



## Concept Note of successful project to be supported by the Viaro Group's CSR programme

### Kingston University Faculty of Art and Viaro Investment

#### Psychosocial support for front line Health Care Workers during and after the COVID-19 Outbreak

**Background:** Expressive Writing (EW) is a form of imaginative writing that places emotional expression at the centre of supporting well-being and post-trauma recovery. Through previous [EW projects](#) collaboratively developed with local and international stakeholders in the UK, Iraq and Lebanon since 2015, including the United Nations Development Program, the researchers Jensen and Campbell have trained palliative care staff, human rights advocates and social workers in the use of EW and overseen the deployment of their EW methodology to support health and social care workers and the vulnerable populations with whom they work. As Director of Kingston's Life Narrative Research Group (since 2007), Jensen has developed a strong international reputation for innovative research situated at the interface of life writing, narratives of traumatic experience, and the advancement of human rights. Jensen's ground-breaking interdisciplinary monograph *The Art and Science of Trauma and The Autobiographical: Negotiated Truths*, draws on the latest research on the clinical, behavioural, evolutionary psychologies and the neuroscience of trauma in order to categorise and elucidate the complex relations between life stories and traumatic disorders, firmly establishing Jensen as a leading voice in this field. Campbell's research explores ways in which narrative, expressive writing and creative writing interventions address and interact with forms of activism and participation in post conflict environments while her creative practice enables the provision of workshop approaches and story gathering protocols for use in contested or recovering environments. In 2015, Jensen and Campbell began to develop and adapt the Expressive Writing methodology, first developed by Professor James Pennebaker in the 1980s, for use in the rights-building context.

**Purpose:** With Jensen as Principal investigator and Campbell as Co-Investigator, the proposed research project will draw upon and substantially develop their past research to create, adapt, and test the effectiveness of new Expressive Writing training and exercise materials for supporting the wellbeing of a newly emergent vulnerable population: front-line Health Care Workers during the COVID 19 Outbreak. These materials, all of which will be made freely available to those workers in English, Italian and Arabic, will include: The Expressive Writing for Front Line Health Care Workers Training Handbook and accompanying Training Film; The Expressive Writing for Front Line Health Care Workers Exercises; and The Expressive Writing for Front Line Health Care Workers website, which will contain FAQs; further exercises and a space for Front Line Health Care Workers to share their own stories in confidence. At the same time, the proposed research project will also develop and test the efficacy of an innovative multilingual, freely accessible digital model for the successful dissemination of Expressive Writing training and exercises, gathering feedback via online surveys.

**How does your project help address the following elements: Stress, trauma and abuse:** Expressive writing is a particular type of coping strategy often used to support survivors of and witnesses to traumatic events. By engaging with a range of writing exercises adapted to the specific needs of the target group, in this case health care workers at the front line of a pandemic, the Expressive Writing Methodology enables them to write out their thoughts and feelings about a stressful or traumatic experience in various ways. Since 2015, Jensen and Campbell's research has developed and adapted earlier work for use in a variety of conflict and non-conflict settings with combat veterans, palliative care workers, and social workers in Iraq and Lebanon. It has demonstrated that the process of writing down these reflections helps survivors 'detach' from negative experiences by turning them into tangible, shareable stories, thus increasing their sense of well-being without the danger of triggering those who may have undiagnosed traumatic disorders. In addition to providing support for the well-being of Front Line Health Workers during the COVID 19 outbreak, the proposed project also enables those workers and their managers to enhance their skill sets, providing them with an inexpensive, digitally disseminated, rapidly deployable Expressive writing workshop toolkit proven to support mental well-being. Moreover, the multilingual online dissemination of the bespoke training and support materials produced for this project provides the direct and sustained transfer of Expressive Writing methodology knowledge, thus enabling the cascading of the methodology to a wider group of practitioners globally.

**How is your project Sustainable?** It will be permanently online and free at the point of use.



**Why is your project: Value for money?** All monies spent will go directly to the needs analysis research, and the subsequent editing and adaptation of existing Expressive Writing materials including training materials, bespoke exercises and a training film, the development of a user-friendly website for the dissemination of those materials and the translation of these into Italian and Arabic.

**How does your project meet each of the following criterion?**

**Usable in multiple geographies/languages:** The project, already tested with multiple vulnerable populations including palliative care workers, patients and their families, combat veterans, refugees and victims of sexual violence and in multiple geographic locations including the UK and numerous regions in Iraq and the Lebanon, will be digitally disseminated by a website which will host materials in Italian, English and Arabic.

**Based on existing best practice:** Since 2016, the Expressive Writing Project has received external funding of over £80,000, from a range of funding sources including the FCO and UNDP. The practices outlined in this evidence-based toolkit have now been adopted by human rights defenders in post-conflict settings in Iraq and Lebanon in projects collaboratively developed with local and international stakeholders in the UK, Iraq and Lebanon. This applied research has positively influenced the well-being of a range of vulnerable populations by engendering a shift in policy and training protocols for the United Nations Development Project in Iraq.

**Easily adaptable to Health Care workers:** The existing Expressive Writing materials have been adapted to support not only social workers in conflict and post conflict regions, but also palliative care workers in the UK. The researchers are confident in their experience and expertise in assessing the needs of stakeholders and developing and adapting bespoke materials in response to these. We will similarly assess the needs of Front Line Health Care Workers during the COVID 19 outbreak by drawing upon the wealth of available recent research on best practice in the support of front line care workers and will effectively, and swiftly, adapt our Expressive Writing exercises for this context.

**Easily accessible in an online, film or training programme form:** The project's outputs will be available in English, Italian and Arabic and will include: The Expressive Writing for Front Line Health Care Workers Training Handbook and accompanying Training Film; The Expressive Writing for Front Line Health Care Workers Exercises; and The Expressive Writing for Front Line Health Care Workers website, which will contain FAQs; further exercises and a space for Front Line Health Care Workers to share their own stories in confidence.

**Able to reach a large number of people with limited resources:** The outputs will be made freely available in a digitised, user friendly format, accessible to anyone with internet access.

**Scalable if organisations take up the approach:** As noted above, after initial collaborative pilot projects in Iraq and Lebanon with local NGOs and the United Nations Development Program, the Expressive Writing project was rolled out to numerous regions across each country as the social workers trained in the methodology cascaded their knowledge geographically. The Expressive Writing toolkit enables support to individuals while also providing the means for the training and delivery of the Expressive Writing Methodology to further populations at no further cost.

For further information about the Viaro Group CSR programme please contact: [admin@viaro.co.uk](mailto:admin@viaro.co.uk)

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