

Amplified

Helping young people find their voice through writing

The Amplified project aimed to engage with 12- to 18-year-olds interested in writing, self-expression, public speaking and addressing current issues that affect them. Professional writers such as Pete Lawson (EastEnders) and Suhayla El-Bushra (Ackley Bridge) and volunteers from Brighton-based creative writing and mentoring charity Little Green Pig (LGP) worked closely with young people, who were recruited through local charities and education and service providers. Through two intensive weekend sessions, the project provided an opportunity to learn from creative professionals and an introduction to working in the creative sector.



Its aims were to:

- build the young participants' confidence in writing, literacy and self-expression
- mentor them in the art of public speaking and promote their value as advocates through civic engagement
- offer ways for the young people to stay connected with LGP beyond the life of the project and to enhance their employability and breadth of experience through involvement in its Youth Board and other writing initiatives.
- 2022 marked the third year that Amplified featured in the Brighton Festival programme, as part of LGP's takeover weekend.

METHODOLOGY

Professional writers and volunteers from creative-writing mentors Little Green Pig worked closely with seven young people, most of whom faced challenges such as ADHD, mental health issues, life in foster care and English as a second language.

Over two intensive weekend workshops, the young people collaborated with professional writers and mentors on their writing, creating their own personal stories to perform in front of live audiences at the Brighton Festival. The young people also featured in a short film, Amplified, which documented the project and demonstrated their personal journey.

Previous Amplified participants also attended the event, demonstrating their ongoing involvement with the project and LGP, and supporting the current participants by sharing the successes they have gone on to enjoy.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Context

One of the biggest hurdles young people face in determining their life chances is understanding what they are good at and what inspires them. This is often down to a lack of awareness of their talents and how to showcase them and/or a lack of confidence and self-esteem. Amplified is a powerful tool to help them discover and promote their talents and aptitudes.

Duration

1st February 2022 to 30th June 2022

Partners

Little Green Pig and Brighton Festival

Funding source

Uni Connect Community Fund

IMPACT

Through the Amplified project, the seven young people taking part (six of whom performed live on stage) gained a range of positive experiences and outcomes that will be useful in their personal and professional lives. Participants reported:

- an increase in confidence and belief in their own opinions and the value of their voice
- an improvement in their communication skills
- an improvement in their writing and public-speaking skills
- an increased motivation to do more public speaking and performance, and to pursue chosen careers and interests in the creative industries.

Participant feedback on the project included the following statements:

'Amplified really helped me open up and understand myself more. Although I wasn't able to perform, I still feel I took the benefits from it; the mentors and resources were so helpful, and the project so inspiring.'

'As a teenager, I often feel like my voice isn't heard. Amplified allowed me to express my thoughts and opinions the way I wanted to.'

'My favourite part was with working with other young people and learning about their stories. Also seeing everyone improve with their public speaking, becoming more confident in their words as if they were saying, I deserve to be here and take up space.'

In addition, the project helped the young people to break down their barriers to participation and to develop respect and understanding of their peers' different perspectives and backgrounds. The project also established ongoing relationships with each young person, engaging them through writing initiatives and LGP's Young Writer's Collective programme and its Youth Board.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Without the Uni Connect grant, the financial resources LGP could direct towards Amplified would have been limited, reducing the quality of experience and the project's outputs and outcomes. The funding allowed LGP to deliver Amplified to its full potential and for participants to tap into SLN's Get Career Confident project's one-to-one career sessions and resources.

The barriers that prevented one young person from participating in the performance event will be examined to ensure these can be diminished and that future participants can enjoy the full experience offered by the project.



TALKING POINTS

- What opportunities do your learners have to work with groups outside of school and college to develop their skills?
- What are the barriers that discourage learners from participating in public speaking?
- How do you work with learners who aren't comfortable speaking in public to develop their confidence?
- What non-curriculum-based activities can be provided to underrepresented learners to support them in finding their voice and representing their life stories?

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