

Intro to ECY and our programme of Yoga on Social Prescription





Our Vision

Everyone in Edinburgh has access to quality,
trauma-informed yoga.

Our Mission

We empower people and communities by
improving access to the therapeutic benefits of
yoga by working across cultural, economic and
health barriers that inhibit people from taking part.



Our motivation

We believe in Social Justice and Health Equity

We recognise the systemic injustice that disempowers and disadvantages many people

We know that access and inclusion is more than saying you are accessible and inclusive

We understand that a trauma-informed and mental health aware approach is essential



2011-2014



2015

NOT-FOR-PROFIT SOCIAL ENTERPRISE



Our Original Business Model

Profit generated through 'mainstream' services - workplace wellbeing/retreats/classes/teacher training.

All profit going back into the organisation and available to subsidise the outreach projects. (ECY funds or partially funds at least 2/3 of our outreach programmes).

Grant awards, fundraising and donations also support the non-profit work.

Our Outreach Programmes

Collaboration with third sector organisations, offering free at the point of service yoga classes to under served populations

Working with NHS boards and 'deep end' (areas of socio-economic deprivation)

Offering subsidised public classes aimed at under-represented groups. classes for as little as £1, £3 or £5.

Offering scholarship and mentorship opportunities for students on outreach programmes to learn more about yoga.

Our Theory Of Change

If we provide high quality, Trauma-informed outreach programmes in non-traditional settings in partnership with organisations in the community, and through social prescribing programmes (partly funded by income from workplace, public and NHS programmes) then social isolation will reduce and mental and physical health will improve, reducing health inequality in and around Edinburgh and supporting the growth of wellness and emotional resilience in communities. If we additionally offer high quality training to yoga teachers and offer opportunities for outreach students to access yoga scholarships then life skills, confidence and employability will grow and diversity in teachers will too.

Our evaluations show some common themes

- Improved mood, confidence, sense of 'self'
- Improved emotional stability - less likely to become overwhelmed
- Reduced physical pain
- Improved resilience/ability to bounce back after setbacks
- Improved quality of life
- Reduced isolation, loneliness – feeling connected or belonging to the group
- Improved mental health symptoms
- Improved physical health symptoms
- Improved flexibility, strength and balance
- Learned skills for managing stress

“Trauma informed yoga has given me a space in which I can safely and gradually reintroduce myself to my body and start to heal. I look forward to the class like a shining light in my week. There is no doubt in my mind that I am better able to heal in this space where I am treated as a person rather than a patient. I only wish that this class had become part of my mental health journey earlier. Thank you ECY.”



In the post
pandemic/cost of
living crisis age -
a new strategy was
required



Our programmes of Yoga on social prescription began in 2019 with just one class. By 2023, the majority of our outreach work was using this model.





Since our online referral form was introduced and our records began in January 2023, we have received 240 referrals resulting in 167 attendees across 10 classes, encompassing 6 separate projects.

Our Strategy

- Making classes free at the point of service and focusing on areas of social and economic deprivation
- Having the resources and knowledge to access available grants and funds
- Developing trusted relationships with key organisations and professionals embedded in each community to allow for trust in the service

Practicalities we prioritise

- Ensuring teachers are highly skilled, experienced, and qualified and also well paid and supported.
- Offering safe supportive spaces with a minimum of two teachers and often a volunteer peer support worker.
- Including tea and refreshments as part of the service and paying teachers for that additional time and space holding.
- Clear communication and processes to make access easy for the referrers and referees.
- Comprehensive evaluations and monitoring processes to document impact and improve services.

Practicalities we prioritise

- Professional teacher support – CPD training, peer mentor support, regular team meetings, one to one supervision.
- Core team support – professional advisory panel support.
- Centering the voices of the students – Lived experience panel, evaluation and feedback opportunities.
- Strong emphasis on policies and procedures around safeguarding, ethics and boundaries.
- Lived experience and representation at the centre of our teaching team.



Feedback and stats from our programme in Dalkeith - August 2024

In the first 6 months we received 46 referrals across two classes resulting in 35 separate attendees. (22 for the women's class and 13 for the chair class). This has resulted in an average of 6 attendees per class per week.





The primary reason for referrals across the two classes

- Mental health issues including CPTSD (26)
 - Physical health issues (8)
 - Previous substance use (drugs) (4)
 - Previous substance use (alcohol) (5)
 - Affected by a family members substance use (3)
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Statistics to understand our impact

- 80% of those who completed a feedback form said they had never tried yoga before.
- 80% reported an improvement in mood, confidence and sense of self
- 60% improved emotional stability
- 50% improved quality of life
- 80% reduced isolation or loneliness
- 80% improved mental health
- 40% improved physical health or reduced pain
- 80% learned useful skills for managing stress outside of the yoga class



Evidence of improved self-compassion and ability or desire to self-care

“I am learning to self care for me. I have learned belly breathing when I panic. Chatting with people I feel care. I enjoy the guided meditation. Helps me relaxation tools.”

“Im learning to like myself and appreciate kindness to me. Self care, enjoy myself. Breathing helps me relax.”





Evidence of improved mood

“My mood is better when I leave, I am much calmer. Thinking, overthinking much calmer. I have learned to BREATHE through my stress. Sometimes I feel happier, mentally when I leave. I feel supported, and people do care.”

The importance and healing nature of relaxation

“I really enjoy the CALM atmosphere in the yoga life. This helps me so much to calm and get through my weeks.”

“I think the relaxation was important. I felt relaxed and blessed. It was nice to end with positivity and I found it healing.”



Evidence of feeling cared for and a sense of community and support

“This class has been amazing. I suffer from rheumatoid and osteoarthritis, also depression and anxiety. I have been able to feel more calm and a bit more flexible also I feel more stable and included. Ali and Lucy are amazing. Very approachable friendly and easy to talk to - just lovely human beings.”

“We can have a chat and a cuppa, restoring my hope in life again. Feel comfortable to chat.”

“Hannah and Vanessa are very friendly and kind, nice to work with.”



Evidence of reduced mental health symptoms

“I feel full of anxiety and nerves and my whole body is tense, but as soon as the class gets going, all these things leave my body and I relax. Very very grateful.”



The Limitations of this model

- Not-for profit, so relies on grants to fund it and these are often short term
- Not a cheap intervention as relies on paying two teachers and also community space hire
- Much more admin heavy process than a mainstream yoga class set up
- Relies on the buy in of the referrers
- Still many barriers to address around the stigma of attending a free class, the perceived value/relevance of yoga etc



Referrals come from various sources

- GP's
 - CPN's
 - Link Workers
 - Third sector orgs
 - Addiction services
 - Council - social work
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Feedback from some of our referrers

“I am grateful to have a service to support patients with trauma, both physically and mentally, as the benefits of movement and meditation are profound. I particularly like that they will be able to engage with other patients who have experienced trauma and may find some solace in one another alongside the support they are getting from Edinburgh Community Yoga. I intend to continue referring patients to this excellent community resource.”

GP at Newbattle Medical Practice

Feedback from some of our referrers

“I am pleased to endorse the work that ECY does. I have collaborated with them since 2015, during which time we have supported many women in their recovery from trauma, domestic abuse, and addictions by providing a safe space to practice yoga. Many women I know who have attended their yoga classes have expressed that it allowed them to engage in yoga in an inclusive environment, free from the feeling of exclusion often experienced in regular classes. I have also supported ECY with their Embodied Programme and the Action Social Project, focusing on women in recovery from trauma in Edinburgh. ECY is a unique charity that reaches out to women who are normally excluded.”

Independent Social Work Consultant DSW, PG Cert Child Protection,
LLB, DPLP, MScR

Feedback from some of our referrers

“From a recovery worker perspective, I find the yoga classes a useful resource to refer people to, especially the Trauma informed classes for women, as the trauma counselling has a long waiting list and this is a great step in-between. It’s good to have a variety of classes for people to do, especially ones that don’t require much physical fitness but get people moving. Great to have a choice of weekly or monthly, or to do both, to help people keeping busy while trying to maintain their abstinence.”

Recovery worker – MELD

Peer Support

Our peer support worker recently won the Social Enterprise Scotland Volunteer Champion Award. She has offered more than 300 hours of volunteer hours to our programme of yoga on social prescription. Her lived experience, and extraordinary capacity for making people feel at ease is an essential part of the success of our work in Wester Hailes. We hope to replicate this model across all of our programmes.



Research

Lead by ECY director, Lorraine Close, a research team from the University of Edinburgh School of Health in Social Science recently secured funding from the Carnegie Trust to conduct a Realist Evaluation of yoga programmes offered on social prescription run by ECY in areas of socio economic deprivation.

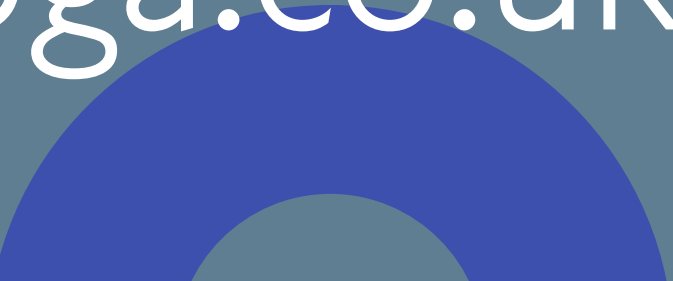
This project will allow the team to look at 'what works, for who and in what circumstance' and aims to contribute to the field of understanding around the social prescribing process and how it is experienced by relevant stakeholders. This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to the evidence base published in this field.

Contact Lorraine.close@ed.ac.uk for more information.



See our website for details of our up
and coming CPD trainings for yoga
teachers.

[https://edinburghcommunityyoga.co.uk
/our-services/teacher-training-cpd/](https://edinburghcommunityyoga.co.uk/our-services/teacher-training-cpd/)



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