

Impact Summary: Being a Boy Creative Workshops 2026



Overview

The Being a Boy workshops continue to provide a supportive creative environment for young men age 12-16 across Dorset to explore themes of masculinity and identity. The creative activities provide a mechanism for exploring their lived experiences and discovering what being a boy means to them and the challenges they may face. The project is part of AUB's Access and Participation Plan 2024/25 – 2027/28's strategic intervention aiming to raise GCSE attainment for boys eligible for free school meals across Dorset.

The 2026 workshop series introduced two new workshops: Action (Film Production), and Launch (in collaboration with AUB's Innovation Studio). With five returning workshops: Identity (Fashion Branding), Snapshot (Photography), Reclaim (Graphic Design), Transform (Special Effects Make-Up), and Evolve (Acting) which was a bespoke workshop with young men from Cornerstone Academy. Now in its fifth year, the Being a Boy project continues to develop, learning from the young men that have participated and using their feedback to shape the return workshops and build a framework for new workshops.

Marketing

From media coverage of the [Being a Boy Exhibition at the House of Commons](#), the project continues to be an example of best practice for engaging with young men. Education providers have a strong awareness of the project with providers continuing to support young men in attending workshops each year. AUB continues to co-chair of the Dorset Boys' Impact Hub, giving advanced insights in the workshops upcoming and an additional activity as part of the building programme for young men across Dorset. Promotion for the workshop also included (right):

- [Being a Boy Exhibition Regional Tour](#)
- Campus visits with education providers
- Community contact meetings
- Careers Fairs and School Presentations
- Social media channels
- Email Promotion
- AUB Schools Newsletter and External Engagement Newsletter
- Physical mailout of flyers and 2025 Anthology to target education and 2025 participants

Participants

**2026
FACTS**



60

Attendees across
the workshops

47

Unique learners
engaged in the series

9

Education Providers
represented across the
series

100%

Participants met one or
more eligibility criteria

The 2026 workshop series engaged with 60 participants across seven sessions (47 unique learners). The series continues to have 100% of all participants meeting at least one of the eligibility criteria, with 38% of attendees meeting multiple criteria. The most represented criteria were those with home postcode shows that you live in an area with low levels of progression to Higher Education or live in an area that falls within the Index of Multiple Deprivation (TUNDRA LSOA quintiles 1–2 or IMD deciles 1–4) with a total of 36 participants. The following highest eligibility was Free School Meals with 26 participants. Other eligibility criteria included: Studying at an Alternative Provision (19 participants), Care Experience or Estranged (nine), Young Carers (three) and participants who have a parent who has served, or is currently serving, in the UK armed forces (one). All participants came from education providers across Dorset including six mainstream and three alternative provisions. Participants all explored the key project themes exploring the masculinity and identity through a variety of creative outcomes including performances, original logos, printed self-portrait photos, personalised caps and t-shirts, personalised talisman, and make-up materials and models.

Successes

“I think [the workshop] related quite a lot because it's like it shows you that some people are going through things that you can't see and like the things that people carry... masculinity is not just being strong, it's also helping others and being yourself.”

Being a Boy 2026 participant

The 2026 workshop series saw a refinement in the evaluation stars used to measure impact of the workshop based on the Taking Boys Seriously Principles (TBSPs) and three key project themes: Being a Boy, Being Yourself, and Expressing Yourself. This refinement allowed for more accurate quantitative data to be gathered, with an increased scale allowing for changes across the workshop to be noted by participants. In addition to the evaluation stars, the team also implemented workshop interviews to participants that opted to provide further feedback. The interview questions were designed around the TBSPs for each workshop, providing the space for participants one on one engagement with the team and speak in their unique voices.

Further success included the development of two new workshops, Action (Film) and Launch (Creative Business). The Action workshop was introduced by popular demand in response to feedback from education providers and conversations with previous Being a Boy participants. The Launch workshop also allowed engagement from participants that are interested in entrepreneurial skills and may not initially engage in creative activities otherwise.

Learning and Next Steps

A key challenge was workshop attendance, with some workshops under subscribed and some attrition on the day. While individual sign-ups remain part of the project, the most consistent engagement comes through education providers bringing groups of students. In 2026, participation was capped at three students per provider per workshop to encourage interaction with peers from other settings. However, this created challenges for providers in selecting students and arranging transport for small groups. As a result, this cap will be increased for future workshops with individual sign-ups.

We also ran a bespoke workshop with Cornerstone Academy students, through the Evolve (Acting) workshop. Whilst performative bespoke workshops have worked well to instil trust within the group, there may be scope to explore other workshops being more bespoke for providers as well as individual sign-ups to provide that flexibility of engagement for larger cohorts of students. The workshops running across May to July continue to be a challenge for education providers as well due exam priorities at this time, therefore the next Being a Boy workshop series will look to have a range of activities across the year to help increase engagement.