

# The Context for a Creative Words for Wellbeing network (Phase 1) Summary for August 2019 Reference Group meeting

## Literature review

### Methods

Collation of the existing literature and other useful information on the subject of Creative Words for Wellbeing to set the scene for the rest of the project, bringing together what we know already as well as establishing what we don't know.

### Summary

#### ***Definition and context***

The Reference Group has produced a working definition of Creative Words for Wellbeing as follows:

“Words for wellbeing” can be any creative literary activity, such as (but not limited to) writing, reading or storytelling, that helps people to take more control of their health and wellbeing. It is often undertaken with the aid of a facilitator, either one-to-one or in a group format.

Contexts in which Creative Words for Wellbeing can be used have been identified, and related concepts used in health and care.

Creative Words for Wellbeing activities or interventions can benefit people with a variety of health and wellbeing needs. It can be used to improve health and wellbeing in community settings without any defined healthcare need or connection to health services. In the healthcare context, it may be used as a psychological therapy in its own right, or before, during or after clinical treatment. It can be used before, after, instead of or alongside medication or therapy. The practice is currently not regulated or accredited.

#### ***Evidence from research and guidance***

Historically Creative Words for Wellbeing (or similar) interventions have been undertaken and evaluated on a small scale which means that existing evidence may be overlooked or dismissed by some. However, a number of systematic reviews have been conducted in recent years (see Appendix 1) and this literature describes the benefits of Creative Words for Wellbeing type activity as including immediate access, cost effectiveness, a reduction in the use of medications, and that patients like it. Improvements were observed in depressive symptoms, wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem.

#### ***Policy environment***

Scotland currently appears to be a conducive environment for this work as national, health, arts and literacy policies reference principles and approaches of relevance to Creative Words for Wellbeing. Scottish policy has a clear focus on tackling inequalities by moving the focus from healthcare intervention to prevention of ill-health, improving health and wellbeing, and strengthening support and self-management in the community. Words for Wellbeing and related interventions are already recommended in a small number of policy and practice areas (see Appendix 2). Additionally, in 2017 the UK Government convened an All-Party Parliamentary Group

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on Arts, Health and Wellbeing and the report is an excellent source of evidence, information and recommendations.

### ***In conclusion***

This convergence of emerging awareness and opportunity in policy, health and care delivery and research creates an encouraging context to proceed with future work and provide focus for activity and Funding bids. However, Funding in this area is typically one off and unpredictable.

### **Stakeholder review**

#### **Methods**

A series of 11 telephone depth interviews conducted with Stakeholders from across the sectors who have an existing interest in Creative Words for Wellbeing.

#### **Summary**

The Stakeholders were very positive about the working definition of Creative Words for Wellbeing, considering it “a reasonable starting point” that they anticipated would be widely understood. Individual Stakeholders questioned the use of terms “wellbeing”, “control” and “bibliotherapy”. Generally it was agreed that reference to “words” and the “facilitated journey” were key. A number of ‘grey areas’ were also highlighted, including: graphic novels, Libraries as signposting, reading groups, music therapy and reminiscence.

The Stakeholders were extremely positive about the idea of forming a national cross-sectoral network, acknowledging that Creative Words for Wellbeing activities were beneficial to “diverse groups” and that consequently membership should be “broad”.

Suggested functions of a future network were:

- Working at a larger scale
- Knowledge exchange
- Support
- Source of evidence
- Enabler of cross-sectoral partnerships
- Enabler of funding opportunities
- Enabler of new initiatives
- Provider of support for facilitators
- Provider of support for Commissioners
- Training provider

A number of practical activities were also suggested, including: campaigning, resource hub, showcases, developing evaluation frameworks, pilot projects and links to other networks.

The Stakeholders speculated that this may be the “right time” to pursue a network, and that linking in with current relevant policy agendas would be enabling. However, it was also felt that there are challenges in setting up something genuinely national and cross-sectoral. Agreeing a purpose and direction, realistic goals, leadership model, and securing funding are some of the key challenges. A number of tensions between the arts and health sectors were also noted (including expectations around evidence, funding and the facilitator role) and that consequently making a persuasive case that convinced all sectors could be a challenge.

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**Implications for a future Creative Words for Wellbeing network**

Summary	Short term actions for Reference Group	Implications for future network
We have a working definition of Creative Words for Wellbeing	The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider whether the definition is sufficient to inform the mapping phase or whether any amendments are needed.</li> </ul>	An effective definition will help us to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify scope of Creative Words for Wellbeing Network.</li> <li>Identify and engage with potential network members</li> <li>Explain our work to potential Funders</li> </ul>
Contexts in which Creative Words for Wellbeing approaches are used and related concepts have been identified.	The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarise ourselves with the contexts in which Creative Words for Wellbeing is used by different sectors</li> <li>Use these to inform the mapping phase</li> </ul>	This information is helpful because it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows us to understand the potential contexts in which Creative Words for Wellbeing can be used and how it is relevant to health and social care.</li> <li>Is helpful in looking to identify Funders and network members</li> <li>Suggests frames of reference to use in Funding bids</li> </ul>
The research confirms the benefits of Creative Words for Wellbeing projects	The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarise the key benefits for communication to stakeholders</li> </ul>	Summarising these benefits will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give us more confidence to proceed with future work</li> <li>Steer us towards relevant policy areas</li> <li>Provide us with evidence to cite in Funding bids</li> </ul>
Creative Words for Wellbeing activity is useful in a wide range of circumstances	The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the mapping phase is as broad as possible</li> </ul>	Stakeholders are likely to be working with an extremely broad range of beneficiaries which will have consequences for identification, network-building, cross-sectoral working and training.
Historically interventions have been undertaken and evaluated on a small scale		The network might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather together small-scale evaluations from Scotland</li> <li>Take a joint approach to devising appropriate small-scale evaluation methodologies</li> <li>Work on a national evaluation</li> </ul>

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In recent years a number of relevant systematic reviews have been undertaken.	We should feel confident to proceed.	
Bibliotherapy is referenced as an evidence-based intervention in NICE guidance.	We should feel confident to proceed.	
Current Scottish policy feels very relevant to the ethos of Creative Words for Wellbeing	We should feel confident to proceed.  The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the terminology of policy in correspondence</li> </ul>	A network could make a persuasive case by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Referring to these policy areas in funding bids</li> <li>▪ Linking policy with research</li> <li>▪ Making cross-sectoral links between policy areas</li> <li>▪ Using the terminology of current policy in correspondence</li> </ul>
Creative Words for Wellbeing (or similar) interventions are recommended in a number of policy and practice areas	We should feel confident to proceed.	A network could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work on raising awareness so as to see more specific reference made to Creative Words for Wellbeing in future policy and practice.</li> </ul>
In 2017 the UK Government convened an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing	We should feel confident to proceed.  The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Read the report from this Parliamentary Group as it is an excellent source of evidence, information and recommendations.</li> </ul>	
The stakeholders suggested a number of functions and activities for a future network	The Reference group might like to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Test these out via a wider survey</li> <li>▪ Test these out during round table discussions</li> </ul>	

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<p>The Stakeholders felt that it might be challenging to agree a realistic direction, agree a leadership model, and secure funding for a network</p>	<p>The Reference group might like to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Test these out during round table discussions</li> </ul>	
<p>The Stakeholders anticipated tensions between the arts and health sectors including expectations around evidence, funding and the facilitator role.</p>	<p>The Reference group might like to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Test these out during round table discussions</li> </ul>	
<p>At present the warmest sources of funding appear to be one off grants from local authorities or trusts and foundations.</p>		<p>If looking for funding, these would be useful starting points for the network or its members.</p>
<p>Creative Words for Wellbeing is currently unaccredited</p>		<p>The network might like to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss and have a response to this issue</li> <li>▪ Consider options for regulation and/or and ethical framework</li> <li>▪ Consider options for guidance and training</li> </ul>

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## Next steps: Phase 2

### Survey of key Stakeholders

Web survey with people living or working in Scotland who have a professional or personal interest in Creative Words for Wellbeing, to include:

- Those with a strategic-level interest (Commissioners, Funders, Project Managers, etc.)
- Facilitators
- Those who would like to work with Creative Words for Wellbeing, but currently do not

Content to explore some of the emerging issues around setting up a future network as informed by work to date, including:

- Needs analysis
- Likely engagement with a network
- Perceived useful functions and actions of a network
- Recruitment for round tables (Phase 3)

### Mapping of current Creative Words for Wellbeing activities

Identification of Creative Words for Wellbeing activities currently taking place in Scotland (with data collection via survey and web searching), to include details of:

- Location
- Client group aimed at
- Management and funding
- Employment status of facilitator
- Specialism of facilitator

### Mapping of Creative Words for Wellbeing practitioners

Identification of Creative Words for Wellbeing practitioners currently working in Scotland (with data collection via survey and web searching), to include details of:

- Location
- Client groups work with
- Employment status
- Specialism

### Outputs

- Survey report detailing needs and consequences for network
- Database of activities
- Database of practitioners
- Mapping report detailing patterns and gaps in provision, and map graphics
- Recommendations for Phase 3 (round table discussions)

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**Appendix 1:**

**A summary of systematic reviews relating to Creative Words for Wellbeing**

Study name	Reference	Findings
A systematised review of social prescribing schemes (Note: Includes Books on Prescription)	Chatterjee et al 2018	“Outcomes included increase in self-esteem and confidence; improvement in mental well-being and positive mood; and reduction in anxiety, depression and negative mood.”
Comparative efficacy and acceptability of bibliotherapy for depression and anxiety disorders in children and adolescents	Yuan 2018	“According to the findings in this review, bibliotherapy may be more beneficial in treating depression in adolescents, but shows less robust effects for anxiety in children.”
Effects of bibliotherapy on treating depression	Gualano 2017	“Bibliotherapy could be considered a useful and cost effective intervention, especially for the elderly, in order to give immediate treatment and to reduce medications.”
The long-term effects of bibliotherapy in depression treatment	Gualano et al 2017	“Bibliotherapy appears to be effective in the reduction of adults depressive symptoms in the long-term period, providing an affordable prompt treatment that could reduce further medications.”
The Therapeutic use of Fiction and Poetry in Mental Health	Peterkin & Grewal 2017	“The use of poetry or fiction in therapy appears to be beneficial when used in a group context with a skilled facilitator.”
Does therapeutic writing help people with long-term conditions?	Nyssen et al 2016	“Estimated costs of intervention were low, but there was insufficient evidence to judge cost-effectiveness. Realist synthesis findings suggested that facilitated therapeutic writing is a complex intervention and group interaction contributes to the perception of benefit.”
Evidence Review of BOP and Creative Bibliotherapy Projects in Libraries	Chamberlain 2008	“The review suggests interventions were cost effective, elicited a positive response from patients, improved patient self-management and resulted in better patient - doctor relationships.”
Bibliotherapy for mental health service users	Fanner 2008	“The evidence strongly suggests that library-based interventions and the provision of information could be beneficial for service users and economical for the health service in assisting treatment of a range of conditions.”

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**Appendix 2:  
A summary of relevant health guidance**

Source	Recommended approach	Document
Royal College of Psychiatrists in partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners	Bibliotherapy	Psychological Therapies in Psychiatry and Primary Care
		Alcohol-Related Brain Damage
		Management of patients with physical and psychological problems in primary care
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)	Bibliotherapy	Common mental health problems
		Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)	Arts therapy or group-based arts activity	Looked-after children and young people
		Older people: independence and mental wellbeing
		Psychosis and schizophrenia in children and young people
		Psychosis and schizophrenia in adults
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)	Self-management, guided self-help, or self-help group	Depression in adults
		Depression in adults with a chronic physical health problem
		Depression in children and young people
		Alcohol-use disorders
		Antenatal and postnatal mental health
		Eating disorders
		Obsessive compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder
		[Also recommended for carers of people with these or other conditions]
Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN)	Guided self help with bibliotherapy as an example	Non-pharmaceutical management of depression in adults
		Chronic pain
NHS Education for Scotland	Low intensity interventions with bibliotherapy as an example	A review and discussion of psychological therapies and interventions delivered within stepped care service models
NHS Education for Scotland	Bibliotherapy	Psychological Therapies for Adults in Scotland – information for service users and carers