

# The WEL Programme in Nairn

Summary of findings from a Learning Journey

January 2012



[www.thewel.org](http://www.thewel.org)  
[www.thehealingshift.org](http://www.thehealingshift.org)  
[www.afternow.co.uk](http://www.afternow.co.uk)

The WEL programme supports the movement from a medical model of patient care to one of self-enablement and wellness enhancement. The programme has been successfully used with both individual patients and groups. By 2010, around 700 patients had benefited from the programme and a StaffWEL version for professional healthcare staff began in 2010. In 2011 a PrimaryWEL version was launched in partnership with Nairn Healthcare Group, which has involved 43 staff and 18 patients so far.

We visited this programme over three days in January 2012. We met senior practice staff, and 18 StaffWEL participants from a range of healthcare disciplines, and 11 patients. During the course of extended and in-depth conversations with these groups, supplemented by a range of individual interviews, it became clear that we were witnessing evidence of a remarkable qualitative change in participants' capacity for self-care, resilience and wellbeing – staff and patients alike. They recognized their experience as one of a 'healing shift' and described a developing sense of compassion for themselves and for others. Staff had developed greater understanding of and empathy for their patients, and understood the importance of self-work, whilst their patients now understood the healthcare relationship as a joint enterprise, with shared responsibility. The sense of energy and purpose, enthusiasm and renewed meaning in life and work generated by participation in this programme was readily apparent to the observing group.

Although the precise nature of the subtle but deep changes which had evidently taken place sometimes proved hard to articulate, these were nevertheless manifest in patients' new acceptance of their condition *and* their responsibility for purposeful work on their own health and wellbeing. We also heard of the unexpected but positive effects on family life, not least in terms of healthy eating and improved family relationships. Effects also extended into the working lives of staff participants, where 'care' had a new, deeper meaning. The 'healing shift' appears to be embodied and lived, rather than simply a cognitive change. Participants at all levels were eager to see this approach transferred to the broader community, and other service sectors.

We are convinced that the implications of this approach for public health policy, and for the future of the NHS in Scotland, now deserve the most careful consideration.

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