



Write Back Trustees' Annual Report

1 September 2021 - 31 August 2022

Charity name: Write Back
Charity registration number: 1188293

Objectives and Activities:

Write Back's vision is for every young person to understand that they have a story to tell and have the capacity to tell it. We work to achieve this by building the confidence and capacity of young people to express themselves creatively through the sharing of their stories. We do this by running collaborative storytelling programmes for marginalised young people which develop their creativity, self-esteem and confidence. The work of every young person on our programmes is published and celebrated.

About Write Back

Write Back started in a History classroom in 2015, where History teacher Sam Norwood explored ways to empower young people beyond the constraints of the curriculum. He began by working with Year 9 students to publish their stories of immigration. Those students went on to create another book, three exhibitions across East London and pilot workshops for younger students. As those original students headed to university, in September 2019 we began running sessions for young people across the borough of Barking and Dagenham. In early 2020, we registered with the Charity Commission, formalising our status as an independent charity and recruited a board of trustees.

We run 10-week storytelling programmes open to 13 to 16-year-olds identified by their teachers as lacking confidence, self-esteem or a creative outlet. These young people are referred to us by schools in Barking and Dagenham, and are then enrolled in our programmes at the Future Youth Zone, a local youth centre. The programmes are built off three key ideas: that every young person has a story to tell and the capacity to tell it; that a deep connection with the stories of others is often the most powerful way to learn; that young people should tell their stories in the way that they want them to be told. In each session we run confidence-building activities, engage with the writing of young authors and develop the stories of the participating young people. The 10-week project also involves working with writers and artists, and culminates with the celebration of the young people's work in front of their friends, families and teachers at a 'graduation style' book launch event. Through this work we aim to build self-respect, community and independent voices for young people through the sharing of their stories.

The trustees confirm they have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.



The need

Our work is focused in Barking and Dagenham because this is where our project was created and where demand remains so great. The borough is the 9th most deprived local authority in the country and well over a third of its young people and children live in poverty. Despite this, Barking and Dagenham has the joint fewest charities per head in the country. Research conducted by the local authority revealed that only 37% of young residents felt they had someone to talk to about problems that worry them. The same research found that almost a third of young people felt optimistic 'rarely' or 'none of the time'.

Our programmes have shown the transformative impact storytelling can have. They provide young people with the opportunity to discuss the issues important to them – areas which are increasingly difficult to cover in the curriculum given the growing exam pressures of secondary schools. Quantitative evaluations of our programmes as well as feedback from schools, families and the young people themselves have shown marked improvements for participant self-esteem and perceptions of themselves and their capabilities.

We believe that storytelling can play a crucial role in addressing this situation by building young people's respect for themselves and by developing trust and community amongst young people.

Key activities and achievements: September 2021 - August 2022

By August 2021 we had delivered over 200 hours of storytelling programmes for young people in East London. Here are some of our key findings and milestones:

- More than eight in ten participants' self-esteem improved over the course of our programme, on average by 23%.* We, our partner schools and families have also seen the tangible increases in young people's personal confidence.
- Through our programmes we have printed and celebrated the stories of over 120 young people.
- Nine anthologies of young writers produced with over 250,000 words published by young writers.

Autumn 2021

Every term we deliver a 'main programme' for storytellers in Years 9 and 10 who are nominated by their schools across Barking and Dagenham. We were delighted that following COVID restrictions the previous year, we were able to return to fully in-person programming. The autumn storytellers completed their ten-week programme with a launch of their book, *A Conversation With...* in the grand setting of CU London.

Meanwhile our 'graduates' (storytellers that have already completed the 10-week programme) continued our most ambitious projects to date. These storytellers produced a website filled with



their stories inspired by local places that had sustained them through the pandemic; worked with artists and academics from the University of Liverpool and the Stay Home Stories Project; and have created a professional film that premiered in the Being Human Festival, the world's largest festival of the humanities.

Spring 2022

In collaboration with local partners Pen to Print and Becontree Radio our graduates published their stories in *Write On!* magazine which has a national distribution and created their very own radio show on a local network. One of our graduates had his work published in a volume from Penguin Random House featuring young writers from around the world and, while the launch took place in the US, we held a celebration closer to home.

Meanwhile, young people on our main programme launched a new anthology *A Young Person's Guide To*. This was our most ambitious book yet as we worked closely with professional designers who took the ideas of the young people and turned their vision into an industry-standard book cover. We then launched this book in the Barking Boathouse, a local arts venue, with an audience of friends, families and representatives of local schools.

Summer 2022

The next cohort of young storytellers produced *Under the Surface* in July 2022. This again involved bringing together the young people with designers and writing experts. That term we then took all of the books ever created by young people on Write Back programmes to the Bishopsgate Archive in Central London where they have been given a permanent home amidst its collection of London's social and cultural history.

Our graduates then started a new programme in partnership with Beyond Past UK where they were trained in oral history techniques, interviewed local residents about their teenage lives in Barking and Dagenham from the 1950s to the 1990s and then used this to inspire their own writing on teenage life.

Alongside this we also ran two additional programmes with other organisations. In Tower Hamlets we worked with the Osmani Trust to deliver a storytelling programme to a group of young men identified as at risk of crime and published their stories in a celebration that included local dignitaries and representatives. We also worked with a small group of young people in Future Youth Zone training them in storytelling techniques that would help them become powerful advocates for youth work.



Reflections

Continued evaluation of our programmes, as well as feedback from schools, families, and the young people themselves, has shown marked improvements in participant self-esteem and self-perception, including belief in their own capabilities.

This really matters because research suggests that young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including many in Barking & Dagenham, are more likely to have very low self-esteem and that this has a knock-on effect on their social relationships and academic achievement.

They are also more likely to develop anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions at a point in their lives where a failure to engage in school has lasting consequences.

'I've never felt so accepted, free in my thoughts and simply able to just let myself be.' *Write Back storyteller*

The fact that their work is published and celebrated at a community event, also gives them tangible proof that their story matters; that they matter. And this is far from a given for all young people.

'Before Write Back I didn't really like talking about my feelings but then Write Back really made me open up... Write Back has given me more confidence in myself and what I want to do.' *Write Back storyteller*

Significantly, what happens at Write Back doesn't stay at Write Back.

Greater self-esteem and confidence, and improved writing skills give young people a better chance of thriving in school, and the social and emotional development they experience can also enhance their future employment prospects.

'I feel as I have gained many transferable skills that have benefited me in my progression to A levels such as time management and organisation. I have also gained something very unique that helps me stand out in my CV when applying for jobs and internships.' *Write Back storyteller*

Financial review

As a small charity whose primary work is carried out by volunteers and whose main work operates out of a youth centre free of charge, Write Back does not have any fixed costs and therefore does not have a policy on reserves. However, we will seek to develop a risk-based reserves policy as the charity grows and its financial commitments increase.



Write Back's principal source of income in the 12-month accounting period to August 2022 has been the money received from schools and other partners like the Osmani Trust and Pen to Print to deliver programmes. We have also received a small amount of money through individual donations.

Our expenses have been larger than in the previous 12 months because we have been able to work with more young people and consistently run 2-3 in person programmes a term which COVID restrictions prevented in 2020-21.

More resources have also been allocated for guest speakers and freelance workers. While Write Back has no employees we have procured guest speakers on a freelance basis to help co-deliver aspects of our programme. Without these workers it would not have been possible to deliver the scale of work we have achieved this year.

Please see the attached accounts for further details of our finances.

Future plans: Write Back's strategy

In the academic year 2022 to 2023 we have run a similar set of storytelling programmes, including our core programme and our graduate scheme. We will evaluate these in next year's charity commission report.

Our strategy for the academic year starting September 2023 is to continue to deliver our existing programmes and fundraise in order to grow our operations and reach more young people.

List of trustees

Alex Newton, Chair of Trustees
Daven Hindocha, Treasurer
Sam Norwood, Trustee
Grace Selley, Trustee



Registered address

Write Back, Flat 21 Dethick Court, Ford Road, London, E3 5PQ



Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Samuel Norwood	Alexander Newton
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Trustee and Founder	Chair of Trustees
Date	28.06.2023	



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Write Back

Charity no:
1188293

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01-Sep-21

To

31-Aug-22

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants and donations	74	-	-	74	-
Charitable activities - workshops & programmes	8,217	-	-	8,217	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	8,291	-	-	8,291	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	8,291	-	-	8,291	-
A3 Payments					
Session resources	1,622	-	-	1,622	-
Student publications	2,176	-	-	2,176	-
End of programme events	1,129	-	-	1,129	-
Advertising and publicity	77	-	-	77	-
Printing & Postage	24	-	-	24	-
Website	229	-	-	229	-
Guest speakers	1,672	-	-	1,672	-
Insurance	140	-	-	140	-
Sundry expenses	287	-	-	287	-
Sub total	7,356	-	-	7,356	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	7,356	-	-	7,356	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	935	-	-	935	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	9,342	-	-	9,342	-
Cash funds this year end	10,277	-	-	10,277	-

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at bank	10,277	-	-
			-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	10,277	-	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))				
	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £

B2 Other monetary assets

	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf
of all the trustees

Signature

Print Name

Date of
approval

Daren Hindocha
Samuel Norwood

DAVEN HINDOCHA
SAMUEL NORWOOD

28/6/23
28/6/23