

Resilience, Recovery and Renewal with Creative Words for Wellbeing:

Responding to COVID-19 and Beyond

Creative Words for Wellbeing (CWW) services have a crucial role to play in supporting Scotland through this time of crisis, and into the new reality post COVID-19. These services use an evidence-based approach which facilitates reading, writing and storytelling to build resilience, improve mental and emotional wellbeing, overcome social isolation, and support people to survive, recover, rebalance and find new ways forward. CWW are community-based services, provided by libraries and third sector, creative arts and health and social care professionals.

The Scottish Library and Information Council supported the Scottish Poetry Library and Lapidus Scotland to bring together evidence from research and key stakeholders to define the way forward for CWW services in Scotland. This summary highlights how the key findings and recommendations from that work can make a key contribution to Scotland's COVID-19 response, and improve health and wellbeing beyond the current emergency.

Impact

The evidence gathered through this project shows that CWW services:

Are endorsed in evidence-based guidelines from NICE, SIGN and the Royal College of Psychiatry. Multiple systematic reviews show that CWW services can improve outcomes in chronic pain, cancer and other long term conditions, depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions.

Make a major contribution to health and culture policy priorities, including public health reform and the goals of Public Health Scotland, Scotland's Mental Health Strategy, the Health Literacy Action Plan, A Connected Scotland - the strategy for social isolation and loneliness – and social prescribing.

Demand for a national approach

This project identified that:

A wide range of CWW services already exists in Scotland, creating a strong foundation for future development. 135 geographically separate activities were mapped, delivered by 47 CWW service providers. There are still opportunities to extend reach more widely across Scotland, into areas beyond the central belt, and to support more vulnerable client groups.

Stakeholders strongly supported the formation of a national network of CWW services. In the survey, 89% of service providers said this national approach would be valuable in strengthening the collective presence of CWW services, widening access, strengthening partnership with NHS and other agencies, so that they can achieve higher impact.

Stakeholders enthusiastically supported the opportunities a national network presents for training and development; sharing experience and best practice, collaboration, promoting the evidence base for impact of CWW services, and a national approach to evaluation.

The Way Forward

We have developed a Vision and Action Plan to take CWW services forward, building on the evidence from this study.



Vision

Everyone in Scotland can get support for resilience, recovery and renewal in the face of life's challenges, by accessing Creative Words for Wellbeing Services, when and where they need them.



Actions

The Scottish Poetry Library, Lapidus Scotland and The ALLIANCE will jointly bring together existing CWW resources and make the case for funding to build a sustainable national network of CWW services which:

Provide a tailored package of services across Scotland to support citizens and healthcare workers affected by the mental and emotional trauma of COVID-19, through the crisis into recovery and beyond.

Address mental, emotional and social wellbeing needs across all parts of Scotland. The network will reach out to people in remote areas, the housebound and other vulnerable groups.

This will be achieved by:

- 1 Training a national network of CWW facilitators to deliver online and face to face CWW services.
- 2 Providing online CWW services to people at risk of exclusion from face to face services– including in remote areas, the housebound and people in care homes and other institutions.
- 3 Delivering a digital learning platform to support facilitators and service users.
- 4 Sharing the expertise and experience of practitioners and service users through the digital platform, including online mentoring and peer support, mediated discussion, and case studies.
- 5 Implementing campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of CWW services among citizens, service users, policy-makers and funders.
- 6 Monitoring and evaluating impact of CWW services.

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