

Year of Writing

Half-Year Summary, October 2010

Overview of Project:

The Year of Writing is providing learning opportunities and resources to support staff with various types of writing such as: writing patient notes, and writing for publication, reflective practice and personal development; as well as opportunities for service users and carers to get started with writing for wellbeing and recovery.

Expected Benefits:

- Contribution to development of a culture of creativity and learning in the Trust;
- Improvements in participants' wellbeing, confidence and self esteem through therapeutic/non-therapeutic writing activities;
- Clinicians increasing their skills, willingness and confidence to use reflective writing as a tool for improving practice;
- Staff acquiring writing techniques useful, for example, for therapeutic writing with service users, personal development, business writing – with associated enhancement of quality of written communications;
- Staff, service users and carers interacting in writing groups/workshops on equal terms and across boundaries;
- Staff encouraged to write for publication;
- Raising the profile of the Trust with members by extending the services offered;
- Raising the profile of the Trust nationally – via the CPD event on 18th March 2011, and articles that will be submitted to magazines and journals after the project ends.

Inpatient Writing Sessions:

As a pilot exercise, one-hour writing sessions were held for small groups of inpatients in Hadrian at 2 pm each Friday from 30th April to 13th August. A total of 20 inpatients attended between 1-5 sessions each. Some inpatients attended only one session and others attended 3-5 sessions.

A report of this pilot is being prepared which will be based on in-depth session evaluation questionnaires, facilitator's observations, emails, casenotes and staff feedback. According to the calculated scores from before and after each session, 75% of inpatients felt more positive at the end of the session than immediately before it; 71% felt the session was deep; and 79% felt the session was smooth.

Feedback from inpatients and staff has been good. For example, the person who attended the most sessions (5) says that writing really has helped her. Consequently, she reports that she is still continuing to write her journal now that she is at home from hospital. She has also gone on to write a very good article about her personal history and her recovery and aimed at encouraging a more positive attitude to recovery in the service users who read it. She has posted the article, which is complimentary about the Trust, on the Patient Opinion website. She is booked to attend a half-day workshop in October. Another service user has also been in contact to say thank you for the writing sessions, and to report on the benefit he feels he has gained from writing since his discharge from Hadrian.

Creative Writing Workshops:

These workshops, aimed at improving wellbeing through creative writing, are open to all Trust members. Workshops have been held so far in Penrith (13 attendees) and Barrow (2 workshops attended by 14 people altogether).

Further workshops are happening in October and November in Distington (8 booked to attend) and Carleton Clinic (3 workshops, 30 booked to attend).

These workshops are attended by a mixture of service users, carers, staff, governors, helpers (accompanying service users), and representatives from local voluntary organizations. Several people have joined the Trust directly as a result of the workshops. Two former Hadrian inpatients are booked to attend one of these workshops.

“The environment was good and facilitated much openness from those present. Appreciated insight into Eileen’s journey and certainly gave food for thought and showed how therapeutic writing can be.”

“Enjoyed being part of a small group and sharing the writing we produced.”

“Whilst I was writing I forgot about everything else around me. I didn’t feel stressed or anxious. I felt calm. And I feel calm still. Any negative emotions I was feeling slipped away. I found this powerful.”



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Carol Ross, Year of Writing Project Lead, October 2010.

Staff Workshops:

Staff workshops have been held in Whitehaven (13 attended), Penrith (16 attended) and Carlisle (4 attended) covering: reflective practice, reflective writing, writing good patient notes, therapeutic writing, and writing for publication. The workshops were facilitated by the Project Lead and by 6 clinicians. Further workshops are booked for Carlisle in December and January.

Evaluation reports are available. This page shows a selection of comments written on the evaluation forms.



Copeland Older Adults CMHT
Team Development Day.

“Enjoyed the group work – writing in people's notes. Thought provoking. Will be helpful to be more focussed and concise when writing in notes.”

“A good way of expressing oneself and feeling better. A guide to prescribe to others as well.”

“Enjoyed getting team members to write about different aspects, e.g., pretend you are a country. Interesting as a team building exercise.”

“I will be more focussed, concise and objective when writing in patient notes.”

“I had a very enjoyable day and am glad I came. I will use what you have taught me.”

“Free writing at the beginning of the day was very therapeutic and let me get all my thoughts and worries of a hectic morning out so I could concentrate on the event itself.”

“Interesting and thought provoking day. Well done to all!”

“Facilitated in a warm, open, friendly manner which enabled group work.”

CPD Conference:

The Year of Writing will culminate in a CPD conference at North Lakes Hotel, Penrith on 18th March 2011. This conference is aimed primarily at trust staff, and clinicians from within and outside Cumbria.

The aims of the conference are (i) to further develop the skills of Trust staff, and (ii) to raise the profile of the Trust nationally. For example, we hope to attract approximately 30 clinicians to attend from outside Cumbria, because of the scarcity of this type of development opportunity.

The main tutor for the event will be nationally renowned author, Gillie Bolton, who will be leading sessions on therapeutic writing and writing for reflective practice. Other workshops will be led by a local poet, Geraldine Green, and by trust clinicians.

Other Planned Workshops:

- Running a reflective practice group;
- Creative writing for personal growth and stress management;
- Working with narratives in CAMHS;
- I'm still me. The importance of the written word in life story work;
- Introduction to writing for publication;
- Research Presentation/Research Clinic;
- Poetry and collaborative poems in group work.

The programme for this event has been drafted and will be professionally designed and printed.

A press release about the conference and the project has been drafted and will be sent to national magazines and journals later this year.



Gillie Bolton (<http://gilliebolton.com/>)