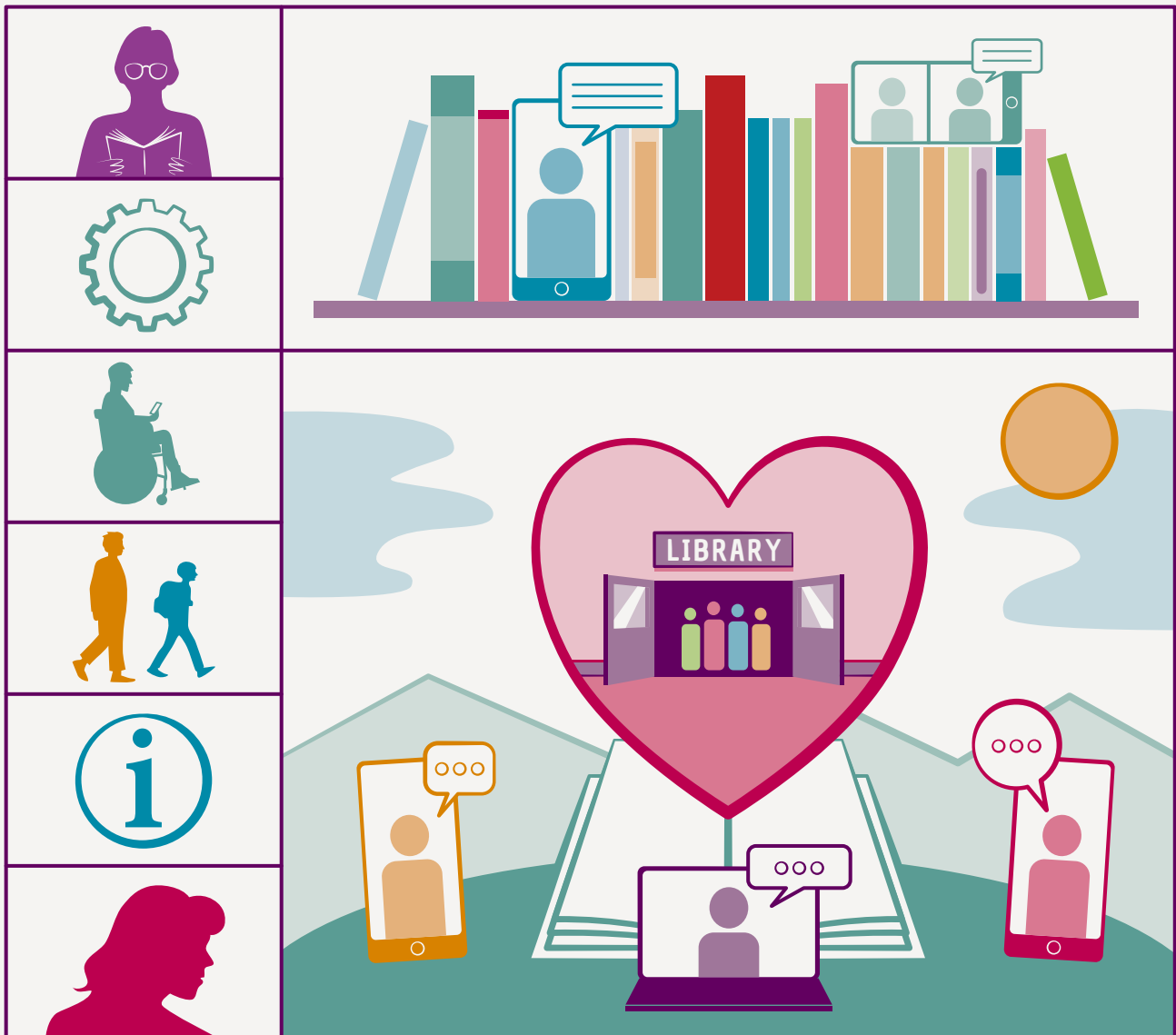


Co-creating libraries for wellbeing

“Putting people at the heart of collaboration”



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Foreword

We generally fare best with a health problem when we can adapt and self manage in the face of our changing circumstances. This requires us to making sense of what's going on, navigate services, and find support for what is important to us. This, in turn, requires a daunting amount of confidence, skills, understanding and knowledge. We call this "health literacy" and is underpinned by trusted, meaningful and accessible information.

In Scotland we have an ambition to be a health literate society that enables all of us to live, and indeed die, well, on our own terms. Knowledge and information can be difficult to navigate given the amount of information and misinformation that thrives through media outlets and social media. Librarians and their services are trusted and accessible distributors of knowledge and information. It is at the heart of what they do. I believe libraries play a crucial role in supporting our health and wellbeing.

Involving young people in co-creating the type and availability of information they seek, not necessarily the information that professionals think they need, is crucial and proved both the basis, and an outcome, of this collaborative program.

It's been an eye-opening privilege to have chaired "Co-creating Libraries for Wellbeing" in what is an important pioneering process towards becoming a health literate society. I commend the hard work and innovation of everyone involved.

Dr Graham Kramer, GP and self management and health literacy champion



Introduction

Empowering people to access the information and support they need to feel better able to live and die well at home is central to self management and health literacy. These are essential for a new model of community-centred, co-designed health and social care promoted by the Scottish Government.

Over the last decade, a range of strategies have been published which all call for self management approaches, partnership and integrated working across statutory and third sectors, using community assets to improve health and wellbeing and prevent ill-health.

The importance of a cross sector, collaborative approach to working with people living with long term conditions, disabled people and unpaid carers was identified as essential for the implementation of Gaun Yersel: the Self Management Strategy for Scotland¹ in 2008. This principle of collaborating across sectors to empower communities and citizens is further articulated in the Health and Social Care Delivery Plan², Realistic Medicine³, and Scotland's Digital Health and Care Strategy⁴.

As universally accessible community services and hubs of information about health and wellbeing, public libraries are ideally positioned to play a key role in delivering this community-focused, person-centred model of support for health and wellbeing. The ALLIANCE, the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) and the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI) have been collaborating since 2017 with Scottish Government support to strengthen the role of libraries in this new model of partnership working for health and wellbeing.

The aim of the Co-creating Libraries for Wellbeing project was to support the transformation of local health and social care systems towards a greater focus on early intervention and supporting self management. It aimed to take an approach which both demonstrated the impact that comes from greater involvement of library and third sector services within local health and social care partnerships and by actively engaging with citizens in the design of redesigned services.

The learning from this project will inform and contribute to the delivery of the Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing Action Plan⁵ and refreshed action plan which has been developed to respond to the changing needs resulting from the COVID pandemic. The action plan sets out a national commitment to working together across libraries, health and social care, and the third sector to help transform Scotland's approach to health and wellbeing.

1 <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ALLIANCE-SM-Gaun-Yersel-Strategy-2008.pdf>

2 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-delivery-plan-progress-report/>

3 <https://www.realisticmedicine.scot/>

4 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-digital-health-care-strategy-enabling-connecting-empowering/>

5 <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/2841/slic-libraries-for-health-ap.pdf>

Background

The Co-creating Libraries for Health and Wellbeing project evolved from learning generated through work the ALLIANCE delivered in collaboration with SLIC and Scottish Government in 2017-18 to develop and pilot a self management training resource for public library staff. The aim of the project was to increase public library staff's knowledge of self management and health literacy supporting them to feel confident offering support and information to people about their health and wellbeing.

Insights generated highlighted a strong desire for libraries - including public, school and NHS - to be better integrated within the health and social care system. Many staff working in libraries did not know how to work in closer partnership with health and care staff and felt the role that libraries, and staff working in them, play in supporting people's health and wellbeing was not fully understood by the health and social care system. These insights were corroborated by feedback from two cross-sectoral conferences held in 2017 and 2018.

What did we set out to do?

The Co-creating Libraries for Health and Wellbeing project was designed through a further partnership between the ALLIANCE, SLIC and the Programme Lead for Knowledge and Decision Support (initially based in Scottish Government Digital Health and Care Division, subsequently in the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre) to support service transformation based on the principles of cross-sector collaboration and co-design.

Young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing was identified as a priority issue for the national project to focus on as it impacts on two of Scotland's Public Health Priorities⁶ and is an issue which requires an integrated response.

The Co-creating Libraries for Wellbeing pilot design remit was to co-design a service model where public and school libraries could better support the emotional wellbeing of young people across Scotland through improved support for self management and health literacy in the three pilot areas.

The project was delivered through three pilots in North Ayrshire, Midlothian and South Lanarkshire and managed by the ALLIANCE and Public Health Scotland. The project was funded through the Public Libraries Improvement Fund administered by the Scottish Library and Information Council on behalf of Scottish Government.

Pilot areas were invited to consider a second priority area for service redesign but due to the impact of the pandemic this second priority was unable to be progressed to the same extent.

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2018/06/scotlands-public-health-priorities/documents/00536757-pdf/00536757-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00536757.pdf>

The onset of the pandemic in 2020 disrupted the delivery of the project and has meant that the second phase of co-design - of moving from discovering and defining the needs of young people towards developing and delivering a service - was not able to take place fully in any of the three pilot areas. Nevertheless, the richness of the learning generated from over the previous two years has generated rich insights and forms the basis of this report.

The learning captured in this report has been generated through the delivery of this national co-design project and specifically drawn from the three pilot areas who delivered this new approach to co-designing a service model based on extensive engagement and involvement of young people.

The following enablers of change initiatives in complex environments were built into the project design:

- the solutions would be co-designed with the people who are affected by the change
- priority would be given to building relationships, an experimental approach would be taken
- time allowed for reflection and adjustment.

In this respect, the project took learning from the Scottish Approach to Service Design whilst not formally employing all aspects of this approach⁷.

The theory of change underpinning the project was the change would be enabled through the new relationships formed between the people involved that would contribute to a changing culture and hopefully leading to improved outcomes.

Governance

The project was overseen by a National Steering Group to provide guidance, direction and ensure the work was able to feed into the broader strategic landscape. Membership reflected the project aim with people in leadership positions within the health, social care and library sectors and two individuals living with long term conditions also invited to the National Steering Group.

A Project Steering Group (see section on the Pilots for details) was established in each of the localities that was directly responsible for the local approach. Throughout the duration of the project, members of the pilots and the wider membership would come together during quarterly National Steering Group meetings.

Embedding project management and governance structures into the co-design project was identified as a key success factor.

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/the-scottish-approach-to-service-design/>

Project timeline

The Co-creating libraries for health and wellbeing project

First phase
November
2018

The Co-creating Libraries for Health and Wellbeing project took place between November 2018, with a formal launch in February 2019 and completed in March 2021 followed by an evaluation.



Launch

February
2019



The launch helped to bring together the various project team members and create a unified vision and collective understanding of the aims of the project.

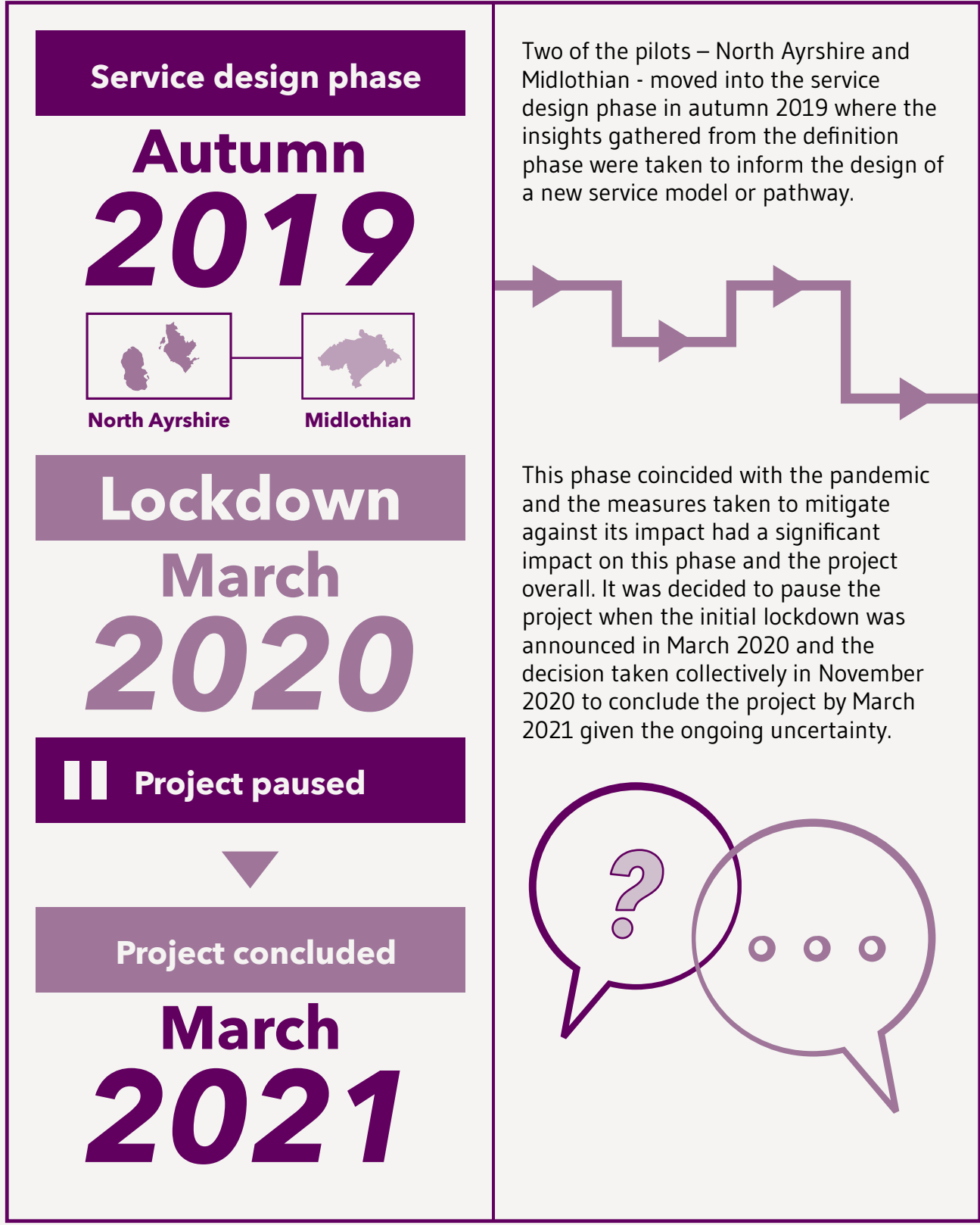
A three month period for project design and planning was undertaken following the launch. This included setting up the governance structures both at the national and local levels.

Service definition phase

Once the project had launched, the pilot areas moved into a service definition phase and a period of identifying and engaging with key stakeholders for the project. This took place over different timescales in each pilot area and took at least six months for identifying and selecting appropriate stakeholders and carrying out a programme of engagement to explore and define the problem before the service redesign began.

During this stage, the Project Managers visited each of the localities to meet with the Project Leads to discuss project management structures for their individual projects. Setting aside time for relationship building was a key enabler and piece of learning. At the national level this also allowed for the membership of the National Steering Group to be identified and for a Chair to be appointed.

Across all the pilots, young people were invited to participate in the project through pre-existing engagement channels for example schools, youth clubs and third sector relationships. To attract the young people to engage with the project a preliminary information session was held, and they were given time to consider participating in the project, particularly as it would involve a time commitment. Upon consent and agreement to participate, they were given key responsibilities within the project such as idea generation, engaging peers and creating a buzz for the project.



The pilots

The project was delivered through three pilots in North Ayrshire, Midlothian and South Lanarkshire. This section outlines the work taken forward in each pilot area, their learning and the impact they had. Longer versions of the case studies are available on the ALLIANCE website and on request.



North Ayrshire pilot project



What were we trying to achieve?

- To engage young people in using library services and trusted information sources to improve their health and wellbeing, particularly their mental wellbeing.
- To improve social connectedness for people experiencing, or at risk of, social isolation.

What did we do?

We enabled young people to identify priorities and shape developments by:

- Partnering with the young people mental health ambassadors created by Kilwinning Academy's Health and Wellbeing project.
- Carrying out a survey to identify how young people currently use library services, barriers to use, and opportunities and priorities for future use for health and wellbeing.

To engage young people and their families further and showcase the potential of library services, we collaborated with the young mental health ambassadors to hold a Library Fun Day in Kilwinning Library targeting P6-S1 pupils and their families. This was a lively day with many activities including mindfulness sessions and a Laughter Workshop. Over 400 people attended the event, with very positive feedback and coverage in the local press.

Following the Fun Day, we worked with the mental health ambassadors to conduct an audit to identify ways we could improve use of library space for young people. As a result, we have created a new meeting space in Kilwinning library, for use by young people and others, and established a booking arrangement for third sector organisations. We also obtained new public health materials to respond to young people's needs.

To address the social isolation priority:

- We opened two libraries early on the days of the 'flu clinics' in adjacent health centres offering refreshments and a chance to relax and enjoy what the library had to offer.
- Kilwinning library offered Chatty Café style events, and the potential is being considered for online cafes.
- We are in the process of creating a library garden area as an outdoor wellbeing space.

Challenges

Our plans were dependent on use of physical library space. COVID interrupted our plans for improving use of this space for young people but presented other opportunities to use the creative ideas generated through this work.

Learning points

Key enablers for these developments were management support and good cross-organisational relationships. These were achieved by:

- Gaining support from the Integration Joint Board by presenting a paper to them.
- Establishing a cross-sectoral project steering group with representation from health and social care, public health, third sector, public and NHS libraries.

What impact did our project have?

Through this initiative, we established new relationships with key stakeholders in health and social care and the third sector, and built a stronger understanding of the library contribution to health and wellbeing. This has led to:

Strategic recognition of libraries' role in health and wellbeing. The Library and Information Services Manager is now a member of the HSCP Strategic Planning Group.

Creation of new collaborative service models and joint response to COVID

The project helped to position library services as community partners with health and social care in responding to the COVID pandemic:

- During the pandemic, four of our libraries became Community Hubs, working with multidisciplinary teams to support their communities with food and prescription deliveries and mental health advice. Five libraries became Health and Wellbeing Hubs for carers and Care at Home staff, providing them with a safe place to rest during their breaks and to meet their line managers and access other support for wellbeing.
- During the COVID pandemic, libraries also collaborated with health and social care partners to develop new health pathways which link libraries to health and care services for children and older people.

New skills and roles for library staff

- Several of our library staff undertook Mental Health First Aid training and some became Wellbeing Warriors offering support to colleagues during the COVID pandemic.

Midlothian pilot project



What were we trying to achieve?

To engage young people in reading and using information sources to support their health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing.

What did we do?

We approached colleagues in Education and the Health and Social Care Partnership to engage their support and seek their ideas and insights. In response this, we opted to work with Beeslack High School in Penicuik. Beeslack had previously worked with library services on a Words for Wellbeing project and has a public library nearby.

We worked closely with the school librarian and Head of Guidance on a co-design process. Focus groups and a survey enabled young people to share what was important to their health and wellbeing, how they sourced health information, and what support networks they use. They also told us how they felt about their school and public libraries and how library services could support them with gaps in their knowledge about health and wellbeing.

This consultation led to public and school library services developing a hybrid service model with three elements:

- A dedicated web resource, accessible 24.7, highlighting approved health and wellbeing information, local resources and third sector organisations.
- Embedding of this resource in primary and secondary class content, with school and public library involvement
- A safe physical space in both the school and public library, especially during holiday periods.

A group of young people led the branding and logo design for this service, selecting the positive name “SHINE’ - Supporting young people with Health, Inclusivity, Nourishment and Emotional Wellbeing.”

The completed website has been designed to support quick and easy communication about difficult health topics. Young people chose light, bright colours to provide a calming virtual space for exploring mental health topics. The site includes links to local and national resources, lists of library resources, the ability to request library resources, and a digital collection of fiction and non-fiction titles using the BorrowBox platform. We responded to the importance of fiction in helping young people to make sense of their feelings by providing a collection of hard copy and digital fiction resources and investing in more e-Format fiction material.

Challenges

- The limited engagement from the Health and Social Care Partnership means that further work is needed to raise awareness of this development in the health sector.
- The COVID pandemic meant that we had to defer an official launch and promotional campaign, and implementation of the physical space element of the service. These activities will be progressed, along with service evaluation, as services re-stabilise.
- The insights from young people were vital to the project but was sporadic and relied on the school staff rather than direct communication with the public library service.

Learning points

- The hybrid approach combining virtual and physical elements gave us the flexibility to progress the project despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic, and the opportunity to shape a new digital model of service delivery.
- A key success factor was the co-design approach, enabling young people to take ownership of the service.
- Notwithstanding the limited input from the health sector to date, the shared commitment and good working relationship between school and public library staff enabled productive development, with plans to maintain and update the service.

Through this project we have created a new, jointly owned digital service model for supporting young people's health and wellbeing, integrated with educational delivery in the school setting. It has strengthened collaboration for health and wellbeing across school and public library settings and opened up new opportunities for extending the health and wellbeing offering.

The plan is to consolidate, evaluate and then roll-out this model to at least five other school sites within Midlothian.

South Lanarkshire pilot project



What were we trying to achieve?

To support young people to use library services for their health and wellbeing needs, particularly to support mental and emotional wellbeing.

What did we do?

Our project was led by Health Improvement within the Health and Social Care Partnership, in collaboration with an implementation group with partner engagement across sectors. This group selected the Cambuslang and Rutherglen area as a focus, for four reasons:

- Consultation had already begun with young people;
- It includes communities ranked among the 5% most deprived areas in Scotland; Rutherglen Library is the second largest library in South Lanarkshire;
- We were able to partner with the Healthy n Happy Community Development Trust, which works closely with their community in this area with established networks and youth initiatives

We worked with existing young people's groups to avoid over-consultation, in particular the Looking Up Youth Group, for 10-18 year olds, where many had lived experience of poor mental health, including suicide and suicidal ideation; and the Youth Activist Mentors who undertake a range of community leadership activities, including supporting other young people to get more involved locally. These two groups worked with Rutherglen Library, Healthy n Happy and the local project steering Group to co-produce developments.

Initial feedback from a session led by Healthy n Happy uncovered that:

- Most young people don't visit libraries, even school libraries regardless of their exams.
- They want health and wellbeing information within the context of lived experiences and to be able to access this in a range of formats, particularly digitally and across various platforms including social media.
- They prefer to access support from their peers.

In partnership with the Young Activists Group, we coordinated a Treasure Hunt which took young people around 5 different locations within Rutherglen, with the library as the final destination. In the library we invited them to complete a survey developed by the Youth Activists Group, and demonstrated the services available, including digital services such as 3D printing and virtual reality. 35 young people registered, mainly in the 10-12 age group. 24 completed the survey and gave positive feedback on how the event had given them new insights into what library services can offer.

To gather the views of older age groups, the survey was also distributed at Trinity High School assemblies across 4 year groups (S3 – S6).

Challenges

The COVID pandemic disrupted project continuity and meant that we were not able to build on the findings from initial engagement to shape specific new developments in collaboration with young people.

Learning points

Partnership with existing third sector organisations was the key enabler of engagement in South Lanarkshire and has strengthened foundations for future collaborative development.

What impact did our project have?

The project has established new cross-sectoral partnerships which will enable library services to take a more active and integral role in ongoing health and wellbeing developments.

In particular, the initiative has created a positive new partnership between the HSCP Health Improvement Team and senior Library staff within South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture. As a result, libraries have also now been utilised to promote resources and tools such as Scotland's Service Directory and Locator Tools. Other areas explored include:

- The possibility of utilising spaces in public libraries for 'time out' for health and social care staff during the pandemic, where it has been difficult to secure socially distanced space.
- Utilising libraries as a C Card provider (condoms on the presentation of a C Card – no questions asked) as this has been successful in Highland and would increase the footfall of young people into the libraries. This will be revisited as restrictions ease.

Healthy n Happy and Rutherglen Library have also developed new relationships through this initiative. This has led to joint work locally such as promoting through local networks the opening on Christmas day of the library every year, providing a film and refreshments for those on their own who want to connect.



What difference can this way of working make?

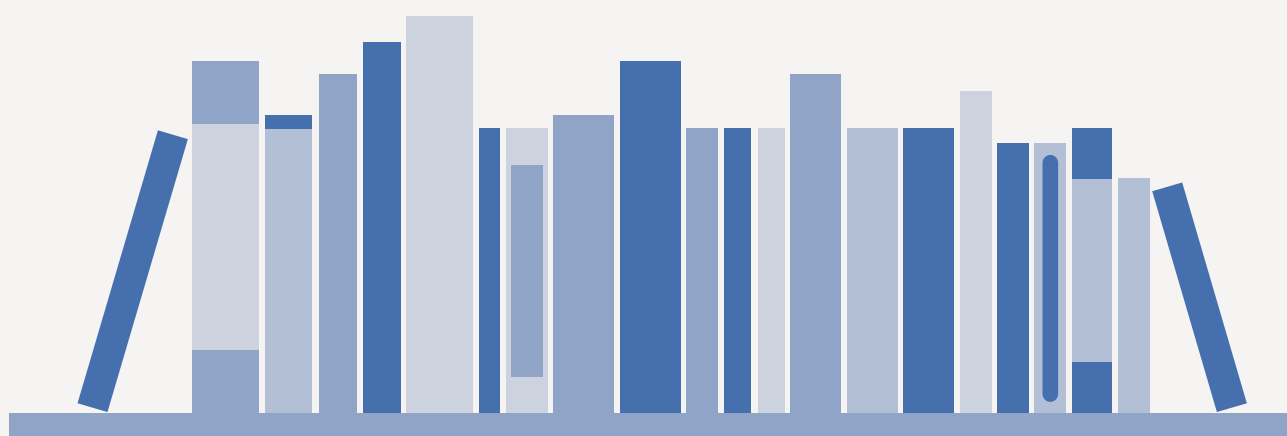
Whilst the pandemic impacted on the delivery of this project and disrupted some of what had been hoped to be achieved in the timescale there is some evidence and learning about the difference this way of working can make.

COVID-19 has enabled a greater focus and effort on the digital delivery of services and offered some flexibility and opportunity to adapt services to incorporate greater digital delivery. It has also demonstrated that it is possible to keep working in extremely trying circumstances. Nevertheless, it has proven difficult to robustly measure the outcomes of people who have participated and whether the project has made a difference to people being able to manage their mental health in the longer term.

Silo working creates inefficiencies and in some cases a number of complementing services were actually being run within the locality which the library services were unaware of. This project has reduced fragmentation across agencies by creating relationships and room for knowledge sharing.

Collaboration between health professionals, health and social care services, third sector, public and school libraries has increased and even began in some areas due to this project.

Libraries in local communities are a neutral space where people could be going for many reasons and there is not the same stigma as with using other services such as a GP. In each area the role of libraries – both school and public – has been enhanced and the potential to continue to work jointly on initiatives that lead to improvements in health and wellbeing.



Recommendations for future developments

Setting up a complex national change programme has generated a range of insights and learning which is likely to be of value to others seeking to do similar.

Context matters

There were interesting differences in each of the three pilot areas. There were decisions to be made about which locality within the pilot area to base the pilot, which had implications for the agencies that were able to be involved.

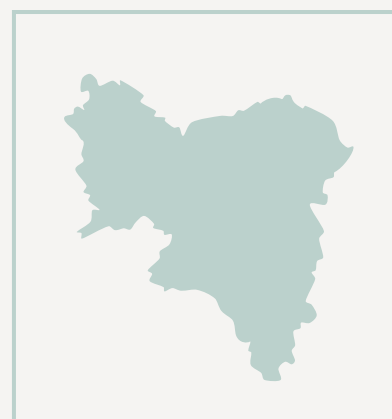
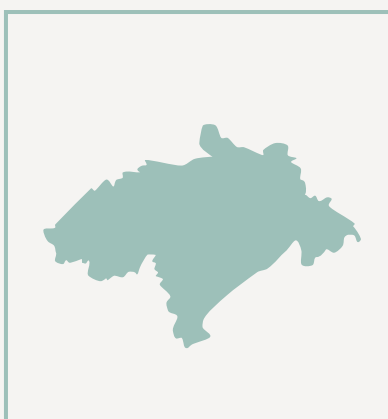
There is no uniform structure to the way that library services are arranged, third sector organisations and where they are placed will vary depending on local area and the group of people a service is being designed for, and the structure of the health and social care system will differ.

It is important to have people who have capacity, agency and enthusiasm to maintain their commitment to this work. The people who lead the project will have an impact and it is important to identify people who feel a commitment to the change and are willing to make connections.

Understanding the local context is key for the success of any project and must be investigated and understood ahead of the project.

"...it was really helpful having three pilot areas or more than one pilot area, but each area has really had, you know, it shows you how important context is... each area has had its own flavour"

"we're not quite at the stage where all sectors have merged or blended within an integration context, you know, there are still distinct cultures and distinct decision making protocols and issues around governance that need to be taken into account. an added level of complexity that we were trying to work with in this project was that it wasn't just about co designing with people with lived experience."

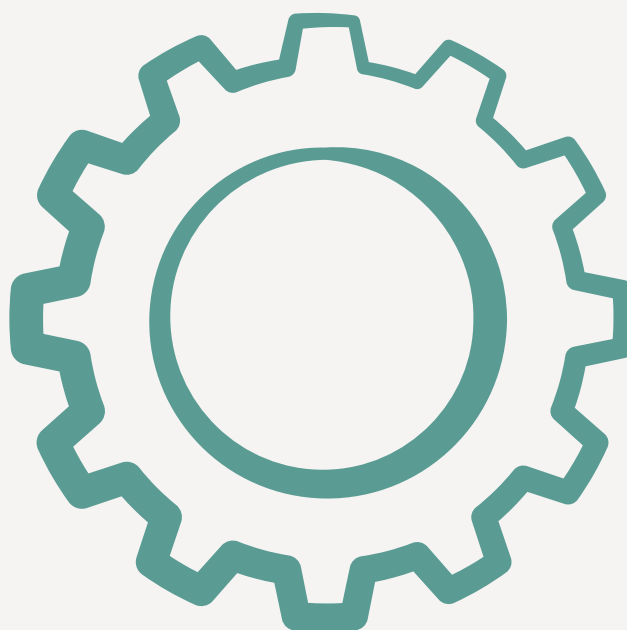


Robust yet flexible governance and project management arrangements

Having robust yet flexible governance and project management arrangements helped to coordinate a change programme which was trying to address a complex issue, working in different localities, and with different cross sector partners. From the outset, the National Steering Group provided helpful oversight and advice as well as operating as a space for reflective learning for each of the pilot areas to be considered. The National Steering Group was instrumental in keeping the project moving through staff turnover and the pandemic. Having strategic oversight from professionals who were knowledgeable about health literacy and the public library strategy was useful.

In addition, each pilot had a local governance arrangements to reflect its local stakeholders. Although all working from the same project brief, the set-up and implementation of each group varied across the three pilot areas.

Striking the balance between having all voices involved in the pilot Project Steering Groups and keeping the numbers manageable for effective group decision making required strong leadership. Each pilot Project Steering Group would meet regularly - at an interval of around six weeks – to keep the project momentum. It was important to have dedicated time to deliver the project as each Project Lead was delivering this work in addition to their current workload which was identified by some leads as a challenge that they encountered. This suggests that in subsequent work, it is vital to carve out time for project leads to ensure there is sufficient capacity to deliver the project.



Networking for shared learning

It was found to be helpful to hear how other areas involved in the project were approaching the work and regular meetings helped to maintain motivation by being able to hear about challenges and solutions elsewhere. Whilst the learning might not always be directly relevant, there were usually aspects which could be applied to a different setting, and this also made it enjoyable and created a broad learning experience.

However, with only the Project Leads being members of the National Steering Group, some of the other local project members felt more distanced from this process. In the future, it would be possible to organise regular reflective learning and networking sessions to continue this peer learning environment.

Identifying the right people and right agencies

Some areas faced difficulties securing involvement from some agencies and the initial project brief that there should be two priority areas for service redesign meant that there was likely to be different agency representatives required depending on the service area being co-designed.

As referred to above, it is important to identify the right people to be involved in such projects; whose role fits the remit of the project and in a position to make decisions relevant to the project aims.

Strong links to the community was identified as a key success factor for a co-design project. Reaching out to, and working with young people, was a challenge for some as the relationships were not already established but has led to new relationships with schools and school libraries as well as third sector organisations.

Working with a select group of young people was found to help with ongoing discussions about service redesign but it was also recognised that the choices made about which groups of young people to engage with could also exclude and leave out those who might not be connected with that group. This was especially a concern if engaging only with young people attending school. A consideration for the future is to reach out widely to young people who are connected with a third sector organisation and/or local community groups.

Strong community links – such as those held by Healthy N Happy in South Lanarkshire and a local community leader in North Ayrshire - helped with youth engagement and involvement. The agility and responsiveness of third sector and community organisations demonstrated to statutory sector enabled more agility in this project.

Timelines and relationship building

Developing realistic timelines for a co-design project is an important consideration, especially taking into account whether the relationships are yet to be formed. Establishing relationships takes time and has to be factored into project timelines. The pilot Project Leads were not involved in arriving at the timelines and this created some pressures as the local context for each area differed and had not initially been taken into consideration.

Related to this is the importance of allowing sufficient time for the service definition phase. Allowing time to build relationships and explore and understand the needs of the people who the service is being defined for will offer rewards later in the project.

Shared understanding and clear vision

The project design and planning phase was helpful in establishing the scope of the project and producing a 'starter for ten' framework to channel the discussions and thinking around project delivery. It was at this stage that it was identified that the complexity of the project meant there were various understandings of the approach which resulted in a guidance document being developed by the Project Managers and Project Leads.

The Guidance Document provided a degree of consistency and coherence across the pilot areas that was helpful. The local context for each of the pilots differed and it was clear that the stakeholder engagement, service model and project outcomes would vary for each area. Developing the guidance document provided a framework to help each pilot chart its own course and yet link back to the overall purpose of the national programme.

The national launch event provided another opportunity for engaging early with a broad range of stakeholders. It was felt that the attention paid to developing a shared understanding of the project across the three pilot areas helped to create a level playing field from the beginning of the project by demonstrating the importance of cross-sector working.

Fostering the right spirit of co-design

There was a range of learning generated about how to foster the right spirit of co-design.

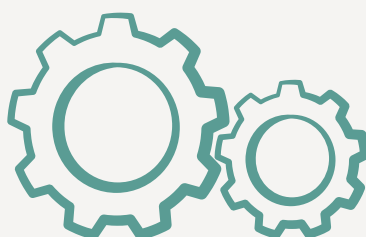
Meetings were held in public libraries or schools to promote the spirit of co-design as well as to demonstrate that libraries are a place for information to the young people.

It was suggested that it is important to lose the "paraphernalia of power" when doing work with the community and with young people. It is not necessary to have formal meetings with minutes taken but rather to be creative about ways to engage and receive feedback. This learning maybe be more relevant for some sectors than others but can make the difference to cross-sector and co-produced working that makes it effective.

Shared leadership

Shared leadership for the project was identified by one pilot area as another enabler. This approach boosted working relationships and positively impacted the project delivery. The shared leadership also had a positive impact on the working relationship across organisations and has proven to be a key success factor for the pilot.

The emphasis on cross-sector working led to a range of different perspectives and expertise being involved in the project delivery – it was therefore possible to identify who was most appropriate to be involved in a particular task. For example, the co-designing was led by someone with the skills to work with young people.



Inclusive co-design

There was genuine commitment to getting the voices of the community, in this case young people, in the project which was not just tokenistic. Nevertheless, it was identified that it is important to clearly define the target audience. For example young people includes a broad range of social groups and identities and decisions had to be made by each area to focus in on particular groups as there would be different points of engagement depending on the decisions made.

It is essential to look out for any structural barriers which result in inequalities or widen existing inequalities. It was found to be better to work with a mix of young people in different age groups for diversity and sustainability, and to explore connections with third sector organisations working locally who might have connections with young people with particular lived experiences.

A co-production approach led to young people being the designers of the project and services responding to what they wanted. It has been useful finding out what young people want from services and these insights have been utilised in the different areas –examples include young people involved in co-designing surveys which were administered, coordinating the Treasure Hunt and leading on a workshop.

“[We] have assumed before that partners know what people who access our services want and have learned about going directly to the service users themselves”



Concluding remarks

The aim of the Co-creating Libraries for Health and Wellbeing was to strengthen the role of libraries in their work with partners in health, social care and the third sector to empower people to be leading partners in their health and wellbeing. The learning and insights gathered from the design and delivery of this project demonstrate the vital contribution school and public library services have in supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Libraries are a vital part of social infrastructure. They enable, empower and equalise⁸. Nevertheless, their contribution to the wellbeing of people and communities has not yet been fully recognised or integrated into local health and social care systems. One of the most demonstrable impacts of this project has been the extent to which there has been greater asset-based partnership working between the organisations and agencies involved in the pilot areas and the opportunities this is presenting for further innovations.

COVID has disempowered many people in their access to a range of services and negatively impacted people's health and wellbeing widening existing inequalities. Conversely, it has also demonstrated how effective people, communities, the third sector, library services, and wider health and social care system can be working together as a collective force.

The refreshed Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing Action Plan takes account of this changing context and will provide an opportunity to build on the learning captured in this report. It sets out a national ambition to further grow the role of libraries in supporting people to use digital tools and services for health and wellbeing, to develop people's digital, information and health literacy skills, to develop words for wellbeing initiatives, as well as proactively enabling digital inclusion in health information services and strengthening human connectedness through digital means.

Libraries are well placed to work with partners across sectors to become central hubs for trusted health and wellbeing information in their communities, acting as key facilitators in helping people to emerge from the COVID pandemic as partners and leaders in their own health and wellbeing. It is vital that their contribution continues to be included within national and local remobilisation and recovery efforts.

⁸ https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex_carnegie2021/2020/10/05101626/Overarching-report-Making-a-Difference-1.pdf

About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. We have a growing membership of over 3,000 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Medical Practices, Third Sector Interfaces, Libraries and Access Panels are also members.

The ALLIANCE is a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and has close working relationships, several of which are underpinned by Memorandum of Understanding, with many national NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims; we seek to:

- Ensure people are at the centre, that their voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change, towards approaches that work with individual and community assets, helping people to stay well, supporting human rights, self management, co-production and independent living.
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner and foster better cross-sector understanding and partnership.



ALLIANCE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
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people at the centre



☎ 0141 404 0231 ✉ info@alliance-scotland.org.uk 🐦 @ALLIANCEscot

📘 Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland 📷 [alliance.scot](https://www.instagram.com/alliance.scot)

www.alliance-scotland.org.uk

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Venlaw Building, 349 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4AA

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