

Letters To Us
Poetry Writing Workshop
LINKS Community Mental Health Service, Cardiff Royal
Infirmery
Timeline Feedback by Duke AI

- I met with the enthusiastic and encouraging Melanie Wotton to discuss the project
- Melanie talked in depth about the aims of the project and mentioned that there would be a final collaborative piece
- Melanie and I then met with the lovely Evangeli from LINKS
- I proposed what I would like to do, hold poetry-based workshops that focus on how creative writing, specifically poetry, can be a self-therapy tool, when suffering from mental health
- Melanie and Evangeli were excited about the project, and they sent me the necessary forms to begin
- I created 8 unique workshops that aimed to develop the participants as poets and help them feel comfortable sharing their experiences
- Melanie, Evangeli and I created a safe, comfortable, and confidential environment to ensure the participants felt welcome and at ease
- To begin there were 4 participants
- Most weeks we had 3 participants
- There were 6 participants altogether, yet 3 had to drop out due to personal issues
- Throughout the process the confidence, group interaction and openness improved with every participant
- The final product was outstanding as the participants were courageous and willing in every single workshop to not only write their own poetry but share it with everybody
- The letters to their own mental health condition really shows the power of poetry and I am so proud to be a part of such a meaningful project
- Melanie and Evangeli were extremely supportive and helpful throughout this experience
- I am looking forward to seeing the mural Amelia produces in the LINKS waiting area

Letters to Us was a highly successful and effective arts project which not only developed participants' skills in poetry writing, but gave them the tools to further understand their mental health condition and introduced them to new wellbeing strategies. Sharing personal stories through poetry writing built confidence throughout the course, and provided understanding of other participants mental health. Participants were proud to share their final poems, and collaborated with Amelia Unity to create a wall mural in the Links Service at the Cardiff Royal Infirmery.

A timelapse video of the mural being created is available.

This project was made possible through funding from Arts Council of Wales and our Cardiff Royal Infirmary people, place, future project

Cardiff Royal Infirmary: People, Place Future

Creative Writing Project – Timeline, Evaluation and Feedback

Evey – Occupational Therapist

- Approached by Melanie at Links CMHT with Pete Murray (Integrated Manager), Melanie discussed funding opportunities for a linked project.
- Discussed ideas, logistics and aims in depth with Melanie and brainstormed potential ideas going forward – decided on aim of project
- Melanie connected with potential artists and the workshop was developed
- Met with first Artist Duke – who shared his thoughts and ideas on aspects of creative writing and poetry. Duke discussed his own experiences of mental health and how he utilised creative writing as a form of therapy and understanding. This would automatically be comforting to the participants under secondary mental health services.
- Discussed the project in our multi-disciplinary team requesting all members to discuss opportunity with patients and identify any interest
- Contacted all those who were identified and discussed workshop in more depth, developed all necessary paperwork and organised appropriate room booking space – utilised the chapel based at Cardiff Royal Infirmary accessing board room with appropriate layout and aesthetics.
- Our aim was to begin project with a max of 8 participants – 6 participants initially began with 3 unable to sustain due to personal reasons.
- The final 3 participants engaged throughout each session, with each week they grew in confidence and skill. The environment was relaxed and open providing a comfortable and safe space. All participants developed beautiful pieces each week. Learning and developing understanding and knowledge in different forms of poetry, writing and style was extremely beneficial and allowed each participant to identify their own individual style.
- A total of 8 sessions were completed, due to a range of unpredictable and unforeseen circumstances the times and days of

these sessions were changed so consistency as originally planned was not sustained. However, the 3 participants did very well and maintaining organisation and engagement.

- The idea for the final outcome of the workshop was developed by Duke, to ensure the workshop was individualised holistically for each participant the outcome was for each participant to develop a letter in the form of a poem to their mental health diagnosis.
- The final perfected poems were exceptionally creative, charismatic, inspiring and beautifully written, the participants were all willing to read out aloud and all willing to allow their poems to be developed into a mural as part of a separate project with a new artist.
- To me this workshop was very powerful and inspiring, it allowed the participants to connect with others who experience mental health, it allowed them to shine and be proud of their diagnosis (often not seen in mental health), it allowed raw talent to present and it allowed new knowledge and skills to be developed in how creative writing and poetry contains a therapeutic lens. It has provided the participants to develop a new occupation they can independently open up within their home environments or seek other public/group opportunities which have been discussed in sessions. I 'am incredibly grateful to Melanie for approaching links to allow this amazing workshop to evolve as well as incredibly proud of the participants for developing such outstanding poetry to represent how powerful and important mental health is. It was an honour to have worked with Duke and to hear his amazing journey in becoming such a fantastic and creative spoken word poet.
- I am keen to continue this project to its next stage working with Amelia and the participants to develop the mural at Links for the world to see their creative and inspirational work.

I enjoyed being given guidance and feedback from a spoken word poet and hearing his performance. Also, the fact that Duke lives with issues himself made everything more relatable. Finally, I took much from sharing work with other participants and meeting like-minded people.

I'll take away ten new poems and a little more confidence in delivering my work; also, more insight into the musicality of spoken word poetry and how it stimulates page poetry.

It would be wonderful if there were more creative projects such as this for people with mental health issues to meet up and share ideas and work.

Jane - participant



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