

SRN's ambitious plans for evaluating Write to Recovery Guest blog

My name is Ruth Stevenson, and I am an independent research consultant. Through my business, [Ruthless Research](#), I provide research and evaluation services for not-for-profit organisations, and my professional interests include mental health and creativity.



In November I was commissioned to evaluate the Scottish Recovery Network's (SRN) [Write to Recovery project](#). Write to Recovery is an eight week programme of writing workshops focused on the promotion of self-management for people experiencing emotional difficulties or mental ill-health. The discussion and writing undertaken at Write to Recovery groups aims to invoke, in participants, a recognition of their strengths and positive aspirations.

This group work element of the project has been running for nearly a year now and is complemented by an [online story-sharing tool](#) which launched in 2014. The take-up and response to group work has been very encouraging, and so SRN is very keen to learn from the process and experience as the project continues.

I have been asked to design an evaluation that is best practice as I see it, based on my extensive experience of evaluating charity projects. Consequently this evaluation will be ambitious! It will be large scale, it will be long-term, and it will be innovative in terms of methodology and inclusivity.

Building evaluation into the heart of the project



I won't just be coming in at the end and seeing what happened. Instead I will be working closely with SRN to build evaluation into the heart of the Write to Recovery model, so that it becomes a routine element of the programme. We'll make sure that the evaluative elements fit seamlessly into what has been working so well

already and are completely in-keeping with the existing delivery tone and methodology.

The main participants in the evaluation will be the beneficiaries: the people that attend the Write to Recovery sessions. Our methodology will allow us to get feedback from all beneficiaries across the rest of the project period which will be very methodologically strong, and also an opportunity for reflection which we hope the beneficiaries will appreciate. As well as this, we're making plans to involve strategic stakeholders, participant facilitators, past beneficiaries and staff members. We will also build in some research skills training for staff members and participant facilitators.

This is very much an opportunity for learning, and with reflection and discussion at its core this methodology will allow the evaluation and project to evolve alongside one another. We have put a lot of time and thought into constructing an evaluation that is very methodologically robust and will be strategically meaningful, but importantly will be designed and conducted “with” SRN and the project stakeholders, rather than “done to” SRN and the project stakeholders.



It is a privilege to be invited to work in this way, and we all feel extremely lucky that our funder, [The ALLIANCE](#), is supportive of our plans! We also have plans to share the knowledge and learning from this evaluation widely. We'll start by blogging about what we're doing, but we'd welcome opportunities to write articles and speak at events as the findings unfold. [Do get in touch](#) if you have any questions or if you'd like us to tell you more.

And... watch this space!

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