



Write to Recovery

Over the sea to Skye: Write to Recovery in rural settings

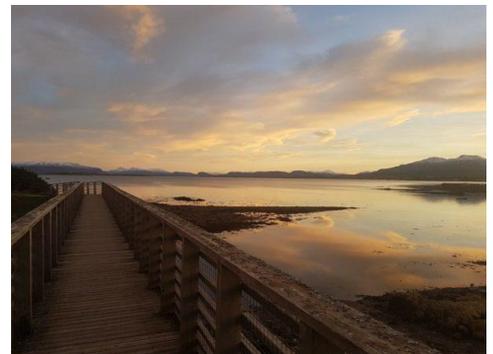
24th January 2018

Write to Recovery Group Facilitator Erin Crombie went over the sea to Skye. In this blog she tells us about her adventure.

I arrived in Broadford late in the evening, grateful to be clambering off of the bus after a 6 hour journey. I'd been prepared to be overwhelmed by the Island's scenery, but wouldn't get a chance until the following morning. Nevertheless I felt exhilarated- this trip had been long in the making.

[Rag Tag n' Textile](#) tutor Gill first got in contact with us in summer 2017 expressing an interest in the project, and six months later I was finally here!

My feelings of excitement were accompanied by nerves. This was foreign territory for [Write to Recovery](#), not just in the location but also in the way I would be delivering the group work. Write to Recovery group work is usually 8 sessions running over 2 months, but due to the distance we planned a shorter version which would be delivered over just few days. I would spend the next three days working with Rag Tag, and the latter part of the week with the Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association (SLMHA).



A creative space



Figure 1(L-R) Meg, Maggie, Gill and Dave

Rag Tag is a unique and invaluable resource in Skye and Lochalsh for people experiencing mental ill-health. Rag Tag offers a secure, calm and responsive environment where people can learn new skills and occupy themselves in a meaningful and creative way. Rag Tag recycles donated textiles to create high quality craft items that are sold in their shop. It seemed clear to us that Write to Recovery would fit in well with the

charity's creative ethos.

I was welcomed warmly to the charity's premises on Monday morning. As Gill busied herself preparing tea for us, I took in the surroundings: a cosy, homely, communal space. One wall covered floor to ceiling with shelves of colourful fabric and craft materials; a beautiful handmade mobile hung at the window (made by one of the group participants, I later discovered). As I sipped the tea, people arrived one by one until the table was occupied by six expectant faces. Faces that, in a few short days, I would come to feel a warm familiarity toward.

Cultivating connection

This feeling of connection and belonging is an important part of the Write to Recovery process. Participants connect over shared experiences, emotions, and ideas, and the group becomes a safe and trusting space. Each member of the group contributes to the creation and maintaining of that space.



My one concern about delivering Write to Recovery in such an abridged way, was that this feeling of connection would not have enough time to cultivate. I'm thrilled to say I was wrong.

Each session a new theme was introduced and the group led each other through a candid and profound discussion, which culminated in the composition and sharing of writing. Stories were shared, both uplifting and heart-breaking. The group responded to each other with encouragement and empathy. A nurturing dialogue emerged each time.

Working in rural communities

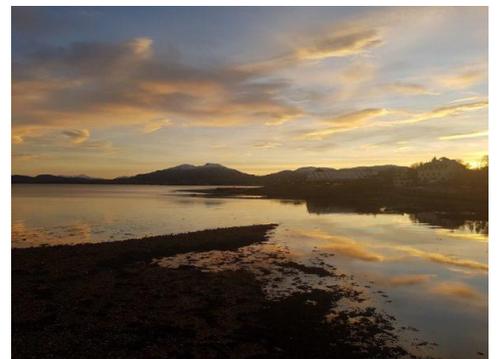


Am Fasgadh, SLMHA's drop-in centre describes itself as a 'home from home', a place where people can socialise, undertake activities, or just relax. For the second time that week I was made to feel welcome in a close-knit community. During the three days spent with Alex of SLMHA we delivered a few Write to Recovery sessions for those who wanted to get a taste of what to expect when he runs Write to Recovery as a weekly workshop at Am Fasgadh.

Write to Recovery is designed to be peer-led and self-sustainable, so part of the work during my week in Skye was offering guidance about how to facilitate Write to Recovery. People from both organisations came together at SLMHA's premises to take part in this evening training session.

We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to share our project and its resources with organisations serving more rural communities. We hope that by getting involved in Write to Recovery, Rag Tag and SLMHA can engage with the project's nation-wide community of writers.

The trip provided great experience for thinking about how we as a project can support and engage with partners in more rural, difficult to reach areas. The feedback from Rag Tag and SLMHA is invaluable to us in influencing how we will deliver the programme for future trips to communities further afield. We are currently planning group work in Stornoway in June, and we are reaching out to potential partners with a view of bringing the programme to Orkney and Shetland within the year as well.



Find out more about [Write to Recovery group work](#)