

Vignette two

The referral came through for the 14½-year-old, but we didn't have a contract to work with youth. A referral came through for this girl through the mother, so I started working with the mother initially, and it's been quite a journey because, as I worked with Mum, who didn't think that we were going to be able to do anything anyway – over the years she had never had really any support, or the support she had had hadn't worked. She had depression herself, with extremely poor coping skills, and her way of managing that, when everything got on top of her, was to take an overdose. Unfortunately she was teaching her children the same thing by her behaviour, and her 14½-year-old daughter had just taken this overdose when I started working with Mum. For the first 6 months the daughter didn't speak to me. She didn't trust me, didn't have any contact with me. So I just continued on with Mum, and encouraged her to come up with different ways of managing her stress and, by her learning those new coping mechanisms, she changed how she would manage times when she was really down, and her daughter did have another suicide attempt during this period, and shortly after that she started to interact with me a little bit – the daughter. So I was able to start working with her, which has been quite exciting. Although on two or three occasions since starting working with her – the daughter – she has taken her mother's medication, she hasn't swallowed it, she hasn't taken any of it. She's just taken it into her room.

We've been working together now for quite some time, and a quite exciting thing happened a couple of weeks ago. She had a boyfriend, who she was very keen on, and, after a short period, he sent her a text message saying he'd dumped her. This was a Friday night. She sent me a message telling me what had happened and how she felt. I knew she wouldn't talk to anybody else like the ... team or anybody like that. She didn't trust them. I asked her if she would like me to come and see her. So I went round and she was extremely upset and tearful. She told me how she felt, and she felt like harming herself. But she also came up with some ideas on some other things that she could do. I actually couldn't believe it. I thought that's really great. So on the Saturday I sent her a message asking how she was and if she was OK, and she sent me a big long message back telling me who she had been seeing and what friends she had had around, and what she'd been doing, and I kept that up over the weekend, again on Sunday. I went to see her again on the Monday. She managed that break-up very well, which I was absolutely amazed about because it wouldn't have worked a year ago. She would have taken an overdose. She also had extreme anger and behaviour problems, and so we set some goals around that about what made her angry, what she could do to stop herself from erupting, and what strategies she could use. Her behaviour has also improved dramatically. She was not at school. She had pulled out of school when I met her. She is now doing Correspondence School.