

Exploring the effectiveness of a creative writing intervention to promote refugees' integration and wellbeing

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Evidence indicates that creative writing is beneficial to individuals whose past traumatic experiences have removed their sense of control over their lives, offering a chance to make sense of what happened, to re-build self-identity and reconnect with people. The current study is set in this context and it aims to explore the effectiveness of creative writing in promoting refugees' mental wellbeing and integration.

Four creative writing classes of two hours each were delivered to refugees attending an organization in the south west of England. Prior to these sessions, nine participants took part in a focus group to have their input on how to design and deliver the sessions. These sessions were then designed and run by the second author, who is an international writer and by the third author, who is psychotherapist who works with refugees. On completion of the sessions, participants were asked to provide feedback.

Participants indicated they found beneficial to take part in the sessions and that they would like to continue attending them. There were mixed feelings about revisiting their past through the writing sessions; some participants felt this was essential for their recovery, whereas others stated that it was important *to move on* and to write about their current situation. A participant selected for the cases studies indicated that the sessions strengthen her self-esteem, however she suggested that future creative writing interventions should be more understanding of gender issues.

These preliminary findings will provide the basis to develop a larger creative writing intervention for refugees.

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