

Impact Summary: Being a Boy Celebration and Children's Commissioner Roundtable



Overview

The 2026 Being a Boy Celebration was hosted with AUB's [Festival of Creativity](#), a flagship event designed to celebrate creative industries at AUB and across the region. The celebration was hosted on Sunday 5 July on day 2 of the festival. The event included Being a Boy activities as well as a varied programme that was part of the festival including workshops, performances, makers market and AUB's Undergraduate Summer Show. The Being a Boy Celebration included creative workshops, viewing of the 2025 Transform Documentary, and the Being a Boy exhibition shown at the House of Commons in March 2026 as well as a free BBQ Lunch for Being a Boy participants and their guests.

Being a Boy Celebration at the Festival of Creativity

The event included three creative tabletop workshops, designed to allow participants to join the activities flexibly and provide creative takeaways for the participants. These included tote bag decorating, zine making and mask making. The mask making activity was introduced to participants to think about their identity, writing and drawing what they show the world on the outside, and things they hide or keep private on the inside. This mirrored both the celebration of identity and understanding of challenges that exists within the Being a Boy workshop series. Participants were invited to take these masks home or donate them to the team for inclusion in the Being a Boy Exhibition at Poole Museum in September 2026.

Marketing and Attendees

For the Celebration and the Children's Commissioner Roundtable Visit, Being a Boy participants from 2025 and 2026 were invited to celebrate their creative achievements and share their voices and experiences with the Children's Commissioner. The 2025 participants were included within this targeting due to the Being a Boy Celebration for this cohort being cancelled due to severe weather. For the Children's Commissioner Roundtable promotion for this activity was emailed to 2025 and 2026 participants along with phone calls to the participants supporters. For the Celebration event marketing included the following (right):

- Physical invites sent to 2025 and 2026 participants.
- Email campaigns to participants and their supporters.
- Promotion during 2026 Being a Boy workshops.
- Comms to community contacts cultural partners, and local authority.
- Marketing through Festival of Creativity.

Being a Boy Celebration - Attendees					
	11am to 12	12pm to 1pm	1pm to 2pm	2pm to 3pm	Total
Exhibition	18	31	30	38	117
Workshops	21	32	30	13	96
TOTAL					213

The Festival of Creativity brought a steady footfall throughout the day with creative activities providing a relaxed and celebratory space. Included within the final total of attendees were four Being a Boy participants who also brought two or more guests with them to celebrate their creative achievements. This was lower than anticipated and will be looked at for 2027 planning.

Children's Commissioner Roundtable Discussion

Through the Being a Boy exhibition at the House of Commons, AUB was invited to host a roundtable discussion with Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, and her team with some of the Being a Boy participants. The discussion also included Jessica Toale, MP Bournemouth West, who sponsored the Being a Boy exhibition at the House of Commons and continues to champion the project as well as opening the Festival of Creativity. The young men were invited to join in an informal discussion to contribute to the Big Future Survey; providing key insights into the challenges young men face today and what they want to see for their future. Topics that were discussed included their interests, identity, education, social media, and what adults and teachers need to know about young men and their perspectives and challenges. The conversations and feedback from the group were powerful and highlighted the importance of providing this platform for young men to contribute to conversations on how to support them. The visit concluded with a lunch and a creative VR Headset workshop, allowing the young men an opportunity to creatively explore with innovative design tools.

You can find further information on this event here: [AUB Press Release](#)

"I want as many young people as possible across Bournemouth to share their experiences so decision makers will sit up and take notice...If we want to build a better future, we need to take their ideas seriously and act on what they tell us." - Dame Rachel de Souza

Successes

Incorporating the Being a Boy Celebration with the Festival of Creativity not only provided more flexibility for Being a Boy participants and their supporters to attend but also allowed for further footfall from the public, providing opportunities to learn about the project and celebrate the participants creative successes. The inclusion of the Being a Boy Exhibition and Transform Documentary gave the 2025 participants a new opportunity to celebrate due to their Celebration being cancelled due to adverse weather. Some of the 2025 participants also attended the Children's Commissioner roundtable, further developing their relationship with the project and celebrating their voices.

The Roundtable discussion was a huge step forward in providing opportunities for the young men to share their voices and opinions in a way that can facilitate real change for young men. The participants were brilliant at discussing their own personal perspectives and the backgrounds that intersect with their masculinity and identity.

Learning and Next Steps

The flexibility and style of the activities was designed to be in keeping with the format of the Festival of Creativity and to allow for more participants to attend the event where evening events midweek had presented challenges. However, the event lacked set timings for activities and proved to be too flexible meaning Being a Boy participants with low attendance compared to previous celebrations. Or if they did attend, they did not make themselves known. A review for future celebration activities will look to incorporate working with the young men on feedback on how they would like to engage in a celebration element of the workshop series, looking to add more structure to the event, with set timings and invigorate the workshops. The team will continue to use their community and contacts to explore other opportunities like the Children's Commissioner Visit, sharing their voices more widely with our network and nationally.