

GRUNGE

a soap opera writing project:

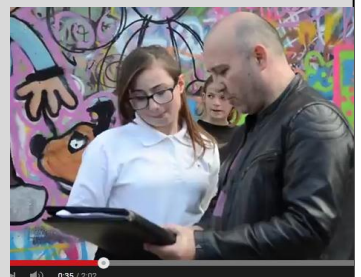
bringing together 12-14 year olds in Brighton and Hove

with a professional scriptwriter



Final Evaluation Report

July 2015



Executive Summary

The project was found to have achieved a notable impact in relation to all six indicators:

- **Attainment in Writing:** Several participants felt that the project improved their writing skills, within the specific genre of scriptwriting but also (in some cases) more broadly. Volunteers called for a broader concept of 'writing' as story development.
- **Creativity in Writing:** Participants felt that the project helped them to be more creative in their writing, especially in terms of the group work element – building on one another's ideas – and the involvement of the professional scriptwriter. The young people also expressed frustration with the lack of creative writing in their school contexts, highlighting the crucial importance of projects like these.
- **Expression and Communication Skills:** Participants, volunteers and parents all confirmed that the project was helpful for improving broader self-expression and communication skills, not only in writing but also verbally. Quieter members of the group were strongly encouraged to express their ideas and thus realised their value.
- **Feelings about Writing:** All participants expressed extremely positive feelings about the writing that they did during the project. The most frequent words used in relation to their feelings about writing during the project were 'exciting', 'interesting' and 'fun'. The impact on feelings about writing at school was less clear-cut, but there was an indication of a shift away from the middle – i.e. some young people's feelings about it had become more positive, and others more negative (by contrast with the excitement of the soap project). This would merit further investigation.
- **Motivation to Write:** Young people, volunteers and parents affirmed that there was very strong motivation to write within the context of the project itself. It is unclear whether or not this enhanced motivation was also translated to the school context, but one young person reported continuing to do creative writing out of school.
- **Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Participants, volunteers and parents consistently reported that the project had a powerful positive impact on self-esteem and confidence. There was a particularly notable effect in the case of a participant with high-functioning autism. However, some participants did have experiences during the filming that made them feel temporarily less confident.

The key concern identified during the evaluation was that the project seemed to be largely missing its target group of disadvantaged and vulnerable youth (with the exception of the individual with autism and a young woman who is in foster care) and focusing on a group of young people who were highly motivated, creative and able from the start. There is a need to revise the recruitment strategy, through target schools or otherwise. In addition, there is a need to manage risks and ensure that volunteers are trained to create safe spaces for the young people to express any concerns that they may have, especially during filming.

Selected quotes from young people (lilac), volunteers (blue) and parents (orange)

They were all saying they were really going to miss it, I think it's been a really big thing for them - it's something they're never going to forget.

I feel very proud and confident now. [Young person with autism]

It motivated me to write more outside school – relatable stories like a blog or something...

The young people are fully immersed in the experience and actually see their ideas come to life – it really is a transformational journey you take them on. A. is a very lucky person to have been on this journey!"

It opened up more of an unexplored world...

Pleasurable and therapeutic!

It was BRILLIANT!

There was a massive change in [a young person with high-functioning autism] when we started filming... He took the job so seriously and was beaming, and by the end of the day he was a different person. That was the biggest transformation. He got to know us and trusted us, he found something he could do really well and was really interested in it.

[Watching 'Grunge'] was really exciting. Even though I was in it, it nearly made me cry!

I felt proud that I can achieve something like that.

I felt more confident, definitely.

It made me look more into writing scripts and filming.

This project made me very happy and proud of myself.

In a time when both arts funding and services for young people are under such pressure, it is fantastic that something like Little Green Pig exists to encourage and teach older kids/young teens the communication skills that are so vital for their future, whichever path they choose to go down in life.

L. whose mum wasn't sure whether he'd actually stay for the first session, was contributing ideas very confidently and at the screening he wanted to say something in front of more than 100 people!

About the Project

Following a successful partnership project 'City Life' with CUPP Brighton University last year, Little Green Pig received funding from Awards For All to run a digital literacy project aimed at 14 young people aged 12 -14 to write, film, and edit three 5 minute 'soap opera' episodes to be premiered during 'B Fest', Brighton's Youth Festival May 2015.

The aim of the project was to recruit students from partner schools most in need (Patcham and Brighton Aldridge Community Academy), and specifically target young people who were not engaging in school, although there were also four spaces open to any young person in the Brighton & Hove area. Young people (YP) were given the opportunity to write, film, and edit their own work. A celebratory event was held at Brighton's Picture House Cinema, The Duke of York's, to share the work with teachers, parents, carers and the wider community. The work was also shown on Latest TV, Brighton's TV station, and broadcast on YouTube.

Evaluation Approach and Indicators

The evaluation was designed as a mixed methods qualitative-dominant evaluation (i.e. predominantly qualitative methods with some quantitative elements), using primarily values-inspired indicators developed by Little Green Pig and the parent organisation, Ministry of Stories. The term 'values-inspired' is used here to indicate that the indicators for evaluation were created by the project team and the parent organisation on the basis of aspects that they found important - rather than being imposed from the top down as part of an external framework, or developed through a formal values elicitation approach.

Through discussion with the project team and reference to earlier evaluations conducted by the Ministry of Stories, seven primary indicators of success were identified, namely *increased motivation to write* (MW), *more positive feelings about writing* (FW), *improved self-esteem* (SE), *improved confidence* (SC), *improved creativity in writing* (CW), *improved attainment in writing* (AW), and *broader improvements in expressive and communication skills* (EC). Each of these, on reflection, was found to consist of two or more sub-indicators, as detailed in Table 1 below. Each primary indicator was evaluated using at least two different methods. While in an ideal situation, at least two different perspectives would have been gathered for each indicator (youth and staff), the time and budget constraints meant that some indicators (SC, CW and AW) were evaluated only from the youth perspective.

A baseline evaluation was conducted at the start of the project, with 14 young people, and an interim evaluation immediately after the end of the writing phase, with 10 young people. However, the majority of the evaluation data collection took place during a dedicated session at the end of the project, after the screening of the finished soap opera, which was also attended by 10 young people. During this session, several different evaluative activities were conducted simultaneously by different facilitators.

Table 1: Full list of indicators, sub-indicators and assessment methods used during the evaluation

Indicator	Sub-indicators	Assessment methods
AW: Improved attainment in writing	- Young people feel that their writing attainment level has improved	Corporal survey with focus groups
CW: Increased creativity in writing	- Young people feel that their writing is more creative	Corporal survey with focus groups
EC: Broader improvements in expressive and communication skills	- Young people feel that they can express themselves better in writing - Staff feel that the young people's expression and communication skills have improved	Corporal survey with focus groups 'Graffiti wall' exercise Staff semi-structured interviews
FW: More positive feelings about writing	- Young people feel positive about writing within the project - After the project, young people feel more positive about writing at school	Word association exercise with self-assessment scale 'Graffiti wall' exercise
MW: Improved motivation to write	- Young people feel motivated to write within the project - After the project, young people feel more motivated to write at school	Corporal survey with focus groups 'Graffiti wall' exercise
SC: Improved self-esteem and confidence	- Young people feel confident in their ability to write - Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale - Young people feel their self-esteem has improved	Corporal survey with focus groups Questionnaire survey (RSES) Corporal survey with focus groups 'Graffiti wall' exercise

In addition to these specific indicators, participants were also asked some general questions: what stood out for them within the project (focus group) and what they felt about the screening of the soap opera (whole-group circle discussion).

General feedback was elicited from parents, and their comments noted in relation to the seven indicators, where relevant.

Assessment Methods

The evaluation was designed with the use of creative evaluation methods developed by the Values and Sustainability Research Group at the University of Brighton, as previously described in several academic publications [1-5]. Details of each method were as follows:

- **Corporal survey (quantitative):** A corporal survey is an adaptation of a traditional survey to a non-written format, which is often more appropriate than questionnaires for working with groups of young people. Participants are asked to close their eyes (to avoid group conformity bias), listen to a question, and then adopt one of three postures to indicate their preferred response. This method has two advantages over traditional questionnaire surveys. First, it helps to maintain a fun and uplifting atmosphere which more closely resembles a 'game' than an 'exam', therefore reducing boredom and disengagement. Second, it ensures that YP who have lower literacy levels, visual problems or specific conditions such as dyslexia are not disadvantaged. The method is described in two papers, although different postures were assigned to the responses in each different setting [1, 3].

In this specific case, the following postures were used:

- Arms raised with thumbs up to represent a strongly positive answer (e.g. *yes, definitely, very much*)
 - Hands outstretched in front with fingers wiggling to represent a neutral or slightly positive answer (e.g. *sort of, maybe, a bit*)
 - Arms by sides with thumbs down, or hands placed flat on table, to represent a negative answer (*no or not at all*)
- **Follow-up focus group (qualitative) [1, 3]:** In the final evaluation session, the corporal survey questions were immediately followed by 15-minute focus groups, conducted in small groups of 3-4 participants. In these, the facilitator asked semi-structured questions intended at eliciting deeper, richer qualitative information – “the stories behind the statistics”. This study was conducted in small groups, both to improve the efficiency of recording responses and to facilitate quality contributions to the accompanying focus groups. In order to reduce social desirability bias and conformity bias, participants were asked to close their eyes before adopting their chosen posture; explicitly asked to respond honestly rather than giving the answers that they thought they 'should' give; and informed that their responses would be anonymised.

- **Word association exercise (qualitative and quantitative):** This was a modification of a method described in *Youth Participatory Evaluation* by Kim Sabo Flores [6], and initially used in the development of a sustainability toolkit with secondary school pupils [2]. The YP were asked to write down, without thinking about it deeply, the first three words that came into their head when someone mentioned 'writing' (either in the school context or in relation to the LGP soap project). The collected word lists were then subjected to quantitative content analysis to determine the overall frequency of words rated by the evaluator as positive, neutral or negative respectively, and qualitative content analysis to identify the top five words across the whole set. To accompany the word association exercise, the YP were asked to write down a score out of 10 (with 0 being the lowest and 10 the highest) to represent how they felt about writing.
- **'Graffiti wall' exercise:** In this exercise, the YP were given a large piece of paper with the word 'Writing' in the centre and asked to write, draw or doodle anything that they felt in relation to writing (either in the project context or in school).

General findings: What stood out for the young people

At the start of the focus group, the young people were asked what stood out for them about the project. Their comments were mainly extremely positive, although the first group also raised some specific concerns about situations encountered during the filming:

Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I felt really dirty after nearly smoking. I hated the smell. I just exhaled. I tried to keep humble but it was a bit weird. - Don't be scared of the drug dealers! [This referred to an incident, discussed in more detail in one of the later focus groups, where real drug dealers were seen at a skate park where the group was filming a scene]. - If it's an uncomfortable environment it's good for the scenes. - It was good, especially the work in groups. It was brilliant! - [What stood out for me was] ice cream and the spinny chair! - The camera was quite interesting.
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I liked seeing it come together from storyboarding, what a soap was, then actually writing it yourself. I thought they were going to write it for us. - I loved acting. - I liked the bloopers at the end and seeing behind the scenes. - It was really exciting. Even though I was in it, it nearly made me cry! - I liked being in charge (the director) and seeing the bits that I wrote.
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I got the confidence to speak out in a group – people are all listening well. - Being able to see more visually and using the camera. It's a good skill. - Acting – I loved it. It was great!

Findings by indicator (alphabetical order of indicators)

Attainment in Writing (AW)

This indicator did not form part of the baseline study, as it was felt to be meaningless to ask the young people about their attainment in writing when they had nothing with which to compare it. Following the Ministry of Stories evaluation, the original plan was to ask the young people's English teachers to comment on their attainment levels in relation to the UK National Curriculum, and then to compare these with the levels attained in the final written work. This was recognised to be impractical, however: not only because project staff did not have the time to contact the teachers to obtain the required information, but also because the extent of collaboration on the script was such that it was impossible to obtain 'individual' writing samples for any given participant.

Final Corporal Survey

The corporal survey at the end of the project specifically asked participants whether they felt the project had improved their attainment in writing, or specific writing skills. Due to time constraints, this indicator was not evaluated through a corporal survey in Group 2, as they had spent more time discussing the earlier questions in depth. It was felt to be more important to spend the time capturing qualitative feedback than 'numbers'.

This meant that only seven participants answered this question. Of these, however, 100% reported at least some improvement, and 29% a large improvement in attainment.

Table 2: Corporal survey results: Improvements in 'attainment in writing' (AW)

	"THUMBS UP"			"WIGGLING FINGERS"			"THUMBS DOWN"		
	Very much / Definitely			Sort of / A bit			Not at all		
I feel that the project has improved my attainment in writing	Total	2/7	29%	Total	5/7	71%	Total	0/7	0%
	Group 1	0/4	0%	Group 1	4/4	100%	Group 1	0/4	0%
	Group 3	2/3	66%	Group 3	1/3	33%	Group 3	0/4	0%

Follow-Up Focus Group – Attainment in Writing

After the corporal survey, focus groups were conducted with the 10 young people (Group 1 with four participants; Groups 2 and 3 with three each) to gain a deeper insight into the question of attainment in writing and how it had been affected, or not, by the project. All comments were captured immediately by the facilitator in the form of mind maps. The tables below include both the raw data, i.e. direct quotations, and the findings of a thematic analysis - although the latter was challenging because of the small size of the groups and the brevity of the responses. While including direct quotations in an evaluation report is rare for a focus group, it was feasible in this case because of the short duration (15 minutes).

Raw qualitative data: Improvements in ‘attainment in writing’ (AW)

Group #	Participant comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- [It improved] in a way. It opened up more ideas that you can use.- It increased my knowledge in creativity.- It made me better at writing soaps.- Yeah, now I know how to write soaps!
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It was good for knowing what level of drama to put in – what’s realistic and what isn’t. I got a sense of using cliffhangers.- Yeah, that’s good. It opened up more of an unexplored world. I didn’t really write scripts much before so it helped quite a lot.- Before I used to see scriptwriting as a bit of a bore. In primary school we had hours. Having less time [in the project] made it more interesting. It was the right amount of time. I think that if we’d had more time, we would have produced the same but got bored and then added unnecessary lines.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I was learning a lot about exterior and interior. I’m better at writing scripts now – I never used to notice that – so it’ll probably get me a higher level. I read scripts quite a lot, which has helped me to write. Writing in scripts, it’s easier to see the big picture.- I rarely read scripts or wrote them, but now I know how to do it.- [My attainment level] is still the same, which is quite good.

Themes that emerged from this dataset were as follows:

- Scriptwriting is a form of writing that participants might not have previously learned, or been engaged with, but the project improved attainment in this area.
- Participants mentioned specific skills of scriptwriting (e.g. interior vs. exterior, understanding realistic levels of drama) that they had acquired.
- Some felt that acquiring these skills would help their writing or raise their attainment level more generally.

Volunteer Interviews – Attainment in Writing

The professional scriptwriter, P., raised the question of what is *meant* by ‘attainment in writing’. He highlighted the differences between scriptwriting and prose writing – commenting that what would be considered ‘attainment’ in prose writing, e.g. in a school context, might not work at all when translated to a screen.

“[In school there is] so much emphasis on the grammar and on certain things that make you understand that your writing gets ‘better’ if you have used an unusual adjective – things that for this process, for learning screenwriting, you would throw completely out of the window. They were good at looking at dialogue, I would say to them, ‘read that out loud, is that how people talk?’ We don’t talk in proper

sentences, we don't use good interesting adjectives. A good piece of prose or an interestingly argued essay makes appalling screenwriting."

On the other hand, P. noted that scriptwriting can help to build analytical skills that are also applicable to prose forms, including essays:

"They were doing [analysis] once they'd got a script on paper: 'Now we need to film this – what is the heart of this scene, what is the most important bit?' - That is exactly the same as the teacher in class saying 'now you've read that short story, analyse this...' They were doing that because you have to know that if you're directing work, all these things have a turning point. [They were] doing all that stuff that you're taught in school.

P. also distinguished two contrasting understandings of the word 'writing': (a) the narrow sense of 'putting words on a page', and (b) the broader process of generating ideas, shaping a story, developing a plot, turning the plot into dialogue, and collaborating with the film crew and actors to weave the finished episode. In this sense, 'screenwriting' ends only when someone views the film and understands what the writer wanted to communicate. While it was difficult to see an improvement (at the individual level) in 'words on a page', because of the very collaborative nature of the project, he felt that the young people had made huge progress in 'writing' in the broader sense:

"[They have improved] in the bigger sense of taking ideas in their heads and developing them into stories and working out how to then create that into a scene, an episode. Their writing improved enormously because of those skills that they were developing."

"Their storytelling got more sophisticated – it inevitably happens with series television because in the first ones you're doing a lot of setting up..."

"You could completely see how much they were learning – 'This is all about a cliff, this is about what can you twist'... 'How can we double up characters, could the creepy guy also be someone's dad?' Once you plant an idea...they get it, weaving stuff together, in that sense completely I could see their writing getting better week on week."

P. felt that emphasising this broader sense of 'writing' could have a powerful effect in itself:

"You open up people's eyes to what actually writing is and what it can be, and how important it is to use language in different ways, in different contexts, for different purposes."

Two other volunteers commented that it was difficult to identify whether there had been any measurable impact on attainment in writing, because the focus of every session was different. However, both felt that the standard had been high from the start and remained that way throughout the project:

"I think it was all quite even, I don't know, because like I said they were all there independently, it was obviously something they had an interest in anyway. Coming up with the ideas and how to do it was pretty consistent, they were always more than able to come up with their own ideas. They were all engaged from the start."

"I think the writing is fantastic, but it's very difficult to talk about changes because there have only been two sessions dedicated entirely to writing. The first two sessions were dedicated to character development and story development and plot, and that was a really interesting process to watch and for me it was hugely exciting."

Parent Feedback – Attainment in Writing

Similar to P.'s comments, parent feedback referred to attainment in writing within the broader context of skill acquisition, in relation to the whole process of writing, directing and producing a screenplay:

"She seemed to know exactly what was going on which suggests they were really taught the importance of planning, detail and working towards an end product. She spoke about learning about how much drama to put into writing without making it unrealistic. How to speak in different voices – what language and words each character would use eg. The older character wouldn't say 'init'! How much emotion to put into acting to make it credible. Learning about stage directions – appreciating how many camera takes there are in soap operas to get the right dramatic effect..."

"A. now understands much more about working in stages, planning, creating structure. Working back from the end product. She feels confident to try something like this again. She said before the Little Green Pig experience she would watch a soap opera and be mystified by how they would even start creating something like that. Now she has a much wider appreciation of the process and will now sit and watch Eastenders and point out how many takes a scene might have taken or how difficult a scene might be to shoot and how a character might have got into character before shooting – it's amazing what she is coming out with! She really has a sense she knows how it works now, an appreciation of the skills needed and a critical eye."

Taken together, the responses from parents, volunteers and young people strongly suggest that the project developed a broader and deeper understanding of what 'writing' might entail, beyond merely putting words on a page. Within this wider context, the young people both found enjoyment and were able to demonstrate greatly improved attainment.

Creativity in Writing (CW)

This indicator, like AW, did not form part of the baseline study, as it was felt to be meaningless to ask the young people about their creativity in writing when they had nothing with which to compare it.

Final Corporal Survey

The corporal survey at the end of the project specifically asked participants whether they felt the project had improved their creativity in writing.

Due to time constraints, this indicator was not evaluated through a corporal survey in Group 2, as they had spent more time discussing the earlier questions in depth. It was felt to be more important to spend the time capturing qualitative feedback than ‘numbers’.

This meant that only seven participants answered this question. Of these, however, 100% reported at least some improvement, and 29% a large improvement in attainment.

Table 3: Corporal survey results: Improvements in ‘creativity in writing’ (CW)

	“THUMBS UP”			“WIGGLING FINGERS”			“THUMBS DOWN”		
	Very much / Definitely			Sort of / A bit			Not at all		
I feel that the project has improved my creativity in writing	Total	4/10	40%	Total	1/10	10%	Total	5/10	50%
	Group 1	1/4	25%	Group 1	1/4	25%	Group 1	2/4	50%
	Group 2	3/3	100%	Group 2	0/3	0%	Group 2	0/3	0%
	Group 3	0/3	0%	Group 3	0/3	0%	Group 3	3/3	100%

Follow-Up Focus Group – Creativity in Writing

After the corporal survey, focus groups were conducted with the 10 young people (Group 1 with four participants; Groups 2 and 3 with three each) to gain a deeper insight into the question of creativity in writing and how it had been affected, or not, by the project. Prompted by Group 1’s spontaneous complaints about the lack of attention to creativity in writing at school, the facilitator also explored this theme with the two subsequent groups.

Raw qualitative data: Improvements in ‘creativity in writing’ (CW)

Group #	Participant comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maybe [it helped] a little bit. Having Pete there – he had ideas. We don’t do group work at school, we just do PEAs [Point / Evidence / Analysis] and work on our own. We don’t do creative writing at all, only in the assessment. - We hardly do any group work at school. We have a very strict way of writing. If we had more time would have come up with a better name than ‘Pedro’, it’s stereotypical. - It helped us because the story progressed from one part to another and you have to decide what comes next – that helps creativity. In school they just call it ‘creative writing’ but it isn’t. - [It helped] a little bit. You come up with an idea and other people add to it.

	In school we only do about 5% creative writing.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I realise how little creative writing we do at school. It's bad, it's not good. But our new teacher used to be in Coronation Street so we do scriptwriting with him – tension writing. I love tension writing so much. It's a better life skill to make up a story [than to do analysis] – no one will say 'Quick, analyse this!' but you're more likely to be in a situation where you have to make up a story, maybe to entertain people or something. - In Year 7 it's rubbish, we don't do anything [creative]. - We did creative writing at primary school but the club got shut down. Now we just get told 'write a poem' if the lesson went wrong. We just watch and analyse Shakespeare most of the time.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There's not enough creative writing at school – it's straightforward. But the project hasn't really changed how I write. - Working in groups has helped me build up characters better. - [Did the project make a difference to your creativity?] Not really – I'm still creative.

Themes that emerged from this dataset were as follows:

- Group work can enhance creativity.
- In the project, participants worked together both to develop characters and to advance the plot; the collaboration made them more creative.
- Participants felt that there was not enough creative writing in schools generally (in contrast to an over-emphasis on analysis) and not enough group work.

Volunteer Interviews – Creativity in Writing

The perspective of the professional scriptwriter, P., was not so much that the project 'increased' the young people's creativity but that it helped them to express the creativity that was already within them. A key factor in achieving this was that volunteers encouraged them to stop censoring their own ideas, and to share them confidently with the group:

"They were creative from the start, they learned how to shape that, then they had the confidence 'my ideas are important, what I've got to say is good' and that really helped develop their creativity and then you stop censoring your stuff, because you learn to believe in your ideas, you can just be in a group. People are inherently creative beings, but we learn not to be, we learn to be shy or embarrassed about our art and we self-censor all the time."

This was echoed by another volunteer, who drew attention to the importance of making each young person aware that their ideas are respected and valued:

“I think they knew their ideas were going to be listened to and were really important, and we couldn’t do it without their ideas, so they were able to access their creativity better.”

When asked whether he or the other volunteers had carried out specific activities to help the youth overcome self-censorship and express their creativity, P. responded:

“Not in any particular activity, I just worked from a position of unconditional positivity., work from a very positive place, believe you can give people encouragement and give people very clear feedback.”

“As a whole they were a very good, encouraging group of volunteers...I wasn’t particularly focused on how individual volunteers were working, but the whole company comes from a positive place of encouraging.”

P. also highlighted the importance of making positive feedback very specific and targeted:

It’s about being clear what you’re being positive about, you can easily say ‘this is brilliant’ and they don’t know what to do more of... When you’re very clear what is good, [they’ve] got that self-belief, they know what ‘good’ looks like and why, and you’ve got them to work through it.”

Another volunteer commented that she felt the young people’s creativity had sometimes surpassed their own, giving an example of how this was manifested in the film itself:

“They had ideas to get round problems that we didn’t have. They came up with things like using the picture and the picture frame to show... there was a picture and it was smashed, as a way of representing that someone’s ending a relationship. There’s certainly... creativity.”

Expression and Communication Skills (EC)

Baseline Corporal Survey

The baseline corporal survey (conducted with the whole group) focused on the specific question of how easy participants found it to express themselves in writing. None of the group members said that they found it very difficult.

	“THUMBS UP” Very much / Definitely	“WIGGLING FINGERS” Sort of / A bit	“THUMBS DOWN” Not at all
I find it easy to express myself in writing	8/14 (57%)	6/14 (43%)	0/14 (0%)

Final Corporal Survey – Expression & Communication Skills

The corporal survey at the end of the project specifically asked participants whether they felt the project had improved their expression and communication skills, both in writing and more generally.

Due to time constraints, this indicator was not evaluated through a corporal survey in Group 2. This meant that only seven participants answered this question altogether. Of these, two reported an improvement in expression and communication skills: one a large improvement, and the other a slight improvement. The remaining five (72%) said that they had not noticed any improvement. This is congruent with the baseline survey results suggesting that most of the young people already rated their EC skills highly before the project.

Table 4: Corporal survey results: Improvements in ‘expression & communication skills’ (EC)

	“THUMBS UP”			“WIGGLING FINGERS”			“THUMBS DOWN”		
	Very much / Definitely			Sort of / A bit			Not at all		
I feel that the project has improved my expression and communication skills	Total	1/7	14%	Total	1/7	14%	Total	5/7	72%
	Group 1	1/7	14%	Group 1	1/7	14%	Group 1	2/4	50%
	Group 3	0/3	0%	Group 3	0/3	0%	Group 3	3/3	100%

Follow-Up Focus Group – Expression and Communication Skills

After the corporal survey, focus groups were conducted with the 10 young people (Group 1 with four participants; Groups 2 and 3 with three each) to gain a deeper insight into the question of expression and communication skills and how it had been affected, or not, by the project.

The positive nature of the focus group comments suggests that the corporal survey results, taken alone, may be misleading. The testimony of the one individual in Group 1 who did report a large improvement is especially noteworthy. In addition, although the corporal survey was not completed by Group 2, the nature of the comments suggests that at least two of them would have reported some degree of improvement. For Group 3, it is interesting to note that all the participants reported ‘no improvement’ in the corporal survey but, when invited to discuss the question, all of them thought of improvements!

Raw qualitative data: Improvements in 'expression and communication skills' (EC)

Group #	Participant comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No difference. Give me a script and I'll talk.- I don't think it made a difference.- Same.- I'm kind of just an awkward mess generally. It made a little bit of difference. Now I can speak. I could talk... I don't know. I kind of felt awkward talking to people, and now it's easier and that's good.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It's good for getting your point across. You don't seem cocky because you kind of need to get things done. If you've got an idea, you've got to say it, or it's not going to happen.- I'll be more confident and say more next time. Now I know my ideas are good.- I didn't used to say most of my ideas because I didn't think they were worth the trouble. But you get pushed, 'say your ideas!' and then it turns into something good.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It definitely helped me, talking up in the group, as a director – I'd never directed people before. I was the main director.- I've always been quite a sociable person who likes to make friends. I'm a pretty confident person anyway.- I feel very proud and confident now.

Themes that emerged from this dataset were as follows:

- Some YP lacked confidence in their ideas at first and therefore kept quiet about them.
- As the project went on, they were 'pushed' to share their ideas, either by the volunteers or their own internal motivation (realising nobody else would say it if they didn't)
- Through this process, the YP realised the value of their ideas.
- At least one person felt their expression/communication skills had improved more generally, i.e. beyond the project context.

Volunteer Interviews – Expression and Communication Skills

One of the volunteers commented that most of the young people had excellent expression and communication skills even before the start of the project, confirming the findings from the other evaluation methods. However, there was one YP with high-functioning autism and she felt that his expression and communication skills had improved hugely. While his mother had been concerned about him at the start, to the extent of staying with him for the whole of the first session, the volunteers and his peers helped this individual ('L.') to feel relaxed and comfortable within the group. This did not mean that it was always easy:

“As a team, we – volunteers and the other young people – have got used to what L. needs in order to feel safe and reassured. He’s really settled in and kind of calmed down. There are hiccups but as a group they’ve relaxed a lot.”

“[It was] challenging because he gets very fixated on detail and upset when things don’t go the way that he was envisaging, so that’s been the group that’s had the most complicated dynamics to deal with.”

A specific incident with L. highlighted the need for effective volunteer training in relation to young people with additional needs, and the potential for inexperienced or untrained volunteers to make the situation worse rather than better. Another important learning point emerging from this situation was the potential for YP with additional needs to trigger or increase the volunteers’ own insecurities and anxieties. This calls for effective project management, in terms of matching volunteers’ strengths and YP’s needs:

“He was working with a group that had two volunteers working with the group and Pete was also kind of there as well and as I understand it L. just got really overwhelmed with all the attention, and the volunteers initially responded by giving him more attention, not less. But when it transpired that that was the problem, J. took him outside and they just had a really calm conversation. He took a bit of time out and then came back and was really sweet, apologised to J. and apologised to P., and then I think understood that he’d got overwhelmed and got quite panicky and confrontational.”

“One of the volunteers who was with him is very nervous herself, and I’m not going to go making diagnoses but she is someone that’s kind of anxious around her role or what it’s useful for her to do, it doesn’t come easily or naturally to her. She particularly gave a lot of attention to him when he was flustering, which wasn’t helpful, so he’s been partnered now with an older, calmer person.”

The volunteer who was asked to work with L. commented on his difficulties as follows:

“L. had had a bit of a meltdown so I was asked to take primary care of him, which I did and he was quite... he was interested in being there but he would very often remove himself from the group physically and psychologically, he would step back or sort of start humming something.”

Peer support was an important factor in helping L. to feel calm and settled during the sessions, as reported by another volunteer:

“In terms of the group that he’s been working with, there’s one young person in particular who’s been incredibly sensitive to his needs, again they’re a very engaged,

thoughtful group...she's been really kind of sensitive to his needs and anxieties and really supportive of him, so that's been really lovely to see."

From the initial challenges during the writing phase, the volunteer who had taken primary responsibility for L. reported that he had undergone a transformation during the filming.

"There was a massive change in him when we started filming... when he had the boom and headphones he sort of panicked and didn't know how to do it, but we encouraged him. He took the job so seriously and was beaming, and by the end of the day he was a different person. That was the biggest transformation. He got to know us and trusted us, he found something he could do really well and was really interested in it."

Establishing a sense of ownership was felt to be particularly important in this respect:

"It wasn't always easy to keep him on track until that point, but he had ownership once he had the equipment in his hand."

"At school although he's very intelligent, he panics about things. He doesn't always understand things, we have to make sure he's got it, but... with the mike he was brilliant."

In addition to his obvious enjoyment of the camera work, the volunteer also highlighted L.'s emerging talent for acting:

"He had to pretend to be frightened, and he did it so brilliantly that I thought he was actually scared, I said 'were you all right?' and he said 'I was acting!'"

The working relationships with the volunteers (and especially the professional scriptwriter, P.) were particularly significant for this individual. By the end of the project, he had established strong connections, something that people with autism usually find very difficult. This highlights the importance of this type of project, and the potential for expanding LGP's work with young people who live with communication difficulties such as autism:

"He said he'd had the best time ever, he really appreciated working with P., he was really fond of P. by the end. When we were saying goodbye he was giving me a hug and Pete a hug, he really formed a connection. It was really amazing."

In relation to the other members of the group, who did not have specific difficulties with self-expression or communication at the start, the effect of the project in this area was harder to determine. In response to what might be seen as 'leading' questions about whether the young people's self-expression and communication skills had improved overall, one volunteer responded as follows:

“I think some of them were more eloquent than others, and some of them were more extroverted so they were more likely to communicate in an open way, but I think that there probably was [an overall effect], subtly but it wasn’t something I really thought about or noticed in particular. All I can go by really is the overall feeling, it was just so positive.”

When asked what had made it so positive, she explained that a key factor was the non-competitive atmosphere that was created. The volunteers had a key role in establishing a feeling of equality between the young people, even if they weren’t always aware that they were doing it, by valuing everyone’s ideas and roles equally:

[The young people] weren’t looking to...put anyone else down, they weren’t in competition with each other, there was no rivalry or vindictiveness... They all sort of wordlessly agreed that...they were all equally as important and each one of their inputs was as important as the other. That was put across by the adults as well.”

The working relationship between the young people and the adults was also seen by the same volunteer as a key factor in creating a positive, enabling environment, in which YP are free to be creative and develop their communication skills. The distinction between this relationship and traditional ‘teacher-student’ relationships was seen as central to the project, which in itself has important implications – not only for LGP’s work with this age group, but also broader lessons for the field of education, as discussed in the recommendations section:

“They knew the adults were there to direct them rather than boss them about... We were there to guide them through the project, give them guidance and direction and encouragement and assistance - rather than set rules, ordering them about and telling them off, it wasn’t like that.”

“It was a different environment to a school environment and that helped them too, to be able to express themselves without worrying that they were doing it wrong or that they would get a bad mark. There was no ‘doing it wrong’ or failing, the idea was to collectively make something brilliant with everyone. Rather than being marked on your own personal effort, it was a group effort.”

Despite the obvious success of the project and its ability to make a real difference to those who took part, one volunteer expressed a concern that the goal of reaching disaffected and vulnerable YP was not fully attained. In their view, the YP involved in the project (with the exception of the young man with autism) almost all began it with relatively high levels of self-esteem and confidence, high motivation and attainment in writing, and good expression and communication skills, especially in comparison to the initial target population. Thus, although everything about the project had been positive, they felt that its full

transformative potential had not been reached. This was attributed to resistance from the target schools, which in turn might have been overcome with a better recruitment strategy:

“I don’t know how they went about targeting them; I don’t think they went in and talked to the young people. They tried but there was some resistance, a sense from schools that it was just another thing they were being offered and it wasn’t a priority. The relationship needs to be built – there seems to be an expectation that they’ll just understand how great a project it is.”

Suggestions for improving this situation were to go into school assemblies to screen the soap opera, and invite staff from prospective partner schools to the public screening at B-FEST.

Parent Feedback – Expression and Communication Skills

Feedback from parents after the project (solicited through open-ended questions sent by e-mail) supported the comments made by the youth and volunteers:

“On the first week she came home full of enthusiasm, saying, ‘they really liked my ideas and I had a chance to talk about issues that were on my mind, it’s really helped to talk about stuff. Some of my ideas might actually be in the filming. Everyone was really relaxed and it wasn’t embarrassing talking in front of everyone – we could talk about whatever we wanted, that’s how you come up with ideas.”

“A. spoke of how everybody’s ideas were considered, she felt challenged to push herself and appreciated for her contributions. She learnt a lot from working with and observing the rest of the team too.”

“In a time when both arts funding and services for young people are under such pressure, it is fantastic that something like Little Green Pig exists to encourage and teach older kids/young teens the communication skills that are so vital for their future, whichever path they choose to go down in life.”

Feelings about Writing (FW)

Word Association Exercise with Self-Assessment Scale

In order to gain a richer understanding of participants’ feelings about writing, this indicator was not assessed through a corporal survey approach, but rather through a word association exercise requiring the YP to list the first three words that they associate with writing – both in school contexts and, where appropriate, within the project. (It was not useful to ask about writing within the project before it had fully started). They were also

asked to give a numerical score between 0 and 10 indicating how they felt about writing. One of the participants did not complete any of these exercises.

To maintain the anonymity of participants while still allowing comparisons between the baseline, mid-term and final evaluations, the participants were asked to identify themselves using only their date of birth.

Table 5. Participants' feelings about writing (FW) at school and in the project: raw data

This table shows the words written by the YP; the evaluator's subjective rating of each word as respectively positive (+), neutral (N) or negative (-); and the score given by the YP to indicate their overall verdict, out of 10.

Participant ID	Writing at School: Baseline	Writing at School: Final	Writing in Project: Mid-Term	Writing in Project: Final
1999-09-24	Painful/ Story (N) Hard (N) English (N) 6/10	Missed session	Missed session	Missed session
2000-07-24	Hard (N) Long (-) Confusing (-) 5/10	Missed session	Missed session	Missed session
2000-11-19	Story (N) Exciting (+) Interesting (+) 10/10	Trying (N) Hard (N) Great (+) 8/10	Excited (+) Scared (-) Happy (+)	Exciting (+) Great (+) Helpful (+) 9/10
2000-12-28	Creativity (N) General (N) Books (N) 8/10	Imaginative (+) Interesting (+) Varied (+) 5/10	Interesting (+) Intriguing (+) Happy (+)	Fun (+) Exciting (+) Extraordinary (+) 9.75/10
2001-01-29	Challenging (N) Intimidating (-) Expressive (N) 7/10	A bit of a drag but then I get to it and I can't stop (N) Annoying (-) Imagination (N) 6/10	Missed session	Experience (N) Hard work but worth it in the end (N) So exciting (+) 9.9/10
2001-06-15	Pleasurable (+) Imaginative (+) Expresses emotion (N) 8/10	Creative (+) Independent (+) Interesting (+) 8/10	Excited (+) Interested (+) Intrigued (+)	Fun (+) Opinionative (N) Exciting (+) 9.57/10
2001-08-09	Interesting (+) Imaginative (+) Exciting (+) 10/10	Fun (+) Serious (N) Interesting (+) 8/10	Happy (+) Confident (+) Proud (+)	Imaginative (+) Crazy (N) Layered (N) 8/10
2001-09-12	Paragraphs (N) Stories (N) Imagination (N) 5/10	Missed session	Interesting (+) Fun (+) Happy (+)	Missed session

2002-01-09	Express (N) Quotes (N) Story (N) 8/10	Missed session	Fun (+) Easy to share with group (+) Creative (+)	Fun (+) Good to share ideas (+) Interesting (+) 9.5/10
2002-02-15	Exciting (+) Free (+) Fun / Story (N) 7 / 6/10	Fun (+) Imaginative (+) Bit dull (-) 7/10	Excited (+) Intriguing (+) Interesting (+)	Fun (+) Interesting (+) Exciting (+) 9.76/10
2002-03-16	Adventurous (+) Escapism (+) Spontaneous (+) 6/10**	Tedious (-) Doldrums (-) MACBETH (N) 6/10	Fun (+) Eccentricity (N) Interesting (+)	Creative (+) Eccentric (N) Riveting (+) 9.52/10
2002-06-15*	Unmotivated (-) Uninspired (-) Bored (-) 3/10	Ugh, boring (-) Un-creative (-) Bad teacher ☹ (-) 6/10	Inspiring (+) Creative (+) Interesting (+)	Brilliant (+) Supportive (+) Creative & friendly (+) 9.85/10
2002-10-01	Boring (-) Easy (N) Fast (N) 4/10	Easy (N) Incomplex (-) Standard (-) 5/10	Fun (+) Relaxed (+) Easy (N)	Free (+) Challenging (N) Shared (N) 7.6/10

Table 6. Feelings about writing at school: total positive, neutral and negative words

	Writing at School: Baseline	Writing at School: Final	Difference
Positive	12/39 = 31%	11/27 = 41%	10-point increase
Neutral	20/39 = 51%	7/27 = 26%	25-point decrease
Negative	7/39 = 18%	9/27 = 33%	15-point increase

Table 7. Feelings about writing in the project: total positive, neutral and negative words

	Writing in Project: Mid-Term	Writing in Project; Final	Difference
Positive	27/30 = 90%	22/30 = 73%	17-point decrease
Neutral	2/30 = 7%	8/30 = 27%	20-point increase
Negative	1/30 = 3%	0/30 = 0%	3-point decrease

The clearest conclusion from these findings is that writing in the project was consistently rated higher than writing at school, which was as expected (or hoped) by the project team. The words ‘fun’, ‘exciting’ and ‘interesting’ were all used multiple times in relation to the project, showing that the YP felt extremely positive about writing within the context of the project itself.

The table appears to show a decline in positive ratings and an increase in neutral between the mid-term evaluation (immediately after writing) and the final evaluation (after the filming and screening), which may be attributable to the excitement of the filming and especially the screening overshadowing the YP’s memories of the writing phase. A

complicating factor is that there was a greater *variety* of words used at the end of the project, especially in relation to writing in the project, many of which were rated as 'neutral' rather than 'positive'. This may in fact be an indicator of the success of the project, reflecting the increased creativity in writing discussed under indicator CW above.

It had been hoped by project organisers that the project would lead to a shift in participants' feelings about writing even in the school context, but it is difficult to identify whether this was the case, due to the small sample size and wide variety of words used. The figures appear to indicate some movement away from the middle ground, with a few YP becoming more positive about writing at school and others becoming more negative – perhaps because of unfavourable comparisons between the 'exciting', 'fun' and 'interesting' writing of the project, and the writing that they were still being expected to do at school. Four of the scores given to writing at school also decreased, although three increased. This is an important consideration and merits further investigation in future projects, perhaps through follow-up interviews, as there is the potential for some YP to become animated and inspired during the project itself but then increasingly disenchanted and disengaged with school.

However, it should be borne in mind that this was a very small sample size and the method itself is not an accurate one, but based on overall impressions. It is important to note the subjectivity of a single evaluator assigning 'positive / neutral / negative' codes to words, and this method could have been improved by having two or ideally three independent observers to rate the words. In addition, if a higher level of rigour is needed, the participants could be asked in future to give weekly or fortnightly ratings and/or explain their scores.

Graffiti Wall Exercise – Feelings about Writing

Participants contributed a wide range of statements and doodles relating to their feelings about writing in general. Some, although not all, of these yielded interesting insights – not only into the 'outcomes' of the project, but also its processes and how the young people felt about it.

The free writing / drawing structure seemed to enable a few of the participants to speak more openly about things that annoyed, frustrated or bothered them in relation to writing, in comparison to the more structured and 'adult-led' parts of the evaluation. It was sometimes not entirely clear, however, whether they were referring to things that happened during the project or in school contexts.

Specific comments with relevance for understanding the project processes and outcomes included the following:

"Creative writing + Tension = Fun!"

"It motivated me to write more outside school – relateable stories like a blog or something."

"I find helping other people write boring."

"I like writing at my own pace without anyone annoying me."

(Linked to another comment by a different participant...)

"Teachers asking me what I'm doing and what I'm writing about before I've had a chance to write."

"People that don't take your ideas and then someone says what I just said and they say 'yhea great'."

"Pleasurable and therapeutic."

"Made me look more into writing scripts and filming."

"I enjoy writing and think it a great way to express yourself."

"This project made me very happy and proud of myself."

"I don't usually like writing scripts."

"I enjoy writing fictional stories about fictional lives as they let you explore a different life."

Volunteer Interviews – Feelings about Writing

Building on the comments from the YP, the professional scriptwriter highlighted the contrast between writing in the project and writing in school:

"We just want people to be excited. School far too often knocks the excitement out of the thing, and certainly out of being creative, because we're so obsessed with how we're going to assess that and how we're going to mark. You just lose that joy."

Volunteers further built on the concept of a broader vision of what 'writing' means, discussed above in the 'Attainment in Writing' section. They commented that while the writing process itself might not have been the young people's favourite aspect, it was its integration within the overall project that made the difference:

"Writing was not the main part of it...The writing was part of the whole, really."

“They didn’t shirk the editing, they understood that this was what had to be done...”

“It might have given them a different perspective on storytelling, that it can be done through different mediums rather than just sitting down with a piece of paper and a pen... [It] broadened their vision of what they can do with creative writing and creative storytelling.”

Overlapping with the dimensions of motivation to write (MW) and general confidence and self-esteem (CE), a volunteer reported:

“I don’t know that it would make them rush home and be writing, but I think it would give them the confidence to know that they could. I think if they had a writing project at school, they would tackle it with more confidence.”

Parent Feedback – Feelings about Writing

A comment received from a parent after the event also captured a shift in feelings about writing for one of the YP:

“The big thing for R. has been understanding the process of how to get an idea from paper to production. Understanding that writing doesn’t have to be a solitary pursuit and the fun or working as part of a team to achieve something so much bigger than you could do alone.”

Motivation to Write (MW)

Baseline Corporal Survey

The baseline corporal survey (conducted with the whole group) illustrated that only five members of the group felt strongly motivated to write at school. The majority of members expressed a weakly positive response, and one person said that they did not feel at all motivated.

When it came to the question of motivation to do the project, all of the responses were either strongly positive (86%) or weakly positive. This was largely as expected, given that participation was voluntary and the young people were largely self-selected (see indicator ‘EC’ on page #XX). In addition, although the participants had all been asked to close their eyes, there may have been an element of social desirability response bias (giving the answer that participants view as ‘desirable’ or expected of them), especially in the presence of the facilitators.

	“THUMBS UP” Very much / Definitely	“WIGGLING FINGERS” Sort of / A bit	“THUMBS DOWN” Not at all
I feel motivated to write at school	5/14 (36%)	8/14 (57%)	1/14 (7%)
I feel motivated to do this writing project	12/14 (86%)	2/14 (14%)	0

Final Corporal Survey – Motivation to Write

The corporal survey at the end of the project specifically asked participants whether they felt the project had improved their motivation to write. The results showed that all but one (90%) reported at least some improvement, with three (30%) claiming a large improvement.

Table 8: Corporal survey results: Improvements in ‘motivation to write’ (MW)

	“THUMBS UP” Very much / Definitely			“WIGGLING FINGERS” Sort of / A bit			“THUMBS DOWN” Not at all		
I feel that the project has improved my motivation to write	Total	3/10	30%	Total	6/10	60%	Total	1/10	10%
	Group 1	1/4	25%	Group 1	2/4	50%	Group 1	1/4	25%
	Group 2	1/3	33%	Group 2	2/3	66%	Group 2	0	0
	Group 3	1/3	33%	Group 3	2/3	66%	Group 3	0	0

Follow-Up Focus Group – Motivation to Write

After the corporal survey, focus groups were conducted with the 10 young people (Group 1 with four participants; Groups 2 and 3 with three each) to gain a deeper insight into the question of motivation to write and how it had been affected, or not, by the project.

Raw qualitative data: Improvements in ‘motivation to write’ (MW)

Group #	Participant comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I was quite motivated to begin with, so it didn’t make much difference. - Pete had a lot of knowledge of soaps and that did help [to motivate me]. - What’s good is that we got a lot of support and that was helpful. - I <i>wasn’t</i> really motivated before. I didn’t enjoy writing so much. This made it fun, it was a bit less serious, and they explained a lot so it was all good.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Now I know I can produce a great piece of work. When I had to do composition at school, I used to spend ages doing the colours and that, to distract myself from having to do the actual writing! But now I’m motivated, I know that if I start I can keep going.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seeing how other people work, their little techniques and stuff, helped me. - [At school] when they say 'write an essay' I don't feel motivated at all. But I love this kind of writing, dramatic writing that has tension... Like L said, you know you can produce something. It's doable, it won't take years.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I've still got a bad teacher [at school] so it doesn't help. - I was motivated to write anyway but this project has motivated me to write in different styles. I usually do stories but now I'm keen to do scriptwriting. - I've been really excited about the whole thing. I found it very exciting.

Themes that emerged from this dataset were as follows:

- The question of motivation to write does not always have a straightforward answer; it depends on the context and the type of writing (school vs. project).
- Motivation was maintained within the project itself by making writing fun and introducing a new style.
- Motivation can stem from seeing real achievement in writing and realising it is feasible.
- Having the support of a professional scriptwriter is very motivating, but peer support is also helpful.
- The project may, in some cases, have improved motivation to write at school, but this would require more detailed follow-up.

Graffiti Wall Exercise – Motivation to Write

One young person's comment on the Graffiti Wall explicitly confirmed: *"It motivated me to write more outside school – relateable stories like a blog or something."*

Volunteer Interviews – Motivation to Write

Volunteers echoed the young people's comments that motivation was high from the start, and confirmed that it remained consistently high throughout the project:

"In all I would say they were a very motivated group from the start. They knew why they were there, they wanted to be there."

"One dropped out after about three weeks, it was just one thing too many in her life, but otherwise they came week after week. They came back because they wanted to, and they came ready to work each week, they weren't just there to mess around or socialise..."

"It was something they looked forward to, they came independently, it was a voluntary thing. It was a free time activity that they chose to do, and most of them stayed through the whole thing."

One volunteer highlighted individual differences in motivation, but still reported a very positive atmosphere overall:

“They were different, they weren’t all completely on task all the time, they came in and out but the ones who sat back for a lot of the time when the writing was being done would then pipe up with something absolutely brilliant. They weren’t all super-swots sitting there contributing 100%, there was a variety but I’d say that they were very happy to be there all the way through.”

Despite the initially high levels of motivation, the volunteers acknowledged their own and each other’s roles in continuing to foster a motivating environment during the project. Key factors underlying this were showing respect for the young people, ensuring that they were not hungry or thirsty, communicating high expectations from the start, genuinely listening, and balancing ‘fun’ with ‘hard work’:

“They were a nice bunch of kids but they could have been any kids, it’s really due to the environment that was offered up by P. and LGP...”

“We set the bar high, ‘you’re going to be in a cinema with an audience watching your work’ and they went ‘Right, let’s get this done’. They came in motivated and we just powered that up for them... You believe in young people, you tell them ‘you can do this!’ and they step up to it.”

“Obviously creativity is fun, it was made fun...”

“P. is a slave-driver, he made them work really hard, but hard work is different when you enjoy it, isn’t it?”

“They were respected for what they came up with. They came up with things that were relevant to them, they were listened to. They were treated with more respect than they would be in school: they were treated as collaborators in the project, not ‘recipients’ of a project. P. did very much make them feel as if they were working on an EastEnders show with him...to get their ideas out, not pushing anything on them.”

One volunteer expressed a concern that motivation was sustained primarily through the personal dedication and commitment of the professional scriptwriter, which might make the project difficult to replicate if this individual was unavailable in future:

“In terms of how much they managed to get done, I think it’s really impressive, and that’s partly because of the enthusiasm of the young people but P. in particular has put in an enormous amount of time and energy. I don’t know whether that’s a ‘pro’ or a ‘con’ of the project but he really gives a huge amount and that’s key.”

Parent Feedback – Motivation to Write

Parent feedback also confirmed the achievement of the ‘motivation to write’ outcome within the context of the project itself, along with motivation in other senses:

“She loved working with a group of people outside school and the classroom and having a sense of learning how to make something from scratch with a tangible end product. Feeling grown up, travelling across the city to work with a professional team, she would never have missed a session. I’m sure she must have asked lots of questions as each week she came back with information on filming and storylines etc – the experience clearly ignited a desire to find out more.”

“The Little Green Pig experience demonstrates to us that taking young people and writing out of the classroom and into a more ‘real life’ industry environment ignites their imagination and thinking. Little Green Pig offers a truly dynamic way of learning – it engaged the young writers on many levels and they learn a huge amount because they are working with a team who are passionate about their artform and are clearly brilliant at teaching young people too. The young people are fully immersed in the experience and actually see their ideas come to life – it really is a transformational journey you take them on. A. is a very lucky person to have been on this journey!”

“The Little Green Pig experience has definitely reignited A’s personnel interest in storytelling and writing and given her a whole array of new skills and learning to explore and develop back in her school setting and beyond!”

“She (and her friends involved in the production) were really enthused by the way in which they were encouraged to use their imagination and creativity to plan, write, develop, act in and film the three part ‘Grunge’ programme; working both independently and also as a close team. It was naturally the first time she had been involved in anything like this, and the enjoyment and satisfaction she gained from being part of the production was immense.”

Self-Esteem & Confidence (SC)

It was initially intended that this indicator would be assessed using two methods: a validated quantitative survey instrument (the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, RSES) at baseline, interim and final evaluations, and the corporal survey with follow-up focus group at the final evaluation. At the baseline evaluation, however, it was observed that almost all of the 14 YP filled out the RSES questionnaire so as to attain a near-perfect score. Two alternative explanations were identified:

- (a) that some or all of the YP did not engage with the questions in a way that reflected their actual levels of self-esteem, but some other factor (e.g. identifying and ticking what they viewed as the ‘right answers’ – social desirability bias or fear of being judged) and therefore the RSES was not a valid measure within this context;
- (b) that some or all of the YP did answer the questions in a way that reflected their actual levels of self-esteem, and therefore their self-esteem was already extremely high at the start of the project.

In either case, the evaluator concluded that it would not be meaningful to repeat the Rosenberg questionnaire during the interim and final evaluations, as it would be impossible to demonstrate any improvement when all of the scores were already extremely high. Accordingly, this evaluation approach was abandoned.

Final Corporal Survey

The corporal survey at the end of the project specifically asked participants whether they felt the project had improved their self-esteem and confidence. The results for this indicator were very high, with a total of 80% reporting at least some improvement in self-esteem and confidence, and 50% saying they had experienced a large improvement. This seems to negate the interpretation that their self-esteem was already extremely high when the project began, suggesting instead that the RSES was not a valid measure for this group.

Table 9: Corporal survey results: Improvements in 'self-esteem and confidence' (SC)

	"THUMBS UP"			"WIGGLING FINGERS"			"THUMBS DOWN"		
	Very much / Definitely			Sort of / A bit			Not at all		
I feel that the project has improved my self-esteem and confidence	Total	5/10	50%	Total	3/10	30%	Total	2/10	20%
	Group 1	0/4	0%	Group 1	2/4	50%	Group 1	2/4	50%
	Group 2	2/3	66%	Group 2	1/3	33%	Group 2	0/3	0%
	Group 3	3/3	100%	Group 3	0/3	0%	Group 3	0/3	0%

Follow-Up Focus Group – Self-Esteem and Confidence

After the corporal survey, focus groups were conducted with two groups (Group 1 with four participants; Group 3 with three) to gain a deeper insight into the question of self-esteem and confidence and how it had been affected, or not, by the project. Unfortunately, due to spending longer on the other questions, there was not enough time to address this with Group 2.

The findings from the focus group mirrored those of the corporal survey in highlighting a clear difference between Group 1, whose comments were either neutral or negative, and Group 3, whose comments were all positive. This illustrates not only the subjective nature of this type of evaluation, but also the tendency for participants in focus groups to reinforce each other's ideas and create an overarching narrative.

Raw qualitative data: Improvements in 'self-esteem and confidence' (SC)

Group #	Participant comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I was already pretty confident. If I were to go back on it, I'd like to contribute more. I liked it, but I missed two days of filming. My brother was there at the skate park, I didn't know he was going to be there.- I personally feel it doesn't help. They film you and everyone has to watch. On that specific day, I didn't like it, but that's probably just me. I wasn't there for the writing, so I didn't do much.- I'm not that confident. I just looked awkward. What made it awkward was that people from my form were there outside the library. They were dancing around, they were really horrible.- At the skate park there were proper drug dealers. It was kind of dodgy.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I felt more confident, definitely. [Participant with autism]- I felt proud that I can achieve something like that.- Overall self-esteem, it helps.

Themes that emerged from this dataset were as follows:

- The question of self-esteem and confidence is more complex than any other indicator.
- While some participants do report an increase in confidence, there are also risk factors involved with filming in street locations (e.g. real drug dealers, or meeting people that the participants already know) which may undermine confidence.
- Being filmed may, in itself, be uncomfortable for some YP.
- However, seeing their own achievements can boost YP's self-esteem.

Volunteer Interviews – Self-Esteem and Confidence

Project volunteers strongly supported the young people's positive comments about increased confidence and self-esteem. They reported that the YP had felt very confident with each other, formed a very tight group, and established bonds of trust with one another and with the adults that enabled them to share their ideas freely and willingly. An important factor in achieving this was the climate of equality and mutual respect, discussed above under 'Expression and Communication Skills'. Beyond this, the volunteers felt that they had succeeded in creating an environment in which the YP were valued for their contributions to the project rather than being judged on appearances, which can be seen as an enormous achievement for work with this sensitive age group:

"When you're working collaboratively and creatively you get to know people in a very different way, you're valued for your ideas and contribution rather than what you look like, what shape you are or whatever."

Volunteers commented that quieter participants, in particular, had benefited enormously from the project – again, echoing the contributions from the YP themselves. The professional scriptwriter reported that he had actively selected quieter members of the group as directors, and they had ‘grown into’ the role and blossomed:

Two of the quieter ones, E. and M., who worked fine in small groups but weren’t very confident speaking up in front of the whole group, I appointed them as director and they were speaking up in larger groups.

Another volunteer also praised the young directors, in particular:

“They were wonderful, more than we were at certain points. We forgot to film a scene and they pointed it out. They liked bossing the adults around, if they were asked to be a director they would be telling us what to do. The girl who I remember was Magda, a little Year 7 girl who was very quiet and shy [at first] but she stood up when everyone was getting ready to go and said ‘Wait!’ - I’m pretty sure they wouldn’t have done that on the first week.”

The volunteers also confirmed the strongly positive impact on self-esteem and confidence for L., the participant with autism, which had already been reported by L. himself in the focus group session. The project was found to be very therapeutic on a day when L. had been experiencing difficulties at school:

On one day when L wasn’t feeling particularly good, he’d had a rough day at school, he was absolutely fantastic. His confidence, I noticed especially that it built - he ended up feeling really proud of himself and what he’d achieved. He could be quite vocal about how he wanted things to be, which was great, he put his input in and it was really valued.”

“All the group grew in confidence, some of them were very articulate from the start, but for instance L. whose mum wasn’t sure whether he’d actually stay for the first session, was contributing ideas very confidently and at the screening he wanted to say something in front of more than 100 people.”

“I felt like he’s really achieved something, he seemed to be very proud of himself and very proud of the film. He told everybody at school about it, said everybody at school was telling him they’d seen him in ‘Grunge’.”

“I think it was a big deal for him. I had underestimated how big his difficulties were, it was only after I’d spent quite a lot of time with him I realised how much they actually limit him.”

Following a specific enquiry from the project director, the volunteers were also asked about the impact of the project for a female participant who was in foster care. They confirmed that, while initially quiet, she had become an active and confident member of the group:

“A., who was very quiet for the first week or so, completely grew in confidence with how she worked in small groups.

“Why do you want to know about A. in particular, was there something different about her? I didn’t notice anything different - she didn’t stand out from the others. She was great, she got along really well with all the other people, she made some friends with the girls and she was cheerful and she was fine.”

However, it was in response to the indicator about self-esteem and confidence that the volunteers – in common with the YP themselves – identified specific risk factors related to the filming phase. This was a particular concern in the case of L., the young man with autism, in that the filming made him more noticeable and vulnerable to bullies and caused him to (temporarily) lose some of the confidence that he had previously gained during the indoor sessions. This draws attention to the need for volunteers to be acutely aware of the potential consequences of filming in public spaces, in order to avoid undoing the good work that has previously been done:

“L. had two little setbacks that day. We were at a playground and this kid who is at his school started shouting ‘Minecraft’ at him, and it was obviously some sort of in-joke at school about him. On the way out there were some other kids there and he said ‘they always bully me’, and you could see him sort of slump back down. But the next time we saw him he was sort of on top of the world again.”

One volunteer also commented on the balance between confidence and vulnerability in relation to a separate incident involving a young female participant. The fact that the YP were independently suggesting some very sensitive storylines can be seen as an indicator of the level of confidence and trust that had been built up within the small groups. This led, however, to a sudden realisation of vulnerability when negotiating the transition to the wider community, and especially the interface with participants’ schools:

“The storylines they came up with, like the boy coming out as transgender, coming out with these things takes a bit of confidence. There was a girl who’d been with someone else’s boyfriend, there were all sorts of slightly risky things...to give this idea you have to say ‘this is something on my mind’. There was a girl playing someone who’d texted nude photos, she suddenly realised people on the outside were going to see this and suddenly realised ‘this makes me really vulnerable’. She asked if it could not be shown in her school, and we agreed.”

Parent Feedback – Self-Esteem and Confidence

A comment from a parent supported the YP's positive feedback on this topic:

“A. has felt empowered by the opportunity to raise issues she feels are a concern to her age group.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall findings

The evaluation revealed the project to have been extremely positive for the young people involved, and confirmed that an impact had been achieved in relation to all the indicators. The overall recommendation is that the project should be replicated, and ideally scaled up, as widely as funding and other resource constraints allow.

Where was the biggest impact?

While comparisons between indicators are difficult in a mixed methods evaluation such as this, the collective weight of evidence from young people themselves, volunteers and parents suggests that Expression and Communication Skills (EC), Motivation to Write (MW) and Self-Esteem and Confidence (SC) were all strongly influenced. The young people, their parents and the volunteers spoke powerfully and convincingly about the transformative influence of the project in these respects.

The influence on Attainment in Writing (AW) and Creativity in Writing (CW) appears to have been rated somewhat lower by the young people in the surveys, but the qualitative data from focus groups and volunteer interviews confirmed that the impact was still noteworthy. If indeed there was a lesser impact in these areas, it may be attributable to the fact that most if not all of the YP were already creative high-achievers from the outset, or perhaps to the fact that some of the respondents were interpreting 'attainment in writing' and 'creativity in writing' in a narrower sense than others.

Transformations for young people with additional needs

One of the outstanding achievements of the project was the transformation that it brought for a young man with autism. Volunteers grew in their understanding of how to manage his tendency to feel overwhelmed, and although there was an incident during the initial sessions in which he panicked and became confrontational, this was handled well by the volunteers and the project manager. During the filming and the acting, he grew

enormously in confidence, and by the end he reported that he felt very proud of what he had managed to achieve. The success of the project in helping him to build up trust and establish connections to people was evidenced in his relationship with the volunteers and one of his peers.

Another participant who was profoundly affected by the project was a young woman who is currently in foster care. While quiet and reserved at the start, she quickly gained confidence, to the extent that a volunteer who was not aware of her home situation was unable to distinguish her from any other participants in the group in terms of cheerfulness, confidence or participation.

Mirroring the overwhelming success of the project among those it worked with, and these two individuals in particular, one volunteer expressed concern that to a certain extent it may be missing its 'target population'. Within this project, most of the participating young people were characterised by high achievement, self-confidence and motivation even at the start, although these parameters still improved over the course of the project.

Specific recommendations on increasing impact for young people with additional needs:

- While this type of activity is clearly beneficial for all young people who participate, in order to maximise impact, more attention needs to be paid to recruitment of disadvantaged, vulnerable and disengaged young people.
- It would be helpful for project staff to spend time identifying individuals or groups who are in particular need of confidence-building, motivation, and/or improvements in expression and communication skills.
- One way of achieving this may be through a more sustained and focused campaign of engagement with mainstream schools in socio-economically deprived areas, perhaps using the soap opera itself and/or quotes from the evaluation as incentives for pupils, teachers and parents to get involved with the project.
- There are also many other possible routes, including direct contact with pupil referral units, care homes for young people, mental health services, or voluntary sector organisations serving young people with additional needs.
- Developing projects with and for young people with autistic spectrum disorders is identified as a particular growth area.

Redefining ‘writing’: re-envisioning ‘education’?

A key finding of the evaluation was the recognition (expressed strongly by the professional scriptwriter, and to a lesser extent by other volunteers, the young people and some parents) that ‘writing’ can be understood in two different ways. One is the physical act of ‘putting words on paper’, usually seen in relation to specific analytical tasks and prose assignments that young people are asked to complete within the school context, which they often find boring and demotivating. The other is a much wider process of generating ideas, reflecting on them, translating them into different formats, and thinking about the most effective ways of communicating them to audiences.

The process of scriptwriting opened up new worlds to the young participants, and challenged them to develop a broad range of analytical and creative skills, even as they worked within an environment that they consistently described as ‘fun’, ‘interesting’ and ‘exciting’. Central to this experience was the practice of *collective creativity* – the sense of working together towards a common goal – which mirrors the real world of professional screenwriting, but is consistently under-emphasised in the mainstream education system. Working in small, close-knit groups gave the young people confidence to express ideas that they might otherwise have been afraid to articulate, and helped them to enhance each other’s energy and motivation. It also allowed them to build on one another’s contributions, thereby creating a whole that was greater than the sum of the parts.

This brings important lessons for anyone working in education, and highlights the importance of expanding and scaling up not only this specific project, but a wide variety of opportunities – both in traditional school contexts and outside – for promoting collective creativity, co-design and co-learning.

The implications of such activities go far beyond the indicators that comprised the focus of this evaluation, hinting at wider values-related outcomes such as increased community cohesion, tolerance, mutual respect and a feeling of unity in diversity, which are of enormous significance in the current political climate. The management of LGP would be well advised to give serious consideration to the ways in which collective creativity might be harnessed in specific pursuit of these broader outcomes, especially in relation to the growing concerns around racism, religious prejudice and the radicalisation of young people.

Risks and challenges

While the project was experienced by all of the young people as extremely positive, some key risks and challenges were also noted. These were generally well managed within this specific project context, but raise important issues in relation to volunteer training, in order to avoid potential problems in future activities. In particular, there is a need for volunteers

to be acutely aware of the safety and comfort of the young people while other people are watching them filming in public spaces. Bringing the group of young people out into the 'wider world' with a large camera renders them immediately noticeable, and may increase their vulnerability, especially in relation to individuals who are already bullying or harassing them in other contexts. The reference to drug dealers is an issue of particular concern and volunteers may need additional training to be able to deal with this proactively, or avoid such areas in future.

While the storylines were contributed by the young people themselves, the sensitive nature of the issues involved made the filming challenging at times for the actors. One young person reported feeling very uncomfortable about being asked to act out smoking, using a real cigarette as a prop - something he had clearly never done before or even thought about doing. It is noteworthy that he mentioned his negative feelings about it immediately – before reflecting on any of the positive aspects - when asked what stood out about the project in his mind. Another participant was concerned about possible consequences if she was seen by her classmates to be acting the part of a girl using her phone to send sexual images.

In reflecting on these issues, it is important to remember that learning to face challenges and work through difficulties is a crucial learning outcome in itself, and concerns for 'health and safety' should not be allowed to impede the young people from engaging in what is clearly a very valuable learning experience. It is precisely at the margins of society, and outside their comfort zone, that young people are challenged to grow to and reflect on their own identity. Care does need to be taken in future activities, however, to ensure that these experiences are carefully managed so that they do not become overly distressing for the participants, or detract from the positive outcomes.

Specific recommendations on mitigating risks and challenges:

- The project manager must ensure that a safe space is provided for young people who feel uncomfortable with something that they were being asked to do during the filming, or with the filming itself, to express these concerns and/or ask for a particular scene to be changed.
- Volunteers facilitating this safe space may need additional training from an experienced youth worker or counsellor, or it may be appropriate (if funding allows) to employ a professional to be available for debriefing after the filming sessions.
- There may be a need to involve parents in discussions about sensitive storylines, so that they are aware in advance of any potential issues that may arise.

- It is to the project manager's credit that there was enough flexibility to ensure that a young person's wishes were respected and the film was not shown in her school, but this is another issue that needs to be carefully thought through, especially as it may be impossible to prevent the participants' classmates from attending public screenings.
- It might be more appropriate for managers to negotiate whether the young people would like the more sensitive storylines to be acted out by professional actors.
- In order to avoid diluting the learning experience, another possibility might be to initiate some form of exchange between schools in different areas. Students from Brighton and Hove might, for example, write a script to be acted out by a parallel group from London or another area where similar activities (e.g. Ministry of Stories) have been established, and vice-versa. This would remove concerns about how young people might be perceived by their siblings or classmates, either during the filming, or when the soap opera is screened.

The role of the professional scriptwriter

It became clear during this evaluation that the professional scriptwriter had made a huge personal contribution of time and energy to the project. There was a strong implication that his involvement was above and beyond what was funded by the project budget, and was motivated by his evident love of his work and genuine respect for all the young people and their abilities. This individual was clearly a very charismatic personality, as well as an accomplished teacher and workshop facilitator, and is to be congratulated on his achievements with the group.

All of these factors would need to be taken into account when planning future projects, as the success of this type of project is likely to depend substantially on the qualities of the professional screenwriter. It does not rely only on an individual with the ability to write convincing dialogue, but also on one who has a strong rapport with young people and understands how to foster an enabling environment. The project would have looked altogether different if there had been any hint of paternalism, doubt in the young people's abilities to create a high-quality output, or prejudice against a particular group (especially young people with additional needs).

If LGP does choose to work with other screenwriters as part of an expansion phase, a strong recommendation from this evaluation is that the current screenwriter could be invited to become involved in training them, or at least in producing a resource (ideally audio-visual) that could be used in the orientation.

Reflection on the evaluation processes and methods

Conducting a mixed methods evaluation allows for the simultaneous collection of rich qualitative feedback from individuals, and surveys that give an overall 'thermometer reading' of the group. However, the findings from different methods are sometimes contradictory and may reflect (to a certain extent) group dynamics or the mood of the young people on the day. All of these challenges are amplified when working in very small groups such as these, and it is impossible to reach an 'objective', 'unbiased' or 'scientific' verdict on the efficacy of a particular intervention when there are so many confounding factors. In order to reach more definitive conclusions it would be necessary to conduct more detailed and systematic research, e.g. through semi-structured interviews with the youth and thematic analysis of the findings, although the interview method is time-consuming and therefore expensive.

Another recommendation is that in future projects, the youth could be given more involvement in designing and implementing the evaluation. Their indicators of success, and methods of assessing it, might have been very different from those chosen by adults – and potentially extremely informative. A process of 'values elicitation' could be useful at the start, to learn more about what is important to the young people, what they want to get out of the project and why they've chosen to be involved, and these responses could be used in shaping indicators for the evaluation.

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