

SSFN

Scottish Solution Focused Network

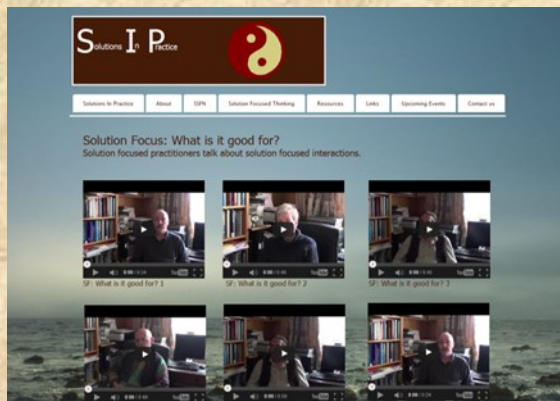
Newsletter No. 7.

In this edition we have reports from [SolutionFest](#), our bi-annual summer meeting, networking event and barbeque. There's also a review of an exciting new book, ["Encounters with Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg: Inside stories of solution-focused brief therapy"](#). There's also news of a new project being developed between NHS Fife and Robert Gordon University on [Solution Focused Recovery](#), and a tribute to [Greg Vinnicombe](#), who died in September. Finally, there is news of our next [Training Day](#), which focuses on developing our skills in asking externalising questions, and news of next year's [Conference](#).

SolutionFest 2015

Our bi-annual SolutionFest meeting was held in Edzell on a bright and sunny early autumn day at the start of September. Delegates attended from around the country and the day commenced with the now traditional sharing of 'what's going well'. Both Neil and Alyssa had recently completed the RGU Solution Focused Brief Therapy course and shared their enthusiasm over the course and taking their practice back into the 'real world'. Various options for further training were discussed, including the follow-up RGU course and the possibility of having an intensive training day focusing on one aspect of SF practice at a future SSFN Training Day. Steve spoke about a recent two-day event in Stornoway, where a group of third sector workers and health and social care staff participated in an Introduction to Solution Focused Interactions workshop. Steve spoke about the enthusiasm of the group, and the fact that the entire group had joined the SSFN at the end of the workshop (Welcome!); a further two-day workshop is planned for later in the year. Kate reported on the tremendous success and positive feedback that can be generated from only 3 hours of client contact. Working in a setting where services are delivered in just five sessions over three hours (1 hour plus 4 x 30 minutes) she spoke about the need to focus on client's strengths and resilience, and, while acknowledging their individual problems, to focus awareness on what is working in the client's life. Graham spoke about developments in NHS Fife and the development of a Solution Focused Recovery programme with RGU; more on this later.

The barbeque, where participant's had brought burgers, frankfurters, rolls, home-made salads, and a wealth of cakes to the 'pot-luck-lunch', allowed the group to network and talk with each other, and the conversation covered a wide and diverse range of topics. Following lunch, Steve led a discussion



on what the group got out of working in a solution focused style. Some of the things participant's spoke of was being able to focus on the strengths that clients brought with them, having a tool to enable clients to reach their 'goals' in a shorter period of time, and being able to focus on what the client wanted to achieve rather than what *they* thought the client wanted. The afternoon session progressed into a video recording session where several participants recorded their thoughts, under

the title **Solution Focus: What is it good for?** These videos have been uploaded onto the website and can be seen at <http://www.solutionsinpractice.co.uk/#!/solution-focus-what-is-it-good-for/c1r5e>. The afternoon then broke up in various conversations and participants were still leaving well after four o'clock, which is always a good sign.

New Book.

A new book, "[Encounters with Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg: Inside stories of solution-focused brief therapy](#)", published in September, provides a unique insight into the development of solution focused working over several decades, and the interactions between Steve, Insoo and a host of European and North American practitioners.

"When Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg founded the Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC) in Milwaukee in 1978, they set out on a journey which led not only to the development of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) but also to a revolutionary influence across and beyond the whole psychotherapeutic field. Terms such as solution focus, resource orientation, scaling, miracle question and many more are taken for granted today, and the broader implications of their work on how we think about therapy are still emerging. Steve and Insoo worked all over the world, introducing people to their practices and inspiring many to get involved with SFBT and take their ideas into fields such as coaching, teaching, social work and organisational change. Their journeys created powerful and lasting connections, which are still producing new work and developments. This book lets you eavesdrop on many of the meetings and friendships which they developed over the years, and appreciate even more their work, ideas and contribution. The book contains memories and stories from former BFTC team members as well as numerous colleagues from Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USA."

Greg Vinnicombe

It was with genuine sadness and a sense of loss that I heard of the death of Greg Vinnicombe on the 21st October. Greg originally came from the North East of Scotland, although he lived most of his life

in the Bradford area. He was a founder of the Yorkshire Solution Focused Brief Therapy Group and



Greg (R) with fellow presenters at Stobhill Hospital, 2009.

was a passionate advocate of solution focused practice, most recently working with John Wheeler for the past few years at [Solution Focused Trainers](#). I'm not sure when I first met Greg, possibly around 10 years ago, but his big smile and enthusiasm has always seemed to me to be part of the experience of solution focused gatherings across the UK. Some of you may remember when Greg sat in on a class during the Solution Focused Brief Therapy course in Aberdeen, a few years ago, and ended up at the front of the class sharing training techniques and experience with the whole class (and I still

use some of the techniques he shared that day). Others may remember him from the Glasgow 2009 SFBT mini-conference at Stobhill Hospital where he spoke on behalf of the UKASFP, but managed to incorporate stories of his daughter's swimming lessons into his presentation. The last time I heard from Greg was about a month before he died, he had emailed me to congratulate me on completing my PhD and, as always, we made a vague sort of promise to meet up for a meal and a drink in Aberdeen 'soon'. A warm and valued colleague and friend; the world of SF is a little bit diminished without him.

Steve Smith

Solution Focused Recovery

Solution Focused practitioners from NHS Fife and Robert Gordon University have been working together to develop a new Solution Focused Recovery Programme. Recovery, as a concept, is well established and widely accepted as being central to contemporary mental health care and practice. Based on the testimony of people with experience of long-term mental health problems, the [Scottish Recovery Network](#) describe recovery as "being able to live a meaningful and satisfying life, as defined by each person, in the presence or absence of symptoms. It is about having control over and input into your own life. Each individual's recovery, like his or her experience of the mental health problems or illness, is a unique and deeply personal process." However, while the principles of recovery are widely accepted, the practical integration of those principles into practice is not always evident; for many mental health practitioners and services, how to deliver recovery-based care remains unclear.

The Solution Focused Recovery Programme brings together recovery principles and solution focused interactions to provide a skills-based approach to training practitioners *how to* provide high quality evidence-based care while being led by the person with the mental health problem. Working

together, practitioner and participant, to co-construct solutions to the problems identified by the participant, utilising the skills, abilities and experience that the participant wishes to bring to the interaction.

Two SF Champions, Neil Gallacher and Alyssa Bell, completed the SFBT course at RGU in the first half of this year and are now working with Graham Buchanan and Steve Smith to deliver Solution Focused Recovery training to staff at Stratheden Hospital in Fife. The training consists of an intensive one-day training event followed by on-going support and coaching from the SF Champions to help embed the communication and thinking underpinning Solution Focused Recovery into daily practice. Commenting on the initiative, Graham said, “we believe that solution focused interactions reflect and embody the principles of recovery-based care. By bringing the two together we hope to enable practitioners to develop a real world understanding of how to support people in their own recovery journey. Following a full evaluation of the pilot project being run in November, we hope to deliver this training across our mental health services.”



Neil Gallacher

SF in Primary Care.

We were about to congratulate Wales in being at the cutting edge of contemporary mental health care. Our esteemed colleague Evan George at BRIEF had posted an email to the UKASFP list in early November promoting BRIEF’s SF Certificate programme, which they are running in Wales. He wrote, “We have chosen to offer this programme in Wales as a response to Wales leading the way in the UK in embedding Solution Focus in its primary mental health services – a proud distinction. The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010, which is currently in the process of being implemented, specifically requires local primary mental health support services to offer 'solution-focussed therapy', as one of a (small) number of interventions.” So ... we were about to join in congratulating our colleagues in Wales when Steve pointed out that Scottish Primary Care Mental Health Workers have been delivering Solution Focused Interactions since they were set up in 2006! So Congratulations to our Welsh brothers and sisters; and a little bit of reflected glory to ourselves.

Next Training Day

The next SSFN Training Day will be held on Friday December 4th at the [Playfield Institute](#), Stratheden Hospital, Fife. The day will be centred on ‘Refining the Miracle Question’, and will take the form of a one-day workshop on developing participants skills in asking and responding to all forms of externalising questions, including the traditional Miracle Question. The day will commence at 10:30 and will close at 3:30, CPD certificates will be issued to all participants.

Conference 2016

Finally, notice that our bi-annual conference will be held next year on Friday August 26th. We are grateful to the Playfield Institute for again hosting the event. Further information and a call for papers will follow soon; in the meantime, if you would like to host a break-out session please do let us [know](#).