



# Write Back Trustees' Annual Report

1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024

*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 2023 - August 2024

In this year we delivered 100 hours of storytelling intervention for young people in East London, taking our total to date to over 400 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 16%.\*
- 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 50%.\*
- Through our programmes this year we have printed and **celebrated the stories of over 50 young people**.
- **Six anthologies of young writers produced**, with over **100,000 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 160 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 three new anthologies. In *Escape* the young writers on our Autumn programme plotted and imagined their way out of the challenges facing young people. Then the Spring authors of *Listen!* demanded the world hear their voices. And finally, in *UnStuck* the summer term storytellers unpicked some of the sticky issues of today's world.

They then launched this work to the world in exciting venues including the Barking Boathouse, Valence House and Eastbury Manor House.



## 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 this year have created *MISPA* an ambitious co-authored novel set out in outer space, *20:24* a 24 cycle of stories in the lives of young people, and they will soon be launching their latest book *Sensational* in the exciting UCL PEARL laboratory which inspired their stories.





## 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.

## Testimonials

'So the most I like, about Write Back is the little family we young storytellers have created. I love celebrating our achievements together and just spending time with one another and sharing great stories. I know life changes and so do dreams but, no matter what I do, I just want to keep going on my journey as a storyteller.'

*Storyteller, Year 12*

'When I'm at Write Back... I feel like I can be more of myself... I think the skills that Write Back has taught me for my future is opening up a bit more and really just pushing my ideas out there because it showed me that what I have in my head has value to it.'

*Storyteller, Year 12*

'There's just a confidence in blossoming into yourself that I see from them [the young people referred to Write Back] that comes from their age and maturity and growing up but I think it also comes from their ability to recognize their voice within themselves and feel the confidence of expressing it.'

*Stephanie Zuccaro, English teacher and Subject Leader*

## Case Study: Former Storyteller Harmony



I started Write Back in January of 2020, one of the earliest cohorts to join the programme. I remember when I was handed my first Write Back notebook that I would later come to decorate and write in almost every day until the covers were bulging and the pages were practically falling out. That book would come to serve as my saving grace during that period. I became enamoured with the written word and its ability to bring people together which I wrote about in several poems over the years.

Write Back was my cathartic release in times of uncertainty, especially during the pandemic and Sixth Form years.

This programme was one of the reasons I decided to do English Literature and Creative Writing at University. Now, I am the Deputy Head of my University Newspaper and am aiming to work in Journalism & Publishing in future. Write Back left a lasting impression on me and motivated me to keep expressing stories in various formats. It wasn't just a place to create stories, it gave me the tools to go out and write my own destiny. I was in a room of people who had the same passions and interests as me. All of us penned and exchanged and shared our poetic pieces which projected our deepest vulnerabilities. As a collective, it reminded us that we weren't alone and that there were people who felt and shared the same hardships. Write Back illuminated the variety of human experience and, more significantly, ignited a spark within me!

Looking back, I accomplished a great deal throughout my Write Back Journey. Over the years, I read a poem at Westminster Abbey, assisted in the creation, and editing of a section of the Write ON Magazine, was a part of writing 4 books, interviewed published writers and locals, read pieces for radio, created and distributed bookmarks in our local libraries, created a storytelling map, stored our anthologies in historical archives such as the Bishopsgate Institute and the Museum of the Home. We also went on trips to historical landmarks such as The British Library, Toynbee Hall, Valence House and many more. I am so proud to say I was a part of such an enriching experience and achieved so much while I was there.

Write Back truly built my confidence and ignited a passion I might not have otherwise had. In some of my hardest times Write Back made me feel seen! I owe it all to Sam and I am tremendously grateful to have been a part of it for so long!



## **Financial review**

In the year of this report, Write Back has remained 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 we are developing a reserves policy this year as our circumstances change. This will sit alongside our existing financial controls policy.

Write Back's principal source of income in the 12-month accounting period to August 2024 has been the money received from the Mercers' Charitable Foundation in the first of set of four annual payments. We have also received funding from programme partners to deliver specific work in the borough as well as from our partner schools from whom we take referrals to our programmes in the youth centre.

As in previous years, the bulk of our expenditure has been on session resources for our programmes as well as the cost of professionally printing the young people's work and celebrating these books in community book launch events.

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

## **Future plans: Write Back's strategy**

We were delighted to be chosen, alongside charities such as UK Reads, Theatre Peckham and the West Ham Foundation, to join a select cohort of organisations working to boost reading and writing for pleasure across London's young people. Joining this cohort means gaining access to financial support across three years which will allow us to bigger and bolder in our plans to reach more young people. It also entails joining a research group led by academics at the Open University to evaluate our work and learn how to deepen our impact.

We are also excited to build upon existing partnerships, including our partner schools in Barking and Dagenham and the creative venues that host our book launch celebrations. In particular we are excited to deepen our partnership with Pen to Print, a local charity, to offer young writers in the borough access to even more exciting opportunities. We also piloted our first collaboration with the UCL PEARL laboratory and look forward to bringing more young people into their inspirational spaces.

Most importantly, we look forward to using these partnerships and opportunities to reach more schools and more young people. Everyone has a story to tell and the power to tell it. We look forward to helping more young people discover this for themselves.



## List of trustees

Alex Newton, Chair of Trustees

Daven Hindocha, Treasurer

Kathryn Elliott, Trustee (appointed May 2024)

Simrat Kaur Gill (appointed Nov 2024)

Former Trustees:

Samuel Norwood, Trustee (stood down in July 2024)

Grace Selley, Trustee (stood down in May 2024)

## Registered address

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


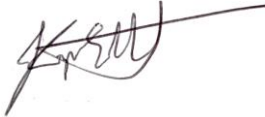




## Declarations

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)

Alexander Newton

Kathryn Elliott

Position (eg Secretary,  
Chair, etc)

Chair of Trustees

Trustee

Date 15.06.2025



## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period  
from

01-Sep-23

To

31-Aug-24

### Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Grants and donations	15,000	-	-	15,000	-
Charitable activities - workshops & programmes	1,350	-	-	1,350	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>16,350</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,350</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>16,350</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,350</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Session resources	1,385	-	-	1,385	-
Student publications	3,829	-	-	3,829	-
End of Programme Events	1,608	-	-	1,608	-
Advertising and publicity	1,168	-	-	1,168	-
Printing & Postage	543	-	-	543	-
Website expenses	192	-	-	192	-
Guest speakers	138	-	-	138	-
Insurance	140	-	-	140	-
Sundry expenses	630	-	-	630	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>9,632</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,632</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>9,632</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,632</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>6,718</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,718</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>10,273</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10,273</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>16,992</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,992</b>	<b>-</b>

### 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	16,992	-	-
			-	-
			-	-

<b>Total cash funds</b>	16,992	-	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

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
<i>Daven Hindocha</i>	DAVEN HINDOCHA	23/6/25