

Media Release



To: National/Local
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Release: Writing Well

Writing Well

Creative writing classes designed to improve mental health and well being are being held in Forth Valley over the next few weeks. A pilot study in Falkirk last year proved that putting thoughts down on paper improved people's confidence, helped them to express their feelings and gain control over their emotions. The study was organised with support from Lapidus (a national network promoting reading and writing for health and well-being) and Falkirk and District Association for Mental Health.

The 2007 course is being run by Dr Robert Clafferty, Consultant Psychiatrist with NHS Forth Valley, and Helen Lamb, a professional author and poet, and writer in residence at Edinburgh University. Last year around 15 people took part in the pilot every week, tackling subjects such as Lost and Found, which began with writing about shape, colour and weight, and then developed into writing about problems such as temper, patience and freedom.

This year's sessions are being funded by NHS Forth Valley and the Scottish Book Trust. Dr Clafferty says he is not expecting people to produce perfect writing. "We are trying to encourage people to improve their mental health and build up confidence. We are not here to write about mental health problems. Last year we carried out a questionnaire and the feedback was excellent."

Improved confidence and self esteem were common reactions. Others praised the opportunity to meet with other people with mental health issues and receive support.

The classes, which are free, are being held on Monday evenings at Dunrowan resource centre in Falkirk. For further information, please contact Dr Robert Clafferty 01324 624111 or e-mail robert.clafferty@fvpc.scot.nhs.uk

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Note to Editors:

The breakdown of participants from last year is as follows.

Age:

- 50% were in the age range 46-55
- 25% were in the age range 56-65
- 12.5% were in the age range 16-25
- 12.5% were in the age range 36-45

Forth Valley NHS Board

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Forth Valley NHS Board is the common name for Forth Valley Health Board

Gender:

62.5% were female

Employment:

62.5% were unemployed, the remainder in paid employment

Interest in the Group:

One in four people in Scotland suffer mental health problems. 100% of those who completed a questionnaire said they would definitely recommend the creative writing group to a friend.