprotective. It affects the whole family, so if a particular child is away with their befriender it allows siblings and parents to spend quality time together as the child with special needs tends to get the attention. Befriending releases and allows the other family members to do something that they can't normally do and enjoy it and relax so befriending has much wider implications (referrer – ASN)*

*It depends on the family circumstances. You might have carers where they are swamped and busy. This will be the case for some families and not necessarily for others (referrer - ASN)*

*Yes the scheme does have an impact; they (parents) can become extra-protective of any child they feel is vulnerable. The scheme gives the parent the confidence that their children can go off and be safe (referrer - ASN)*

Indeed in some cases befriending was described by referral agencies as respite for the young person i.e. an opportunity for them to get a break from a difficult or stressful situation and to have activity or listening time which is just for them.

*It's not like mum or dad are spending time with them anyway or thinking about things from the young person's perspective . They might just be putting them out of the door. For me I think it's more about the safety bit. Normally the young person might just be wandering with their friends; instead they are safe and doing something constructive (referral agency CYP)*

The other family impact described was not to do with the time and space created by befriending activities, but the impact on the family because of change or development in the young person caused by befriending. This can range from them simply being more positive on return from an

activity and having something to talk about and to contribute to the family, through to longer term changes in the child which may even have challenged family members to see them in a new light.

*I can think of a couple of cases where it broadened the views of the family to see what their child was achieving. They were resistant to become involved in the first place, but it has always been ok. Sometimes it is more about respite for the child and not the family (referral agency - CYP)*

In summing up, referral agencies did feel that in the right circumstances Shetland Befriending Scheme could take the pressure off family relationships and help families to cope.

## **16. Results: Impact of the Scheme on Parents and Carers – Parents and Carers**

A small minority of parents and carers saw the scheme as being solely about creating opportunities for the young person without any wider impact. The majority of parents and carers were very positive about the fact that the befriending scheme has a wider impact on them and other family members and not just on the young person themselves. They see befriending as providing:

### **A break:**

*I have that peerie bit of time to myself*

*It's 90 minutes peace. I can do jobs and get a little bit of a break*

### **A sense of security:**

*Yes. I feel when he's with the volunteer he's in good hands – I never feel anxious – I know he's there with someone competent*

*Not really. He'd have been going out anyway but it's good to know what he is up to*

### **A change in dynamics:**

*He's learned these relationship skills. He practises them on his siblings so his relationship with his brother and sister has improved. They are less likely to bury him in a snowdrift*

*I know just because she is chilled out she is able to tolerate things a bit better. She's got something positive to talk about. It changes the dynamic – she has positive things to talk about instead of negatives*

*I can see him happier which makes my life a lot easier. My family see him as more sensible and acting sensible – it makes everybody's life a lot easier*

*I'm so excited for him coming home to hear about what they've been up to*

Parents and carers mostly strongly agreed with the statements that the Shetland Befriending Scheme can take the pressure off family relationships and can help families to cope:

*Without a doubt. I have to leave before he gets the school bus. It used to be manic in the morning. Last night he was getting the school bag checking the PE kit was there. He's never done that before. I thought 'My God' that is brilliant*

*It's vital to functioning as a family*

*Without the scheme I wouldn't have seen a difference and the fact that this has made him happier has taken a lot of stress out of the family. My mother, brother and sister were always phoning to see what he was up to now – they're now not phoning everyday. They can see the difference*

*I am very happy to have support a bit more for my son to live without me – I am a single mum and have a child with special needs – the bonding is strong. To have someone who is prepared to try his best to be with my son gives me peace of mind. My son is safe with a friendly person and this is towards his development*

## **17. Results : Volunteers' Best Memory**

Volunteers were asked for their best memories or a positive story of a time with the young person who they had been matched with. These 'stand out' moments showed the impact of:

- unexpected moments (where an activity had seemingly gone wrong but where things had turned out surprisingly well or where young people had behaved in an unexpectedly positive way. In some cases these had appeared as turning points or indicators of a change in the young person)
- personal achievement (where the young person had a chance to do something well and to recognise this for themselves and have others noting it too)
- simple things (where conversation, having a laugh together, sharing common interests have a heightened significance because these things may not be happening at other times in the young person's life)

### **Unexpected Moments – turning points**

*Quite enjoyed randomly going for a walk in a field and having to stick her in my wellie boots – she makes such a fuss – seeing her enjoy it – turning her face up and then suggesting we do it again*

*Getting our nails done at the beauticians. She loved it so much. All three of us were gassing. Normally she doesn't have much humour or gas that much. It was really good. She was delighted; in her element. It was good to see. She came out as pleased as punch*

*I went playing golf with another young person and their befriender. It was pouring with rain, but we were out in the rain and they didn't seem to mind (which was unusual for my one). It was great seeing them enjoy stuff*

*The first time she suggested an activity we should do. Up until then it was difficult to get a choice out of her. I was so delighted it was wonderful; one of the best days of this year*

*One of the strangest things was that this was a young guy who you might have thought would be quite shy about being spotted out with befriender. But as we were driving around he was waving to all his pals out the window – he didn't have any hang ups about it*

*I took him to the Isleburgh and we had tea I had done this quiz for him. It was like 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire'. I was amazed how quickly he did it. He got up to a million points; it opened my eyes to how bright he was. I gave him a prize and then I was away on holiday so it was 3 weeks until I saw him again. The first thing he said was, "Are we going to do that again?"*

*I wanted him to open up and connect with me; we threw stones in the water and I asked him what he wanted to do....Everybody has dreams and he was a lot happier for saying his. If he only hears discouragement that's no good. I saw a different side to him...*

### **Personal achievement – a chance to be good at something**

*I would say the smoothie making day (one of the scheme's group activities). It was the first time he'd been to a group activity. He loves smoothies so this is something that he's good at. It was funny because the smoothie making machine was leaking all over table. At the end he said, "I've had a brilliant morning. You're a really good friend."*

*Horse riding – when he trotted that horse himself...that was just heaven. He was so happy. I was standing there freezing cold. I had a wee tear in my eye; it nearly froze to my cheek*

*Getting him to try things he hadn't done before like mountain biking and the climbing wall*

*Kayaking and swimming with them on a group activity which ended up being a one-to-one with the instructor. The young person was very proud of what they had achieved.*

**Simple Things – conversation, banter, fun, mucking about; the little things which can mean a lot**

*Good conversation & lots of laughing!*

*Probably being together as friends talking and listening to music in a play tent, which we pitched near a brook in the dark of a cold autumn evening*

*I'm a Celtic supporter and he's a Rangers supporter so there's a lot of banter.*

*I took him to the cinema; it was the first time he'd been to the cinema at the age of 15. He enjoyed that and we've been back since*

*I think it was just before his birthday – I said to him as a sort of special treat we can go and have something to eat. I asked him what his favourite meal was. He said "Chips and beans", so we drove up to Brae to the chip shop. We were talking about his birthday and he said, "Even when I'm 10 I'll still play with you"*

*Probably when we drove 75 miles to find the place we wanted to go to was shut and we went to the airport instead and watched the planes, and the fact that he coped with that. And also I let him go about with ketchup on his chin and after he'd got home he texted to say 'I can't believe you let me do that!'*

*We went to Voe; a coffee for me, a pot of tea for her, and two fancy cakes and we just spoke. She spoke an awful lot to me. She wouldn't stop speaking; she spoke and spoke and spoke, and she said this was one of the best meetings we'd had. I came away and I thought that was really good. She had offloaded everything*

*We went to the beach because I didn't plan anything for that day. It was such a nice day. It showed that we didn't need to do anything fancy for him to be happy. I found an old tub and spent the day filling it with shells. Just the freedom with our socks and shoes off and he could just run...*

*Going for a walk at Sumburgh Head and seeing puffins. Finding that we both loved the outdoors and we had common ground together*

## **18. Results: Positive Stories – Referral Agencies**

Referral agencies were asked to give a positive story which summed up the benefits of the befriending scheme. The stories they chose highlighted the importance for young people of the chance for:

- new opportunities and activities
- a positive relationship (often contrasting what their experience had been to date)
- continuity and ongoing support and commitment from a volunteer (when other aspects of life were more liable to change)

### ***New opportunities and activities***

*The fact that this boy went to Lerwick was an achievement in itself*

*A socially disadvantaged pupil has enjoyed opportunities outwith his local catchment area to use and develop skills in creativity and design. This pupil would not have had the opportunity to do this without the Befriending Scheme.*

*This young person didn't want to leave the house at night and at the weekend. Seeing his befriender helped to motivate him to make a lot of changes in his life. He got out to a lot more community events than before*

### ***A good experience of relationships***

*One springs to mind whose upbringing had been physical abuse and being taken into care; her experiences of relationships had been very different to what they should have been. She had a very warped understanding of what a mutual respectful relationship could be. I don't see her as often now which is great as she is getting the support she needs*

*It's significant that she had a positive healthy relationship and friendships that enabled her to see what it could be like, challenging what she thought was the norm*

### ***Point of continuity and ongoing support***

*I was speaking to a girl yesterday – she has really enjoyed having a befriender. She really enjoys going out on trips. She has been a looked after child in her time and befriending has been a point of continuity for her*

*At the beginning it was a rocky start but between me, a paid worker and the volunteer we managed to overcome that. It's been so important for the young person to see that the volunteer wouldn't give up on her at the first hurdle*

*It's nice for her to have a female to speak to that would listen and spend time with her. It's respite from the family home. It gave her time and space herself to be treated well and it was important for her self esteem. There's no way I could have done all of these things. She got a lot out of it – they got on great and did all sorts of activities*

*One ongoing one that took a lot of work because of family resistance but is going extremely well. The child is getting a lot out of it. She's getting opportunities to try new things, different places she would rarely get the chance to go to. It's broadening her horizons.*

## 19. Results: Positive Stories – Parents and Carers

Parents and carers were asked if there was a particular story which was positive or memorable regarding the young person and the volunteer. The stories they remembered were ones about particularly enjoyable activities, or ones where the impact of the befriending was clear as the young person behaved differently from normal.

*My son acted almost like a tourist guide for one visit with the befriender which helped him gain confidence*

*In summertime they used to go to mini golf and go for a lot of walks*

*He did enjoy the fishing – he really enjoyed that – he'd done it before, but this was out on a boat. That made it a bit more special*

*The golf one – he has his own clubs – they were all polished up and he made sure he had enough golf balls. He came home laughing at how she (the volunteer) had been playing. They both came in the house laughing at each other*

*Just that she was very happy and carefree when she came home*

*The run that they went out to Sumburgh – he likes bird life – I've never even taken him out there –he took photos, he had his binoculars - they were out and wandered around a lot. He came back and raved about that – they saw some strange animals... he was going on and on and on! And the time he beat the volunteer at badminton*

*What he said the last time he met her (the volunteer). He explained to her that he was upset that he wouldn't have her as a befriender any more but he was very glad to have met her. Previous to the match he would have been very distraught at this; he had no idea before of a natural beginning and end to things. To say he was upset and not be angry and be glad to have had her as a friend was pretty significant for him*

*We went for a holiday. We were together choosing the postcards to send home. This one's for that person, this one for that person. My son told me himself, "What about x (volunteer)?" It showed he is a really important person in his life*

## 20. Difficulties perceived in Shetland Befriending Scheme

Surveys with volunteers and referral agencies did reveal a few difficulties which people face in their work with Shetland Befriending Scheme. These related to

- volunteers finding it difficult to see their impact
- volunteers finding it difficult to relate to young people's lives or attitudes
- volunteers wanting to be linked in more with agencies involved in young people's lives to ensure that the maximum effort was being made
- referral agencies wanting referral criteria to be wider

These comments were limited to one or two respondents at most.

### A feeling of not making a difference

Some volunteers although generally positive about the scheme, found the situation they were in to be difficult to see the benefit of:

*Sometimes I feel 'why are you really needing a befriender?' She seems to be switched on with what she wants to do. I feel sometimes I'm not making a difference*

*But he's got no friends – he doesn't go out and the family as a unit don't go out – so I don't know - is this free entertainment or just company?*

*I get very little feedback from the young person*

### **Things that were difficult to see or relate to**

Some volunteers found that the young person's behaviour is difficult to relate to

*The young person has no desire to work at all – I've never experienced that before – it's a bit of an eye opener*

*It's a tricky one – she has very odd self esteem; she's always got to be sexy. I constantly try and work on that. I'm not sure how she is apart from the times I see her*

### **The limits of the scheme**

Referral agencies talked a bit about how much the befriending scheme could be expected to achieve. This related to the question about 'respite care' and the idea that befriending might remove some pressure from family situations. The comment highlights the scale of the situations which the scheme may be working within

*What are the limits of the scheme? Things can be so difficult in the child's home, it's a massive thing to expect the project to do. Even a child in a good foster home can end up in a disastrous situation (referral agency)*

One parent questioned recent advice which suggested that their child could not sledge with a volunteer because of insurance difficulties for 'winter sports'. To them, this seemed excessive given that activities such as swimming, horseriding and fishing were allowed (the project later confirmed that this was indeed the case with their insurance company and that parents were informed of this in the project's literature about activities).

One volunteer perceived a 'high turnover of staff' with a personal view that this was because contracts tended to be short term and lower salaried thereby offering less security than public sector social care posts.

### **Boundary Issues / Wanting to do more - volunteers**

Two volunteers noted difficulties in the boundaries of befriending and not being able to take issues further which they felt were important, and feeling disconnected from other services.

*I sometimes wish that you could speak to other agencies and pass on what you've experienced and I've never had that opportunity. You are in that situation, trying to second guess why they are behaving like that*

In one case this was heightened when there is 'non existent' family support and where the volunteer feels that there are education issues which could be important and where they want to know that certain things are being addressed.

*We are in position where we hear stuff and can pass that on. I have found it very frustrating – she's not getting on well enough – I can't go ahead and be her teacher or her social worker – but we have spoken about these things a lot*

## **Boundary Issues / Wanting more to be done – referral agencies**

Two referral agencies highlighted limits of the scheme which they felt prevented people in need accessing it.

*If the befriending service could provide intimate care for our pupils then more pupils could access the scheme*

*The fact that the scheme stops at age 25 means that a lot of our clients who are isolated can't access it*

## **21. The Befriending Scheme and Shetland – Volunteers' View**

Volunteers were asked what they felt the befriending scheme brought to Shetland. Almost all of the volunteers felt that the scheme brought something unique in terms of:

- the 1:1 support it offers
- the unique nature of volunteering as opposed to paid support and
- the opportunity for a relationship for young people which provided support outside of the immediate family.

### ***New Opportunities for All***

*If they didn't have someone to do these activities with they just wouldn't get the chance. This is just someone to give you the time of day.*

*An opportunity for people who for reasons of their own don't socialise well*

*A lot of opportunities for the young people which wouldn't be there through any other context. For example there are groups in Shetland but not 1:1. There are a lot of opportunities for volunteers to test out, even if they are not following it up into a career*

*Support for parents and families and new experiences for young people*

*For one of them they want to join groups but walking in the door by yourself? No way. So just to have someone to go with; not someone who will be there forever. Just someone to take them to an initial meeting in the hope that I'll be able to flip out the back door and they're not going to need me any more*

*I don't want to be the best friend – that's not what its about. Its more about being the in-between the person that passes them on to their proper friends*

### ***A Different Form of Support***

*It probably gives more young people the chance to get out and do stuff for themselves. And this is different; it's not a job, not like a paid employee. You are doing it because you want to do it – giving up your time*

*A 1:1 support system which is not otherwise available at all. It's good that for instance that somebody who is verging on going off the rails has a bit of a chance to be steered back in the right direction. It is generally an excellent scheme – no matter what kind of young person, no matter what the problems are or what the situation is – it works whether it is respite for their families or a guiding role model for the young person*

*There's a lot of adult support like college, job centres etc – but it's not always about jobs or therapy or sorting your benefit. There's not a lot out there that's about fun*

*It might be (as a young person) that your physical health is fine and your rent is ok. But there is nothing out there that helps people strike up conversations with other people. The young person*

*I'm matched with had only ever been in one shop in the shopping centre – so we went in every shop together just to see. It's more life skills in a social setting*

### **Something to Look Forward to**

*It must bring an escape if nothing else for a couple of hours every 2 weeks for young people that maybe don't have anything else to look forward to or even just helping with difficult situations. It's a really good scheme. From the befrienders' point of view, personally speaking, it means you go and do different things – things I wouldn't normally do on my own*

*In my training, I joined 15 people who are now matched with 15 people who have got needs. I don't think these kids would have that support that help without the scheme, that good example that one to one time - these are the things that change the world a wee bit*

### **Impact and Awareness**

*It's been really good; it's helped a lot of young children and young adults. They could go down the good road or the bad road and befriending has helped them go down the good road*

*It has opened the community up to being more open to young people and difficulties going on there*

### **Impartiality**

*Because the befrienders are volunteers they are impartial and not part of the overall 'system' e.g. social workers etc. who are paid to have a relationship with the young adult or child. The relationship is valued more as it is freely given with no strings and is impartial and non-judgemental and not intended as an intervention*

*The age of people I was with it gives a good opportunity for people who are needing a bit of help outside their immediate family for the short term. It means that they have an independent person to speak to and try some new things with. It's great that the service is there. It's obvious there's a lot of need*

*I think an opportunity for children and young people if they are having difficulties in sharing a friendship. It's an opportunity for them to have someone to speak to about things. Even if they have their own friends outside the befriending scheme but this is an opportunity to explore things they like doing or talk about things their friends don't want to talk about*

*It is important. It's a nice community but can be a bit closed, a bit claustrophobic. It can end up just the immediate folk that young people are mixing with. Children will talk to a someone they don't know (a befriender) sometimes; it can be quite releasing knowing that they can talk to them and it won't go any further*

## **22. Future Use of the Scheme – Referral Agencies and Parents and Carers**

All of the referral agencies interviewed saw themselves continuing to use the Shetland Befriending Scheme in the future i.e. continued demand and in some cases (ASN) increased demand is anticipated:

*I think it's so valuable – matching takes time (though I'm delighted with that) - it's so the young person has as positive an experience as possible*

*We always have clients that I would recommend for this service*

*It's crucial; it's an external support for us in school and with the socio-economic problems we have across Shetland we need services like befriending*

*Our school roll has gone down but the number of children with special needs or social or emotional needs has risen. I could give a whole list of people coming through primary who*

*at the pre-teen and teenage years will need help. That's when children need most help with things like transition*

*Continuing what they offer clients will be really important. They have always been very quick to respond. Clients have never waited and matches have come quickly. I was really surprised. That's been positive. If they can keep up quickly assessing and quickly matching... for some clients if that hadn't happened they'd have changed their mind*

Referral agencies were asked what the removal of the Shetland Befriending Scheme would mean for them and the people who they worked with. All recognised that the individual young people involved would miss out on something unique as there was no other service in Shetland offering 1:1 support in the same way. Beyond there simply being a loss of service it was seen that the reduction in opportunities for confidence-building and relationship-building could have a very negative impact on young people's lives as they grow up.

*It would be really difficult. In Shetland our department does not have a massive array of services. We would have to try and fill the gap again. The befriending scheme is a big help and support*

*It would mean another avenue of support is cut off. There would be more disillusionment and more disaffection. If life outside school is stable, it's easier for us and there is a better chance for children of achieving in school*

*For anyone who is involved it would be a real shame. There is nothing else which fills that gap. A youth group is a different thing entirely which some people can't access that easily. It would be another service cut. In Shetland there is so little for young people within the current financial climate. It's a very worrying time. There are youth clubs but these are not comparable. 1:1 befriending is in its own league*

*There would be limited opportunities for social activities, development of self esteem and opportunities to mix with peers*

*It would just be tragic. Befriending opens up the world to them - it gives them the confidence to take the next step to be more independent not to mention the effect it has on families. The befriending scheme is one of the most fantastic things...*

*It would mean that pupils who use the scheme would again be disadvantaged and parents would feel this too*

*It would be extremely sad – there have not been a great number of young adults referred, but for those who have been, the quality of service and the benefits received...we couldn't have provided these for them. We do build positive relationships but not on a friendship basis. For women who are so isolated by their experience it would be a big miss*

Parents and carers also saw themselves as hoping to be able to use a service which had been important for the young people they cared for.

*He'd just be stuck with me and have to go down the town with me (parent)*

*It would be very disappointing without it. We're OAPs. We can't take him to these things (carer)*

*He would miss it terribly. It's his time. I would be vexed too (carer)*

*It's essential - when families go for a befriending service they are sometimes at breaking point and the child is able to get out of a situation for a while (parent)*

*We would be devastated – all of the challenges for my child are very difficult for him and these regular meetings are always very interesting for him, full of fun; things which he likes to do without his mum by his side but with another person (parent)*

### **23. Shetland Befriending Scheme and Local and National Policies**

Referral agencies were asked what local procedures and national policy they thought that the befriending scheme should link with. The main one mentioned by most was GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child). Other mentions were for Children's Support Plans, Additional Support for Learning, the aims and aspirations behind the Curriculum for Excellence, awareness of child protection issues, drugs and alcohol related policy (Hidden Harm). Because the scheme also supports young adults, respondents also noted awareness of community care legislation, the mental health act and policy relating to support for vulnerable adults.

This question did highlight again that some referral agencies perceived the scheme to be well-connected and well-informed already

*The experience of the befriending scheme is a very positive one. They are very easy to get hold of, and are a concerned and caring service and do all they can do*

Suggestions of other involvement were:

*Perhaps befrienders could be invited to review meetings with parental consent*

*Where behaviour plans are in place in school it may be helpful with parental consent to share these with befrienders.*

### **24. Results: Final Comments – Volunteers**

All participants were asked if they wanted to make any final comments about the scheme. Almost all chose to do so, and the majority of these went on to praise the scheme generally or the staff team specifically noting how welcoming, approachable, interested and supportive they were.

*The staff are excellent to deal with and very good at what they do.*

*A fantastic scheme! Very supportive to both myself and the young adults. A rewarding experience for me that I'm proud to have been part of*

*It's a really welcoming office*

*A super scheme with very approachable staff. Any query at all is not a problem, they'll answer back straight away that day. They are good at communicating if someone (your staff member contact) is away; I'll get an email saying they're away and I can contact the others. It makes me feel more comfortable; through the training I got to meet all the staff so at least you knew who it was you were contacting. I certainly feel confident to phone and speak to any of them*

*I really like the lasses that run it here. They are very open honest people; I can go in and they would want to know that I'm ok. I initially thought I'll do the training and I'll see how it goes but I've had a fantastic experience with them*

*I put in my expenses claim and it comes back straight away. If I've got a problem they would want to deal with it straight away. That makes me a better befriender – if I need training they will find it for me*

*Just an excellent scheme; there should be befriending everywhere. I hope that more people become volunteers. There are so many children and young people missing out because there are not enough volunteers*

*I really would genuinely praise the support the service gives the helpers. The training is really useful and there are transferable skills from it. Lynn, Amanda, Laura and Colleen are superb. They give a lot of support; if there was any trouble I wouldn't hesitate to call them*

*The team are positive. Things are not set in tablets of stone. They are willing to listen....it's a wee community*

*I think that the Project Co-ordinator Lynn Tulloch has been and continues to be a major asset to the Scheme*

## **25. Results: Final Comments – Referral Agencies**

Referral agencies were asked if they wanted to make any final comments about the scheme. Almost all chose to do so, with most noting again how appreciative they were of the scheme, as well as the manner in which it was run. All referral agencies wanted to see it continue and individual respondents noted that ideally they would like to see the scheme expand in both age (over 25s) and the area it is able to serve.

*It's a valuable and a growing resource. The move into young adults and ASN are good moves. Staff are always very approachable and quick to get back to you. This is true previously with Lynn and latterly with other staff.*

*It's a great service. It's a really important service for us in school and an avenue of support for pupils*

*I can't say enough good about them. Everything is positive so far. At multi-agency meetings they (scheme staff) are there; concerned and involved*

*I feel it is a valuable and well run service*

*I really do appreciate the scheme. I would like to be able to have more people – there can be a local problem of finding someone to match up. I would like them to have more befrienders and more funding*

*It is a well-organised scheme benefiting many young people and training befrienders to develop valuable skills.*

*I'd like to see the age opening up – it's very limiting. There is nothing for the 'middle group' – the over 24s and under 65s.*

*I think it would be very sad if we didn't have Shetland Befriending Scheme. It offers a very valuable service for vulnerable young people who would otherwise be very socially isolated.*

## **26. Results: Final Comments – Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers were asked if they wanted to make any final comments about the scheme. Almost all chose to do so, respondents noting their gratefulness for the scheme, its volunteers and staff and their desire for more volunteers

*I'm really very very grateful. It's fantastic. Even the fact that you don't need to worry about the cost - this is an additional help which I think is very important*

*It's just been very good and I've been very pleased. It certainly helped me and I hope it can help other families*

*We are absolutely delighted with it*

*Just hope we get him matched up again soon*

*She'd love another match – but it seems like we are up against it. It's just a shame; they can't recruit any more people*

*If they could recruit more volunteers because there is quite a limited pool of volunteers. If they had a wee bit more publicity. I think people know their name but not their mission; a lot of what they do is not very well known*

*There's a lot (of young people generally) bullied and have low self esteem – if it (the scheme) could be there for a lot of others it would be good*

*The way the staff have done everything has been really good. Everything has been considered. Even them coming to the house. Really lovely.*

*They (staff) are brilliant people and I hope it carries on for years to come*

*They (staff) did match her well*

*The volunteers are the ones who should get knighthoods not these footballers and people on mega bucks. They are unsung heroes.*

## **27. Results: Staff Feedback on the Scheme**

The staff were interviewed about the work they undertook, the links between the scheme's three sections, the scheme's procedures, the impact of befriending and the staff members' views on working relationships and management within the scheme.

### **a) Structure and management**

All of the staff see the scheme as being very well structured and organised, with this stemming from the approach and working practice of the Project Co-ordinator. The impression given is of a staff team who all know clearly what tasks are expected of them and have the confidence (and support) to do these, and who know how their work differs from and is similar to that of others in the team. The fact that all have started within the last two years but all are actively involved not just in their own duties, but in covering for colleagues and sharing tasks like training, shows that responsibility is encouraged and shared out well, even for the newest member of staff who has only been in post a few months but is already delivering training events supported by colleagues. All development staff described being very well supported by their line manager, the Project Co-ordinator, and by the others in the team. Further than that, staff members noted that they enjoyed the working environment where they had a combination of freedom to work independently, thoroughness of well established procedures and being listened to when they contributed ideas to potentially help the scheme to develop. The Project Co-ordinator in turn identified the good support from her team as well as welcoming the management support given by the Executive Officer of Voluntary Action Shetland.

The fact that all three development staff have experience of being befrienders in the past is seen by them as giving an extra insight into some of the issues of their respective jobs. As one staff member put it, "You know where volunteers are coming from".

## **b) Procedures in relation to good practice**

Staff are managing numbers of matches well within the range for best practice (15-25) (as set down in the Befriending Network Scotland Code of Practice). The experience is that staff members' caseloads rarely go above the 'high teens' and at the moment the three development staff are each managing between 11 and 16 matches. The Project Co-ordinator retained a small but diminishing caseload of matches as the most recent section was developed but this post will now not have a caseload responsibility and will focus on strategic, development and management issues.

Staff described an extremely thorough recruitment and selection process incorporating application forms, references, local authority and medical checks, a criminal records disclosure and an interview with two members of staff.

The training is covered over 8 sessions (although the format was changed to 4 day sessions for a different location as part of a rural recruitment drive). Each week, the trainers write up an assessment proforma which is used in a feedback meeting with management board representatives at the end of training. Once again this shows a very thorough approach, making use of every stage of contact with volunteers during the selection process.

The scheme uses matching forms and interest/hobbies sheets to assist in matching and takes a careful approach to the order of tasks and the flow of information in the matching process. Once matches are introduced, the scheme contact volunteers after each of the first few meetings and meet, phone, email or text every 6 weeks, aiming to see volunteers face to face as often as possible (typically a minimum of every 3 months). All of these approaches fit well with the Approved Provider Standard for Mentoring and Befriending Projects which the scheme achieved for the second time in 2009, showing that the practice required for this standard is being undertaken.

## **c) Similarities and differences across the sections**

The scheme's three sections are independent but work closely together e.g. shared training. They share the same procedures with a few differences e.g. the young adults would receive self referrals which the other two sections do not.

Other variations include:

- the Young Adults Development Worker can get involved in individual support of young adults if someone is seen to be struggling and this intervention would have a preventative role and be in the young adults' best interests
- the Young Adults reviews can take place at a higher frequency if necessary (with a minimum of every 3 months) as their lives can be more complex and more liable to change quickly
- the Young Adults section's experience is that activities are more likely to be a way in to a match which is actually about emotional support, whereas in the other sections the activities themselves can play a key role in new opportunities and confidence building
- the ASN section see one difference of their work being that there may be an upper limit of ability that the young person reaches (e.g. because of a disability). However the scheme plays a function in helping these young people achieve their potential. One effect of this is that in some cases the changes for young people may appear very minor to volunteers but are actually quite meaningful.

Given that the Young Adults Section works with a different age range than the other two sections, and that the young adults themselves might have very different living situations and personal issues than a 7-15 age group, there is a sense that the main differences within the scheme are between the two 7-15 age range projects and the 16-25 project.

At times a section in the scheme might create a new procedure which the other sections go on to benefit from e.g. the scheme tried to improve its own internal evaluation of ASN work using Individual Outcome Progress Plans (IOPP) where progress on the goals highlighted at the start of the match are assessed with the volunteer and the parent or carer. This process is repeated at the

end of the match, while the young person gives feedback every 6 months. These IOPPs then were rolled out across the project.

#### **d) Views on the role and impact of the Shetland Befriending Scheme**

Staff view the majority of matches as being really positive, with some being 'plain sailing' where opportunities to try new things and build up confidence have led to progress for young people. For other more complicated situations staff recognised that befriending is a very small part of the jigsaw and there will not necessarily be a clean and tidy outcome (a 'happy ever after'). However, the scheme still provides a role in these situations of ensuring that a young person has someone to speak to and who will listen for what may be an important period of time in their lives.

On the whole staff observe that the importance of the scheme is in providing someone impartial away from family and friends and who can be consistent throughout ups and downs of life. Whilst activities might be identified at the start, the Young Adults section can often work on an emotional level; the activity is a way into the scheme but the contact with a volunteer becomes a lot more about being listened to and seeking guidance.

As with other stakeholders in this evaluation, staff members were asked for their best memories of the scheme. These were about young people who had made clear changes in their lives as a result of the input of volunteers. The common thread for the very different case studies described across the three sections was the matches had not necessarily been smooth running, but this meant that the outcome at the end (often because of the effort put in by staff and volunteers combined) had been especially satisfying.

Staff view many of the issues which people in Shetland deal with as being broadly the same as in other parts of the country (e.g. socio-economic issues, drug and alcohol misuse), although at times there may be some local features to these e.g. there tends to be a higher level of combined drug and alcohol misuse in Shetland than elsewhere, and lower unemployment. One key factor about Shetland is that when people are geographically isolated this can be particularly acute in comparison to isolation in other parts of the country. Another issue which Shetland has is that some young people after 4<sup>th</sup> year, move away from Junior High School to board at High School.

#### **e) Changes to the Scheme**

Staff were asked what changes they would ideally make to the scheme. The issues described were:

- volunteers – more of them, and from different parts of Shetland, because young people often need a volunteer at a crucial point in their life and there are not always enough available. In addition the need for male volunteers
- volunteers – better commitment; avoiding the situation where volunteers leave a few months in because they feel they are too busy, thereby letting down young people and doing what the project has specifically asked them not to do during training and at the point of matching
- referrals being appropriate – this related to the young adults work, ensuring that referrals were for people who were actually isolated, rather than those who had a gap in their week's activities
- funding; securing the future work of the sections

The Executive Officer sees the scheme as a great success. The evidence for this is that it started as a single part time post and the scheme has just reached its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is well respected in the islands and has a hard working staff team reaching a lot of young people with a dedicated team of volunteers.

Relating to this development, the Project Co-ordinator might have started out managing a caseload of volunteers and young people, but is now an experienced manager who has a strategic viewpoint, has been successful in raising funds and has developed the profile of the scheme around Shetland and beyond.

The impact of the scheme is seen not just on the young people but also on the volunteers who come to the scheme and gain great experience, some of which enables them to move into work in

the social care sector on Shetland. The training which the organisation offers is seen as a strong asset, but remains one which to date has only been utilised within the scheme itself. The overseeing role of the Executive Officer has provided some guidance over the years to ensure that the scheme consolidates each of its new developments, rather than moving too quickly into another new phase.

## 28. Conclusions

Linking back to the purpose of the evaluation the key conclusions are:

- **Evaluation of the scheme as a whole:** this evaluation has gained feedback from volunteers, parents and carers, referral agencies, young people and staff involved across all three sections. The key fact to note from this is that the scheme's work is consistent across all three sections with all parties positive about the working practice of the scheme, the approach taken by staff and volunteers and the impact. The evaluation finds that the Shetland Befriending Scheme has expanded and at the same time retained its commitment to good practice.
- **Service delivery:** the fact that the scheme's original staff member is now the Project Co-ordinator managing a staff team and no longer a caseload, has not impacted on the findings of previous evaluations which showed that all stakeholders have very positive for the scheme's work. The evaluation shows that there is consistently positive feedback across all of the sections, and each of the staff members involved are committed to and feel supported in their work
- **Quality of service:** In terms of quality of practice, the scheme's procedures and practice have been found to easily match, and often exceed standards expected by the Approved Provider Standard (the quality award for befriending projects). The procedures presented suggest the scheme is managed in a highly organised and thorough manner, potentially in keeping with much of what is described as 'best practice' in the new Quality in Befriending award (Befriending Network Scotland).
- **Management:** the transition of the scheme from a part time, single staff post project, to a full time staff team with three sections appears to have been well managed with each stage being consolidated before new developments are considered. The Project Co-ordinator has grown with the scheme to effectively move from a Development Worker role (initiating and co-ordinating matches) to become a well-respected and highly competent manager, developing the project strategically and motivating and managing a staff team.

## 29. Recommendations

The enormously positive results of the evaluation suggest no major areas of recommendation. A key issue for the scheme (as ever) is future sustainability, and about ensuring consolidation before further development. The following are some areas for consideration which have been prompted by the evaluation:

**Recruitment:** explore possibilities of targeted recruitment for

- male volunteers – options for the scheme to use male voices, male quotes to specifically target men to get involved
- different sections – options to try different recruitment messages for the different sections

**Internal evaluation:** consider regular collation of results from IOPPs

**Outcomes:** consider the wording used in the outcomes across the 3 sections. Consider the crossover areas for the three sections to consolidate a set of general scheme outcomes with some additional ones relevant for each section

**Training:** consider if there is any opportunity to make some aspects of the current befriender training available to be delivered elsewhere e.g. within youth services or within education services for example for auxiliary staff. This could work as both an income generator and as promotion for the scheme

**Administration:** consider options for administrative support for the project as development staff do all of their own administration

**Group activities:** consider the comments from evaluation participants as the scheme staff review the future of group activities

**Ongoing training or volunteer discussion:** these could focus on some issues identified by volunteers as being relevant for the majority:

- tactics to give choice to young people and encourage them in doing activities
- how to encourage young people cautious about moving from 1:1 into group activities
- children's development – the changes in children as they grow



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