

Resilience, Recovery and Renewal through Words for Wellbeing: Responding to COVID 19 and Beyond

Vision and Action Plan for Creative Words for Wellbeing (CWW) Services

1. Context

COVID 19 confronts the people of Scotland with the biggest health and economic crisis since World War 2. The deleterious effects of the lockdown on the mental health of many people, the loss of life due to the virus, the trauma for those working in health and social care and other frontline roles, the hugely difficult ethical decisions for healthcare staff, patients and carers, and the financial hardship, create major mental and emotional challenges both during and after the COVID 19 period.

At the same time, COVID 19 is making us learn valuable life lessons about how to live with a “new normal” that removes familiar certainties, to find depths of resilience within ourselves, to value our communities and opportunities to support others – e.g. through volunteering – and to engage more widely with digital communication and learning.

In this context, Creative Words for Wellbeing services provide an evidence-based approach to help people and communities, including health and social care staff, to recover mental and emotional wellbeing, overcome social isolation, rebalance their lives and build resilience to deal with life challenges beyond COVID 19. CWW services are community-based, provided by libraries and third sector, and creative arts professionals as well as by a number of health and social care professionals.

1.1 Supporting strategic priorities across health and culture policy

Development of CWW services presents a practical way to deliver on key policy objectives across health and culture:

- Supports the [public health reform](#) and Public Health Scotland ambition of a whole system approach to health and wellbeing, embedded in communities and in partnership working across health, third sector and local authorities.
- A focus for the growing interest at parliamentary and government levels in [social prescribing](#) by health and social care staff.
- Facilitates delivery of the [Health Literacy Action Plan](#), self-management and personalised care centred on individual values and priorities – as set out in [Realistic Medicine](#).
- Provides an affordable, high impact, community-centred approach to early intervention and prevention of mental health needs – a top ministerial healthcare priority and a critical objective within [Scotland’s Mental Health Strategy](#). This community-based approach will help to reduce avoidable demands on health and care services, and to reduce waiting times for mental health services.
- Supports implementation of the refreshed Public Library Strategy [Ambition and Opportunity](#), which highlights the role of public libraries in health and wellbeing, and the [Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing Action Plan](#), which sets out objectives for collaboration across libraries, health and social care and the third sector.
- Delivers on key objectives with “[A Connected Scotland](#)” – the strategy for addressing social isolation and loneliness.

The focus on digital delivery of Creative Words for Wellbeing Services within this action plan also contributes to the goals of [Scotland's Digital Health and Care Strategy](#), which aims to use digital technology to empower and enable citizens to take more control of their health and wellbeing.

1.2 Building on work to date

This action plan is based on the findings from the mapping and consultation work carried out during 2019-2020 within the Scottish Library and Information Council-funded project 'Mapping the Way Forward for Creative Words for Wellbeing in Scotland.' This project delivered:

- A review of the evidence base for impact of CWW services.
- Mapping of current provision of CWW services across Scotland, and an initial version of an online directory of services.
- Reports of stakeholder consultation through survey and roundtable events on priorities for developing a Network of Creative Words for Wellbeing services, and the benefits this could bring.

2. Vision for Creative Words for Wellbeing Service Network

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

3. Work Programme 2020-2023

3.1 Leadership and management

It is proposed that this programme of work is led and managed by the Scottish Poetry Library with support from Lapidus Scotland and The ALLIANCE, working in close collaboration with library, third sector and health sector representatives in the network of CWW service providers.

The aim will be to identify resources to appoint a Network Manager, based within the Scottish Poetry Library, to provide operational management for the developments outlined below. A health professional lead and a creative literature professional lead would also be appointed on a sessional basis.

3.2 Aims

This programme of work will:

a) Support people's mental, emotional and social wellbeing across Scotland through two phases of the COVID 19 crisis:

- While the COVID 19 pandemic is still with us, though past the peak and the most severe lockdown restrictions - anticipated from October 2020 to middle of 2021.
- Post COVID 19, when Scotland is transitioning into a new era and dealing with the economic, health and personal aftermath of COVID 19.

b) Support people across Scotland experiencing a wide range of mental and emotional health and wellbeing needs, not related to COVID 19.

3.3 Objectives

a) Provide a tailored package of services across Scotland to support people affected by COVID 19, through the crisis into recovery and beyond.

This support will be available universally and will include a focus on reaching the following key groups:

- Health and social care professionals and other frontline workers.
- People living through grief and bereavement.
- People living through the emotional, social and mental impact of the lockdown and of experiencing major illness, as patients, carers or family members.
- People suffering from the economic impact of COVID 19 on jobs, businesses and lifestyle.

b) Widen provision of CWW services to address the impact of COVID 19 and other mental, emotional and social wellbeing needs across all parts of Scotland

This includes reaching out to remote areas, and to people who are housebound or have restricted movement – e.g. due to caring commitments, people in care homes, prisons - by:

- Providing specialist training in online facilitation of CWW sessions, and creating a cohort of skilled online facilitators.
- Training up new facilitators to deliver face to face training and enabling all facilitators to reach new settings and client groups.
- Providing “train the trainer” resources
- Providing guidance, support and training to support start-up of new CWW services.

c) Build high quality, sustainable CWW services by:

- Enabling sharing of experience, ideas and good practice through face to face and virtual networking for facilitators.
- Establishing mentoring and peer support networks, including use of virtual tools.
- Supporting development of local and regional networks, so that they can signpost clients to relevant services for their needs.
- Providing training, good practice guidance, tools and tips for facilitators.
- Making the case for long-term funding for the network of services.

d) Strengthen awareness and uptake of CWW services -

Among clients, by:

- Providing a directory with information about available services and how to access them.
- Providing virtual CWW services, for example facilitated by Skype or phone.
- Tailored communication for specific client groups and needs.

For policy leads and potential funders, by:

- Providing an Evidence Hub highlighting research and case studies illustrating the impact of CWW services
- Tailored communication demonstrating how CWW services will address the impact of COVID 19 and aligning CWW services with policy-makers' and fundholders' priorities.

e) Evaluate impact and value of Creative Words for Wellbeing Services by:

- Providing an impact evaluation framework for services to record and share evaluation results.
- Commissioning a formal research study to assess impact.

3.4 Three-year action plan

Year 1 2020-2021: Laying Foundations

The Scottish Poetry Library, Lapidus Scotland, The ALLIANCE, Scottish Government health literacy and self-management leads, will use this year to lay the groundwork for future developments.

Initial COVID 19 support package

- Identify human and financial resource to create an initial cohort of online facilitators and digital resources, and support tests of change of providing online CWW services to frontline workers and people suffering isolation and loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Refine and optimise the support package based on evaluation of these tests of change.

Strategic engagement and sponsorship

- Engage key policy leads and ministers in appreciating the value CWW can offer during and beyond the COVID 19 pandemic and in supporting the way forward over the next 2 years
- Ensure that the Creative Words for Wellbeing plan is integrated into taking forward the national Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing Implementation Plan.
- Put forward business case for the next two years of development to appropriate sponsors.

Maximising use of existing resource

- Map existing offerings that support the objectives outlined above (e.g. Lapidus Start-Up course; initial Directory of Services and evidence report; Creative Scotland courses).
- Provide a single Go-To place that signposts users to these resources – e.g. The ALLIANCE Information and Learning Portal; Scottish Poetry Library website). Encourage other sites to signpost users to this Go-To Place.

Dissemination and awareness raising

- Disseminate summary of project findings and proposed action plan.

- Organise at least three virtual or face to face meetings to share the action plan with service providers and to lay foundations for the CWW Network.

Year 2 2021-2022: Developing the national network of CWW services

Appoint CWW Network Manager to coordinate the network of service providers and manage delivery of the next two years of work:

'Beyond COVID 19' service package

This service package will build on the tests of change conducted during year 1 to create a national network of facilitators and trainers, with accompanying online and hard copy CWW resources. This will bring together newly trained facilitators and existing service providers to deliver a national programme of support to help frontline workers and citizens affected by COVID 19 to recover and move forward with renewed strength..

The programme will support all the target groups highlighted in objective 3.3a) above. It will include a particular focus on reaching people who cannot participate in face to face sessions and are most likely to experience social isolation – for example, people living in remote areas, people who are housebound or living in institutions such as care homes.

Key components of this national networked service

Delivering this 'Beyond COVID 19' service package will be enabled by developing the following service components:

a) Online information and learning platform

In consultation with the network of service providers, and building on the existing landscape of resources, establish an online platform providing access to:

- Information and learning resources
- Hub of evidence for impact of CWW services
- Peer support and mentoring
- Online discussion

b) Developing CWW network and resources

- Expand delivery of training for online facilitators and “Train the trainers” sessions. This will be managed in a targeted and systematic way to create a national network of services that reaches all parts of Scotland, including the most vulnerable and hard to reach groups.
- Develop guidance and resources to support start-up of new services, to address gaps in current service provision.
- Develop best practice guidance, tools and tips for existing services.
- Facilitate a programme of virtual and face to face networking and learning events.

c) Impact evaluation

- Commission research to develop evaluation framework and evaluate impact.

Year 3 2022-2023: Widening the user base and becoming a permanent service

- Complete delivery of resources and support for service providers initiated in Year 2.

- Extend scope of support beyond COVID 19 impact to the wider range of health and wellbeing issues which CWW can address.
- Provide mentorship and support to new services in start-up phase.
- Update and enhance online directory of services so that clients and service providers can quickly identify available services suited to their needs.
- Facilitate development of local service provider networks which can provide mutual support and signpost clients to services appropriate to their needs.
- Review results of impact evaluation and make business case for long term funding.

4. Governance

A Steering Group will be established to guide and monitor this programme of work. Given the proposed role of the Scottish Poetry Library as overall national lead for this development, it is proposed that this Steering Group will report to the Board of the Scottish Poetry Library, and will also have a “dotted” reporting line to the Implementation Group for the Collective force for Health and Wellbeing Action Plan led jointly by the Scottish Library and Information Council, The ALLIANCE and the Scottish Government Health Literacy and Self-Management team.