

How we are building evaluation into Write to Recovery

Guest blog

Ruth Stevenson, of [Ruthless Research](#), presents the second in a series of blog posts about the evaluation of SRN's Write to Recovery project.

One of the major components of the [Write to Recovery](#) evaluation will be to get feedback from those that are participating in the writing workshops across Scotland. As a freelance researcher I'm joining Write to Recovery from the outside and although I came in with a few ideas for how I could do this, it is important to make sure that the final plans for the evaluation feel 'right' to the existing team. In this blog post I'm going to outline the way that we've been working together to design the evaluation and what we've come up with so far.



A researcher wears many hats

With my researcher hat on I always have my eye on the data, analysis and report which will be required to demonstrate the impact of any programme. I know I'm going to need to gather as much insight from as many participants as possible and that this will need to sit within a sound methodological structure. That said, I also know that evaluation can feel dry and dusty and (to some) a bit intimidating. For the Write to Recovery evaluation I've been granted the time and the methodological free reign to implement best practice so when all of this data is being gathered I want it to feel natural and friendly and flexible, and ideally I would like the participants to actually get something out of the process themselves.



Firstly I spent some time with the Write to Recovery team, talking about typical Write to Recovery sessions, and the evaluation, and ways that these might fit together. Across a couple of meetings we looked at what has been working well already, and what we wanted to achieve with the evaluation, and we thought

about what some of the barriers and practicalities around the evaluation might be.

I then attended a training day for new Write to Recovery facilitators. The initial presentations contained some more of the theory behind Write to Recovery as well as an insight into the facilitator perspective. As the day moved on I also had a good chance to chat with some of the people who have taken part in Write to Recovery already and to join in with some discussions and writing activities. This gave me a bit of an idea of what taking part in Write to Recovery felt like both from hearing their stories and from experiencing it myself.

After that I went away and had a few reads through the facilitator's Group Work Guidance handbook – a 36 page document that sets out plans for the full programme of Write to Recovery sessions.

Then it was Christmas. And I let all of this sink in!

Then I made a plan!

The plan involves slightly amending the existing Write to Recovery sessions so that reflection and evaluation are an integral part of how Write to Recovery is delivered, and adding in a new final session with the theme of 'Reflection' which will be the main data collection session.



Through discussion and writing we will be asking participants to reflect on what Write to Recovery has been like for them and their group and to identify any changes that have occurred during that time. We expect that this will give us plenty of evaluative data, and we hope that the opportunity to reflect on distance travelled will be a positive one for the participants.

We want the additional session to be as comfortable as possible so that the participants will feel willing to share as much with us as possible, and also because making people feel comfortable is simply the right thing to do! To build this comfort, the Reflection session will be facilitated by the usual group facilitator rather than me – an unknown person – turning up and complicating things at the last minute. We've also used a similar structure, similar wording, and similar activities to the previous sessions in the block to keep things feeling familiar. Hopefully the new session

will fit in seamlessly, feeling like a natural part of the programme as if it had always been there.

Piloting the evaluation process

But we're not committed to this! The next thing we are going to do is pilot it. Four new Write to Recovery groups have started in January and in these four groups we're going to test out the updated Group Work Guidance handbook including the new bits and pieces and the evaluation activities. We're going to see how well it works and we're open to refining any part of it based on experience, at that point or as we roll it out to future groups.

In upcoming blog posts I'll let you know how the piloting goes, and tell you a bit more about the methodologies that we are using.

[Read the first blog in this series](#)

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