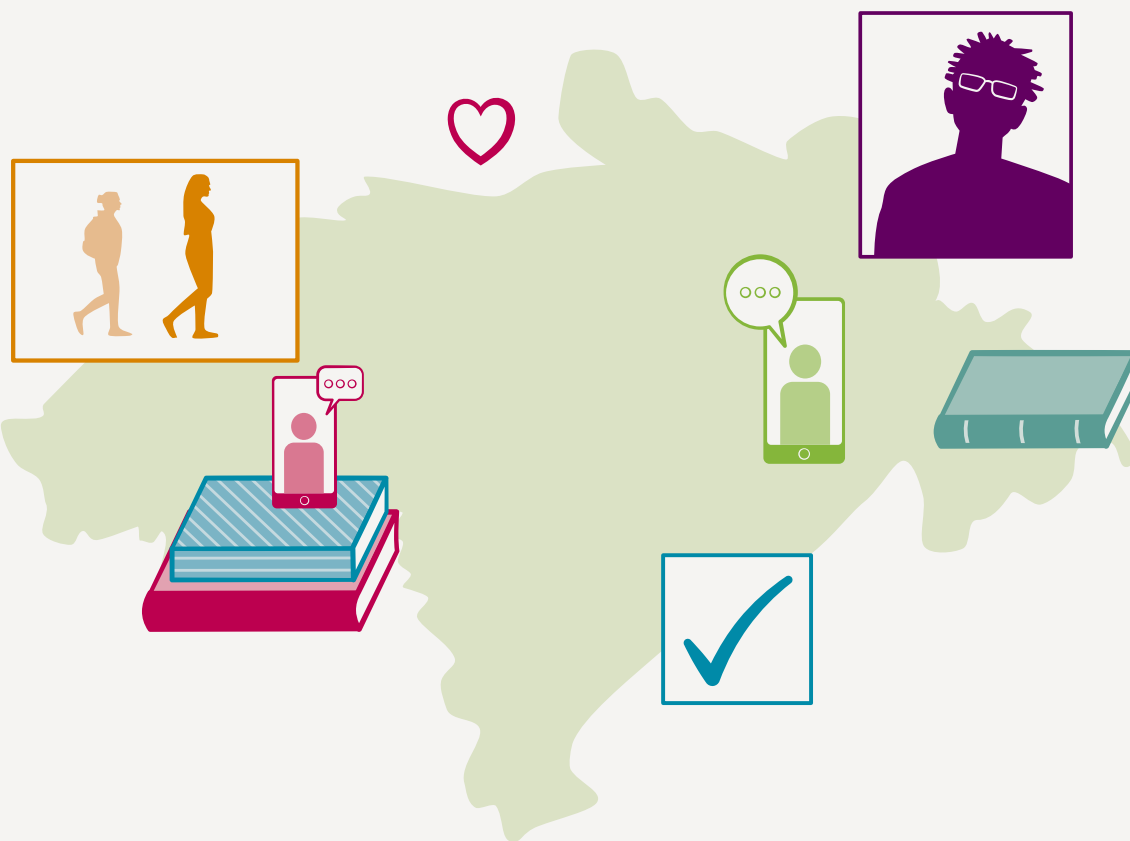


Co-creating libraries for wellbeing

# Midlothian

Pilot project



**ALLIANCE**  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE  
ALLIANCE SCOTLAND  
people at the centre

# Midlothian

Despite the disruption and inevitable difficulties associated with the pandemic, the project in Midlothian has resulted in a dedicated digital platform, and a strategy for embedding both library resource awareness and a physical presence in schools and public libraries across Midlothian.

In the early stages of the pilot in Midlothian, various stakeholders were identified who could help to assess the priority needs within the community and who could have a pro-active role in co-design at all stages. Colleagues in the Health & Social Care partnership and Education were approached to help formulate the best ideas for scoping and design and to ensure that the outcome would produce an ongoing legacy.

As is quite common in cross-agency working, some difficulties were encountered engaging with some of the potential partners and unfortunately there was very little input from colleagues in the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Nevertheless, Midlothian generated some rich learning in engaging with young people to co-design the digital platform.

It was decided that the best way to reach young people was through schools and as such school librarians were involved from an early stage. Beeslack High School in Penicuik was a community asset, having previously worked with library services on a Words for Wellbeing project and with a local public library located nearby.

Working with the School Librarian and the Head of Guidance, two existing groups within the school community – the pupil wellbeing group and the Beeslack LGBT group - participated as focus groups. The young people shared their views on what was important to their health and wellbeing, how they sourced health information, and what support networks they would turn to if they needed relevant advice. They were also asked for their feelings on their school and public library and what their library services could do to support any gaps in health and wellbeing knowledge.

The groups helped in the design of a survey shared with and completed by younger year groups in the school, and also took part in a workshop activity facilitated by the school librarian and the project managers from the ALLIANCE and Public Health Scotland. The learning that came out of these engagement exercises contributed to the direction and form the project took. The main aspects of which were:

- A dedicated web resource, accessible at all times, of approved health and wellbeing information, with an emphasis on local resources and third sector organisations which might not be readily apparent to anyone doing a general internet search.
- The embedding of this resource in PSE class content, including school and public library involvement
- A physical element – being able to access a safe space in both the school and public library, with the latter especially emphasised during holiday periods. In the case of the Beeslack pilot, this would be the local public library, based at Penicuik.

## Co-Design

The consensus from the research and consultation was clearly that an online means of accessing information was vital though a physical presence was also thought important (for example, there was a clear desire for physical flyers, posters and bookmarks promoting resources). The pilot was branded as 'SHINE' - Supporting young people with Health, Inclusivity, Nourishment and Emotional Wellbeing. The name was chosen by young people from a list of possible choices as the one they thought sounded most positive. A designer from within Midlothian Council helped to produce potential logos for the service with pupils from Beeslack High School choosing the one they liked most, with the one with the most votes (in the event by a large number) being officially adopted.

This logo will be used on all official marketing material online and to promote across schools in Midlothian. School librarians were engaged to contribute their knowledge of what topics should be covered in 'SHINE' resources, with an emphasis on what their students asked most about or were discussed in PSE classes, whilst physical and eResources were selected by the Service Development Leader (Children & Young People) to complement the topics addressed in the web resource and which those accessing the site could download or request easily.

The outcome from this pilot is a service model and resource that can be accessed by young people both during school terms and over holidays and will be embedded and evolve rather than a 'one-and-done' resource. Further co-design opportunities are envisaged in the future with regard safe physical spaces in libraries and lesson plan content as a post pandemic context will allow.

The co-design aspect led to interesting discussions with young people about what services are offered to them and how they can shape delivery to best reach them and meet their needs. However, input with the young people was very sporadic and public library staff were never able to work with them directly. As interactions were often done via the School Librarian and other teachers, communication sometimes felt disjointed.

General consensus from the public library staff who worked on the project was that their involvement in the co-design element was successful and that the views and experiences of the young people shaped the process and that the final design is effective in conveying its message simply and in a straightforward fashion.

## Implementation

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, project implementation has focussed on virtual development and delivery with involvement from Midlothian Council Digital Services plus the Communications web team. The part of SHINE that promotes libraries (both public and school) as a safe physical space for young people struggling with their mental health or wellbeing has been undeliverable during the pandemic but will be implemented once circumstances allow.

In addition, the initial plan to have a launch event has for similar reasons had to be modified – with the launch being solely online and promoted across the Council and on an ongoing basis via the social media strategy. Physical posters have been designed incorporating QR codes that will make access as smooth as possible and will be promoted on a wide scale online and in physical buildings as access and services resume.

At times, the implementation of the project was challenging. With the young people learning from home for most of last year it was hard to work with them to progress the project. Despite the difficulties of COVID 19, what has become available should be an essential local support to health and wellbeing. The launch of the SHINE digital service will link up the resources available in both the public library and the school to be accessible for information and support, by both young people and their parents or carers.

The future plan is to roll out the service to the other five high schools in Midlothian over the course of 2021/22, though setting a firm timetable for this is problematic given the continuing impact of the pandemic.

## Evaluation

The SHINE site had a soft launch in May 2021 to ensure the resources were available over the summer holidays, but as of yet there has been no opportunity to conduct any form of evaluation. Pupils from the Beeslack groups and classes who participated have been encouraged to submit feedback previously, but disruption caused by the pandemic has made anything further impossible. Once the new term begins a full launch will take place hopefully involving a range of young people, some who were initially involved in the project and with some new voices and points of view. This will ensure that the resources remain relevant and the site of value.

The numbers of people accessing and viewing the online site, and numbers of items borrowed, will be monitored and recorded on a regular basis. In addition, a radio button and feedback response feature will be available online which will enable any users to aid periodic platform reviews and evaluations. There are plans to offer small prizes to some pupils who access and submit their opinion of the service concurrent with active promotion by our education partners, as a means of both marketing and evaluation data gathering.

The SHINE online resource is envisaged as an ever evolving platform that will regularly and consistently be maintained and adapted, and will be a significant aspect in the library service's offer based around supporting health & wellbeing and healthy communities in the future.

## Resources

Having always planned on having a virtual space for materials and information for the young people meant work could continue together with new ideas during the COVID 19 pandemic. Having both a webpage and physical resources was something the young people were clear about in their feedback, so it was important this was delivered. It was felt a logo would bring all the resources together clearly. As for the physical resources, working with the School Librarian on booklists worked well to ensure there were enough titles for the project that were relevant for both fiction and non-fiction subjects.

The completed website has been designed to be concise and easily communicative of the dense and difficult topics being covered. The light and bright colours were chosen by the young people and help provide a 'calming' space for researching mental health topics. It includes useful links on a national and local scale, listings and the ability to request library resources, and a digital collection of fiction and non-fiction titles using the BorrowBox platform.

Fiction has been included as often particularly relevant to how young people make sense of their feelings, and as such a block of fiction titles that will support a range of issues/ topics is branded as a 'collection' to support the project. Previously, most Teenage and Young Adult fiction titles in such collections were only in hard copy but more stock has been purchased in eFormat to bridge this gap. This will all be added to in time and there will be a dedicated sum of the stock budget allocated to keeping SHINE resources refreshed and up to date.

The project group had access to organisational resources, such as a designer for the marketing logo, and Council Digital Services who could provide their expertise and advice with regard to setting up the online presence. This staff resource extended to library services also, with the professional expertise of the Service Development Leaders (Children & Young People, Digital) and their knowledge of, respectively, library resources needed and what preparatory work was required to set up the digital site was vital.

It is hoped that when the project is rolled out to the rest of Midlothian's High Schools, that they are fully invested in the co-design model and will have a clear outline of the process, steps and roles needed to ensure a successful project.



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