

# Book of Cope

The 'Book of Cope' celebrates and shares the different strategies people from West Yorkshire use to boost their mental wellbeing, to help others when facing their own challenges.

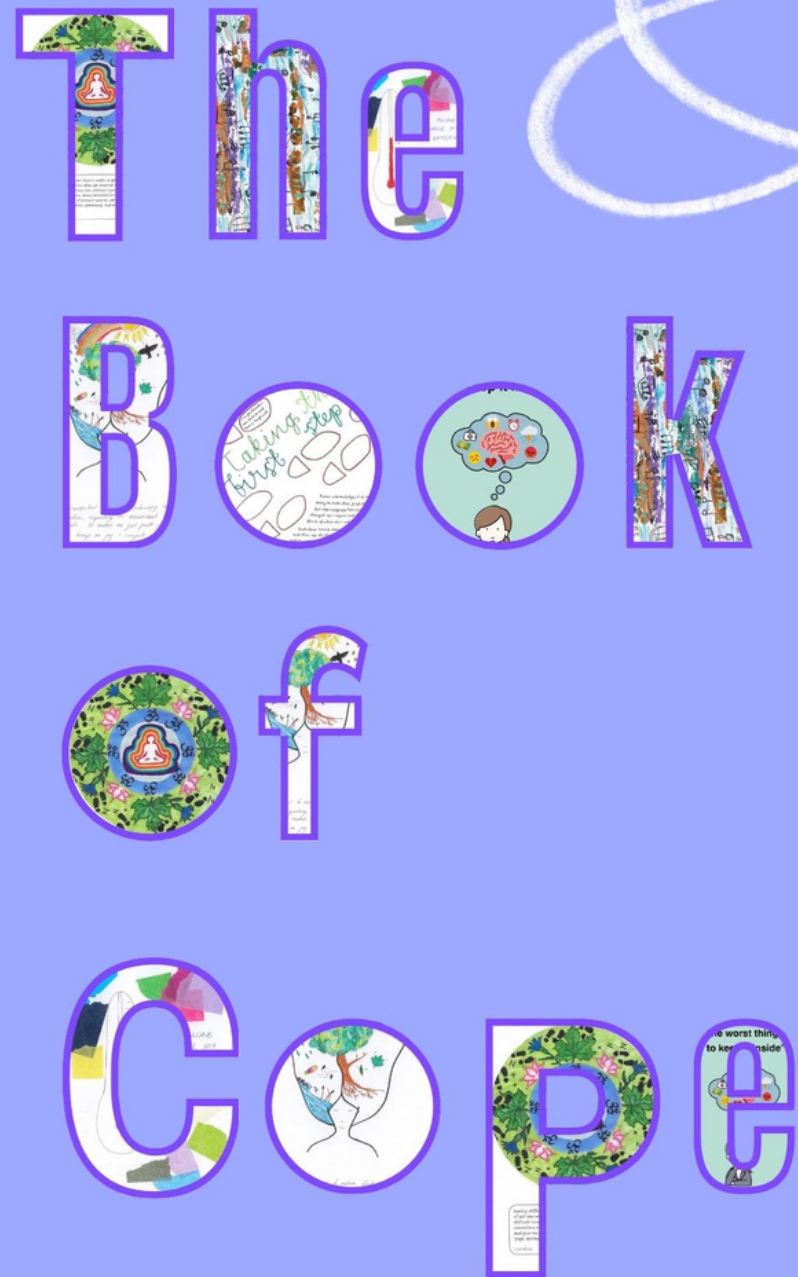
We came up with the idea for 'Book of Cope' when we were talking about coping strategies and how important peer support can be on your mental health journey.

We went out and about holding drop-in sessions across West Yorkshire, for people to design their own creative pages for the book. We also accepted online submissions.

This culminated in a 44 page book of coping strategies which are categorised by the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'.

Read the Book [here](#)

Contents



## Inspiration and Aims

**Following the release of the films and the Lived Experience Guidelines, the group decided they would like to work on a project as a larger group.**

Discussions around ideas took several directions and talked about reaching high risk groups/ wider communities that hadn't been targeted in the work so far.

Inspiration and ideas were sought from existing workshops, events and exhibitions such as the [Suicide Bereavement Service's virtual art exhibition](#), Yorkshire 'Speak their Name' quilt and [Wakefield's postcard project](#).

So far, most of the projects had been geared towards systems work, and there was an appetite amongst volunteers to do something a bit more creative and community based. This would help us to meet our aim of reducing stigma.

The group aimed to create an in-person activity or workshop that could be 'toured' in different locations and amongst different community groups. The hope that it would be an activity or workshop that fostered individual and group discussions among different groups which would result in a co-produced 'end product' that could be displayed or used.

**“This project came about as a way to co-produce a resource for a more public audience than specifically health care staff, that people can use to understand what sort of coping strategies people with lived experience use”**

## Initial ideas

**Initial ideas for the format of the event were creating beer coasters or signage to go in train stations.**

However, it was felt that something artistic might not resonate or feel comfortable to everyone.

This led to the concept of gratitude journaling as a workshop activity, due to the known benefits of writing things down and cultivating gratitude. One volunteer shared that during difficult periods they didn't have the motivation to look for help but seeing something like this journal idea would have made them hopeful and feel that they weren't alone.

This sentiment was echoed across the group about how hearing other's perspectives and knowing about shared experiences can be very powerful tools of recovery.

This concept developed further through discussions around potential challenges of identifying something you are 'grateful' or something you value about yourself. This evolved into the final concept where the group agreed that they would instead ask workshop participants 'what helps you?' to collate a diverse series of coping strategies, positive stories and real voices.

**“I got involved in this project because if I can help just one person, not only will it help that person but it will make a difference to their family and friends, so they don't have to go through the trauma that nobody should have to experience.”**

# Community Sessions

The title of the book is of great significance as it relates to the way in which people have experienced unhelpful mental health conversations.

It started as the 'Book of Hope' but individuals shared their reservations about the use of the term 'hope' as this can feel like a difficult word when it comes to having suicidal thoughts. Group members had experienced this in a negative way from various professionals

Out of this came the concept of 'The Book of Cope' out of reflections that 'The best you can possibly do in this situation is cope'.



“When we chose the book’s name, there was a collective ‘oh yep, that’s the one’”.

Participants at the various workshops were asked ‘When you’re struggling with your mental health, what is something that helps you, that you think could help someone else?’

Participants were encouraged to offer something in the form of writing, a quote, art or any other way they felt they wanted to represent their coping strategy.

Sessions took place in:

- Wakefield Central Library
- Bradford City Library
- Halifax Central Library
- Huddersfield Library
- Slaithwaite Library

We then opened up for online submissions.

Read the blog post [here](#)

“This is a fantastic project from our volunteers and we hope the end result will be a book packed full of useful strategies and advice, offering something for everyone.”

Associate Director for WY HCP’s Improving Population Health Programme



“When being asked ‘Have you lost hope?’; it can feel very difficult to have something brought to your attention that you used to have but don’t have now.”



# Designing the Book

The way we would structure the book began to take shape as we identified common themes among the submissions.

We had originally thought about focussing on each of the senses but the submissions began to align with the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'.

For those who didn't feel comfortable creating something visually and had submitted their thoughts in writing, our volunteers created drawings and other visual representations of people's voices.

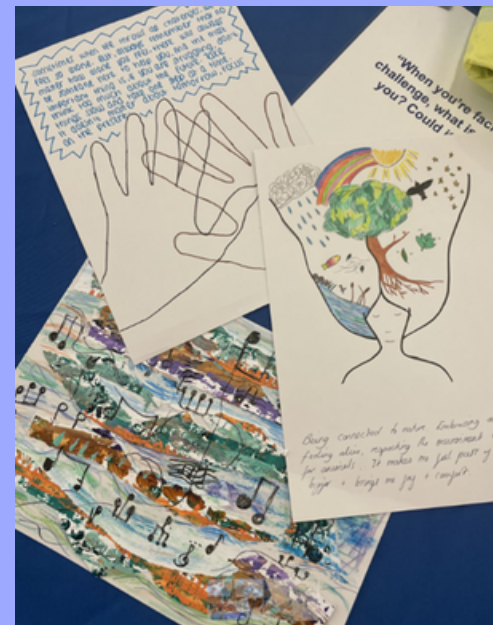
[Yahoo News](#) [Yorkshire Post](#) [Keighley News](#)

**“We saw ourselves as a group of people with lived experience who could make a difference... many people such as friends and family don't talk about suicide. When seeing professionals, it could often feel like a 'tick-box' exercise...you would be left with a series of print-outs of coping strategies or to work out your own self-led coping strategies.”**

# Output

Our final output was a **44 page Book** which has a digital and print version.

We printed 500 copies and have distributed them across West Yorkshire.



We have given out 'master copies' for community groups, libraries, GPs, local mental health services and places where people might 'usually' go.

People can also create their own on the blank page at the back. This can both be useful for people who need it for themselves, but hopefully it also helps staff for use with clients.

# Impact

## Impact on volunteers

“Engagement with individuals was the most meaningful for me”

We enjoyed the Book of Cope community engagement sessions as it brought about lots of interesting conversations.

It was nice to have so many people come and chat to us as it showed the importance of the work we have been doing.

“We have got people with lived experience to share important stuff. It’s a reminder that we’ve got human potential”

[Read the book here](#)

‘it’s highlighted how far I’ve come in that I can talk about it now. We all still have crap days, weeks, months sometimes but it doesn’t feel like my life now so that’s really positive for me’

## What we hope will be the impact

“Your concentration often isn’t great when you are in the midst of mental health challenges; it can be hard to read a text book or self-help book.”

We hope that the colour and the hand-written nature of The Book of Cope is much more user friendly and accessible and that it brings the various coping strategies to life and shows people that they are not alone.

We know that everyone has different experiences and not all strategies will work for each individual. However, learning about them feels more meaningful, interesting and engaging when it comes from the heart and from others who understand.

We wanted to collect a ‘rich knowledge’ that people with lived experience have and have it in something that is ‘usable’.

‘It’s great to have a resource for service users by service users with recommendations for coping strategies. I find myself making the same suggestions when making safety plans with service users but I am not someone who has ever found themselves in crisis. This way, I can send service users the book of cope and not only do they have a variety of strategies to try but they can feel less alone as they know theirs is an experience shared by those featured in the book!’

- Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner