

SSFN

Scottish Solution Focused Network

Newsletter No. 4.

In this edition we have the report from our first, highly successful, [SSFN Conference](#). Joan Tilley, one of the delegates from the Western Isles has compiled the report, providing feedback on the presentations and on the experience of the day. There are also details of our [next training day](#), being held on November 21st. In this issue we are pleased to include the [Network List](#), finally enabling network members to communicate with each other directly, if they wish. We also have advance news of a couple of [events coming up next year](#) and details of [SF training events](#) coming up. Finally, we also have an excellent [paper](#) reviewing the literature on the effectiveness of Solution Focused Brief Therapy.

Conference

The first SSFN National Conference was held on Friday 29th August at the Playfield Institute in Fife. There was an excellent turnout of members from across the country to participate and share in a wide range of workshops and seminars. The quality of the presentations was outstanding; all the more so considering that this was our first attempt at a national conference.

Joan Tilley, a network member from Stornoway, attended as part of a group of delegates from the Western Isles, and very kindly produced this report on the Conference.

There are very few occasions when child and adult mental health services come together to enjoy and share common ground, but this was one of them. We set off together from rainy Stornoway having nearly broken our necks trying to tie

up work from the previous week to free our thinking and not really knowing what to expect from the conference. Would it be a Buddhist philosophical interactive heavy debating anti- psychiatry forum? Practical workshops full of role play to prove our understanding and worth as therapists? Would it be a “celebration of simplicity in a complex world” type of one word mindfulness or mindlessness as the case may be? Or would it be as stimulating and inspiring as our training had been and a much needed top up?

We eventually reached the medieval Kingdom of Fife. Next day was a short journey to the Playfield Institute where the conference was held. We were welcomed as the Western Isles delegates and introduced by the chairman Graham Buchanan (Clinical Director of the Playfield Institute) to a varied programme of the day ahead; plenary sessions, workshops, case studies, SF skills training as well as networking opportunities with presenters and fellow delegates.



Steve Smith delivered the keynote address arguing that the unique focus on the future is the ‘difference that makes the difference’ within solution focused therapy and this is what sets it apart from traditional models for working. Why working towards the future was important, as that is where change always

happens. He spoke of traditional models drilling down into a problem whilst solution focus worked in a horizontal style collaborating with clients in an intersubjective, co-constructive ‘not knowing’ approach which allows the client to be the expert of their own solutions. ‘Best hopes’ not being linked to the problem but to a solution state. “It’s where we are going to be tomorrow that we are looking forward to”. He described the practitioner as ‘scaffolders’ helping the client to construct this better future and inspiring hope and possibility no matter the level of difficulty or severity of problem defined.

Breakout workshop sessions consisted of Sharon Little, a Penumbra worker, describing the value of vision boards as a tool to communicate subconscious desires and establishing future goals in a powerful and effective way. A technique taken from marketing and advertising that provides us with a visual image of where we want to be. She linked this to its effectiveness for recovery, and for those who have difficulty with imagination. Wendy Woolfson gave focus to narrative, (the story of the client) and constructivism (the constructivist paradigm indicates that human beings try to make sense of the situation they are in, and therefore social phenomena are the result of their own interpretation). Through the medium of storytelling she spoke of re-storying the story (re-framing), noticing how this new story or interpretation changes the outcomes and perspective. Kate Smith works as a Primary Care Mental Health Worker and described “successful outcomes in three hours”. How brief is brief? This was amazing and gave good pointers or ‘hooks’ for successful sessions. To listen intently to the client’s story, who is peopling it, what strengths are you noticing, what does the person want from attending, how would that help, miracle focus is ‘when’ not ‘if’, the importance of scaling, always taking a break to prepare feedback, using outcome measurement for service audit to prove effectiveness. Gerry Hastie a Community Mental Health Nurse shared his experience of staying solution focused in long term work, particularly with revolving door clients and helping us to ‘work our own solutions’ to these challenges.

The afternoon plenary session was given by an amazing lady, Claudia Van Zuiden, who has identified the need for developing mental health care in places as far afield as Nepal, Thailand and Malawi. She discussed why she thought Solution Focused Brief Therapy could be a way forward in countries where there is minimum mental health support.

She has been successful in training workers in Nepal and setting up an SFBT mental health project. She continues to network to explore solutions to the gaps in mental health services within these resource deprived countries. This



was followed by further breakout sessions. Chris Ward, Nurse Consultant in CAMHS, gave a great workshop on using SFBT with clients who self-harm. He spoke of client's expectations for new techniques and any 'suggested techniques' being a tired intervention and not validating of the person's experience. He emphasised the need for curiosity around the exceptions to the self-harming behaviours and to drill on these, to be in the moment of these exceptions and to stay there with the client in that moment. Very informative and gave us good practice. Dorothy Adam, a Lecturer in Adult Nursing with a palliative care background, explored Solution Focused work with people who are grieving. How do you respond to this, and is the Miracle Question appropriate when the client wants the impossible, such as the dead alive and with them again. How well does it sit with current models for grieving?

Graham Buchanan lead on a presentation followed by a discussion on the natural application of Solution Focused techniques in Recovery based interventions and how SF thinking can enable practitioners to operationalise recovery based care. He looked at the recommendations of Paper 1 and Paper 6 of the SRN national strategy and how we can, as SFBT practitioners, create the



conditions that foster hope, optimism, strengths and guide patients to new meanings within their lives. The NHS current political agenda was discussed linking with the nursing RRR (3-Rs), mental health strategy and how we have to be careful not to let the institution come out into the community, which we are

in danger of doing unless we become more proactive in developing new models for working.

The Open Space session facilitated other speakers to open up debate on current research; SFBT inventory, group working and mindfulness which allowed us to dip in and out of sessions according to interest.

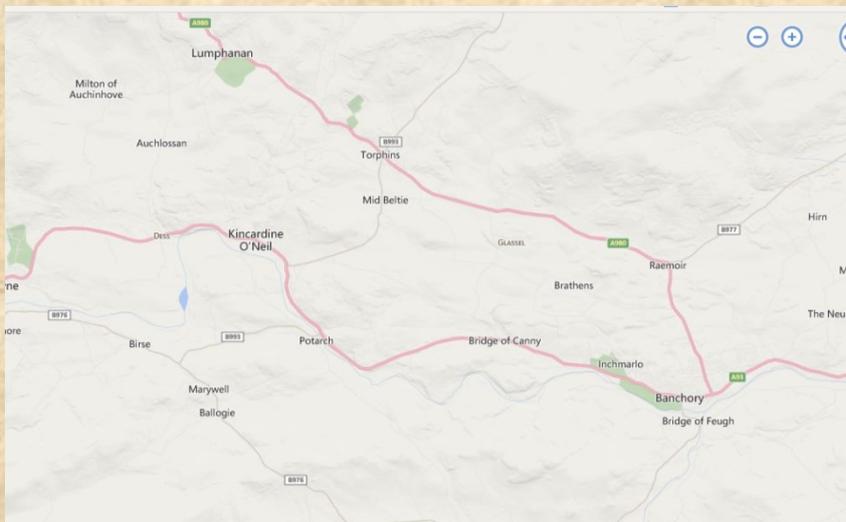
Overall we returned inspired, determined to make a difference and having a clearer idea on how we could polish up our techniques and better influence our

therapeutic relationships within the contexts of our roles. We each agreed it was a worthwhile and very valuable exercise.

There is little that we can add to Joan's report, except to thank her for taking the time to do it and for sharing it with us. Thank you also to all the presenters, and to everyone who attended and helped to make it such a great day, and to Claudia for the photographs of the day.

Next SSFN Training Day

The next SSFN training day will be held on November 21st, and is being hosted by Claudia Van Zuiden (see Claudia's blog on the SSFN website) in Kincardine O'Neil, Aberdeenshire. The day will commence at 10:30 and will include a session on Solution Focused Team Building within organisations. Lunch is available from a nearby café / tea-room, and the day will close around 3:30.



Kincardine O'Neil is on the A93, approximately 25 miles from Aberdeen. It's a beautiful part of the country, and well worth the run. The venue is at 29A North Deeside Road, [Kincardine O'Neil](#),

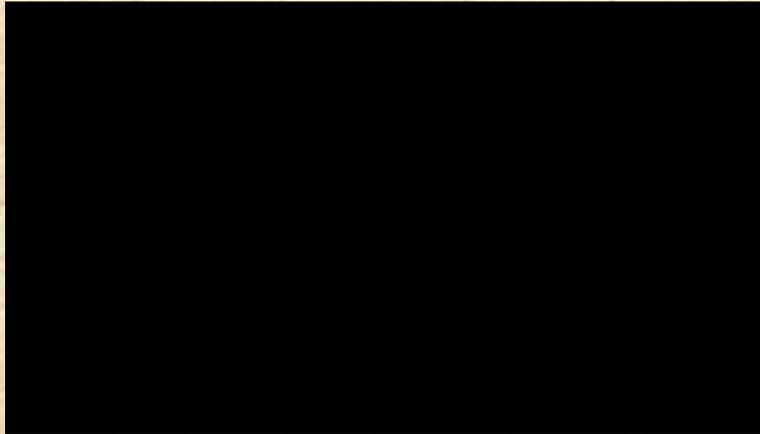
AB34 5AA. We look forward to seeing you there.

The Network List

At our first ever meeting, back in March 2012, we established that one of the main goals for the fledgling network was to have a Members List that we could distribute throughout the network. This proved a tougher goal to achieve than we had imagined, and it's taken two-and-a-half years to reach fruition; but, at last, we have a Network List! The list is arranged geographically and alphabetically, by first name, so that you can easily find out who is in the same geographical location as you, or search for someone by name. One of the challenges we had was keeping your contact details confidential within the network; we could have put them onto the website, but not everyone necessarily wanted their contact details made public by us. So; we think we've found the answer. Use the list to contact individual colleagues (or groups of colleagues), or cut-and-paste all the contacts into an email to contact the entire Network at once. Share your thoughts with the Network, and tell us what you think.

Name	Location
[Redacted]	





Events coming up next year

We will be having the first SSFN Training Day of 2015 around the end of February; if there is anything you would particularly like to see included in the day (or if you would like to facilitate a training session), let us know. The second Training Day will be a half-day event, and will be a true Networking occasion. On the 19th of May 2015 we will be hosting a visit from counselling students from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. The morning will be spent in showing the guests around the Playfield Institute (where the event will be held) and discussing the SF training provided by Robert Gordon University around Scotland. In the afternoon it would be good to introduce the guests to as many SF practitioners from around the country as we can, so we will be having a *Network Afternoon* where SSFN members can meet, and share experiences, with trainee practitioners from Texas. More details of this will follow in due course.

We will also be having our second National Conference at the end of August next year. Any ideas for the conference theme, offers to present session, or suggestions of who you would like to see there are very welcome. Let us know your thoughts.

SF Training Events

There are a number of training events coming up in the near future. Playfield Institute will be running a two-day introductory workshop to Solution Focused interactions, and Robert Gordon University will be running the Solution Focused Brief Therapy course in February 2015. Details of upcoming events can be seen on the [website](#).

Featured Paper

This edition's Featured Paper is a systematic review of the effectiveness of Solution Focused Brief Therapy published in Research on Social Work Practice. The link (<http://rsw.sagepub.com/content/23/3/266>) is to the abstract only, but most members will be able to access the paper through NHS or University on-line libraries. The key conclusions drawn from the literature are that “the evidence of SFBT effectiveness in adult mental health is strong and reliable”, based on the review of 10 controlled studies carried out between 1993 and 2010, and that “there is strong evidence of the effectiveness of SFBT with occupational rehabilitation populations”, based on the review of 5 studies conducted between 1997 and 2010. The review concludes, “together, the above analyses provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of SFBT across a range of fields of practice, and particularly in the field of adult mental health”.

If you come across a paper that you think would be of interest to the rest of the Network, forward it on to [us](#) and we'll include it in the next Newsletter.