



# Write Back Trustees' Annual Report

1 September 2022 - 31 August 2023

*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 2022 - August 2023

In this year we delivered 100 hours of storytelling intervention for young people in East London, taking our total to date to over 300 hours. Here are some of our key findings and milestones:

- Eight in ten participants' **self-esteem improved** over the course of our programme, on average by 13%.\*
- Our impact was even greater on those who joined with low self-esteem. Nine in ten of those young people saw improvements, on average by 40%.\*
- Through our programmes this year we have printed and **celebrated the stories of over 50 young people**.
- **Seven anthologies of young writers produced**, with over **190,000 words** published by young writers.

\*Measured by the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, which participants took at the start and end of our programmes.

## The Programmes

Our core mission has been to build self-esteem among young people in Barking and Dagenham and that's exactly what our programmes have been doing. Since 2019, over 120 young people have completed our core programme. Over each 10-week project, young people have been introduced to storytelling techniques, to the writing of other young people and to the game-changing idea that their story matters. As a result, we've seen storytellers leave our programmes more confident in themselves and in their abilities. These findings have been supported by feedback from schools, families and the young people themselves. It is also reflected in quantitative survey data which revealed that eight in ten young people experienced improvements in their self-esteem. This rises to nine in ten when considering those with initially low self-esteem.



This year writers on our main programmes have produced four new anthologies. Published in September 2022, *Under the Surface* took the young people on a deep dive to overlooked stories and issues. Then *Lemonade* invited the storytellers to turn something negative into something positive. Meanwhile *Revelations* gave the writers the opportunity to share their insights. Finally in *Disguises* the young writers peeled back layers of deception to find hidden truths.

They then launched this work to the world in exciting venues including the Barking Boathouse, CU London's university campus and Dagenham Heathway Library to audiences including friends, family, local writers and dignitaries.

## The Graduate Programme

In addition to our core programmes, we have run a graduate scheme for those storytellers who have completed our main 10-week storytelling programmes! Those graduates have been involved in so many exciting projects 2022-23, but highlights have included...

- Learning oral history techniques from Beyond Past, then putting them into practice by interviewing local residents from across four generations on teenage life in Barking and Dagenham.
- Working with Pen to Print to develop online story showcases and a physical zine for the widely distributed *Write On!* magazine.
- Interviewing published writers and using these conversations to inspire young people's own writing.
- Producing three new books to add to our ever-growing collection of young writing!

## And beyond...

We have also been delighted to work with other organisations who share our goal of helping every young person to see the value of their own story.

We've worked with young people in the amazing Future Youth Zone by participating in holiday clubs for younger children and by helping teenagers communicate the value of youth work to their lives.



We also ran a programme for young men aged 14-20 identified by the Osmani Trust as at risk of becoming involved in crime. These young writers then launched their powerful book 'Writers of the Wall' to a packed audience of families, educators and politicians.

'The way we wrote our stories and then published them was the best thing ever in my life. It shows I am writer and I can express myself through my stories.'

*Storyteller, Year 10*

'The sessions have been fun, well prepared, inspiring, engaging and has unlocked creativity and passion in our young people who have attended through the medium of creative writing and expression.'

*Gershom Clarke, Senior Club Manager, Future Youth Zone*

'The students demonstrated pride in their past and also in themselves at being able to share their stories. Thank you for giving these young people the platform to enable them to do this.'

*Amanda Wray, Learning Operations Coordinator, Valence House*

English was my worst subject. I absolutely hated it. Every time I would go into English, I would dread it. But, since I was given this opportunity, it really has changed everything. English has become my favourite subject, along with sports of course. It's taught me that there's a lot more to writing than just writing down on a pad of paper. Poetry is my speciality. Learning how to make real poems, reading it out to others, getting other people's opinions on how to improve it, how to change it... It really has been a transformation to my life.

*Storyteller, Year 11*



## **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 the need for a fixed policy on reserves has been limited. However as the organisation grows we will keep this under review.

Write Back's principal source of income in the 12-month accounting period to August 2023 has been the money received from grants, including project-based funds that have supported specific aspects of our delivery. In addition, we have received money from project partners including schools and other organisations locally that have collaborated with our work.

Our expenses have been larger as we were able to run a full set of programmes following on from disruption thanks to COVID in previous years.

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 2023 to 2024 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.

We have been awarded a three year grant starting in the new academic year. Our strategy for the is therefore 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

Kathryn Elliot, Trustee (appointed May 2024)

Grace Selley, Trustee (stood down in May 2024)

## 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)

	
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Full name(s)

Samuel Norwood	Alexander Newton
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Position (eg Secretary,  
Chair, etc)

Trustee and Founder	Chair of Trustees
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Date 20.06.24

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CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Write Back

Charity no:  
1188293

## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period  
from

01-Sep-22

To

31-Aug-23

### 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 £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Grants and donations	10,075	-	-	10,075	-
Charitable activities - workshops & programmes	2,575	-	-	2,575	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	12,650	-	-	12,650	-
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total receipts</b>	12,650	-	-	12,650	-
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Session resources	1,537	-	-	1,537	-
Student publications	4,748	-	-	4,748	-
End of programme events	915	-	-	915	-
Advertising and publicity	361	-	-	361	-
Printing & Postage	849	-	-	849	-
Website expenses	373	-	-	373	-
Guest speakers	3,655	-	-	3,655	-
Insurance	140	-	-	140	-
Sundry expenses	75	-	-	75	-
<b>Sub total</b>	12,653	-	-	12,653	-
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total payments</b>	12,653	-	-	12,653	-
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	3	-	-	3	-
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	10,277	-	-	10,277	-
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	10,273	-	-	10,273	-

### 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 £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Cash at bank	10,273	-	-
			-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	10,273	-	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

**B2 Other monetary assets**

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

**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
	DAVEN HINDOCHA	19/6/24
	SAMUEL NORWOOD	19/6/24