

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

Being a Boy

2023 Impact Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Being a Boy Project 2023 was an effectively targeted project that **engaged boys on Free School Meals, a key underrepresented demographic at Arts University Bournemouth (AUB)**. All the participants involved were from target groups, with many meeting multiple widening participation criteria.

The series engaged 61 attendees (42 unique learners, up from 18 unique learners in 2022) from six different education providers.

For 2023, the Being a Boy Evaluation Star was introduced to support our learning

linked to the Taking Boys Seriously Principles (TBSP) to provide us with some instant feedback on potential impact of the workshops.

The student facing workshops created the conditions for the participants to express themselves and share their experiences, which enabled the project to meet its key aims and build on this learning to inform the projects next steps.

AUB has committed to continuing with the development of the Being a Boy Project in the 2024-25 to 2027-28 Access and Participation Plan Objective 1 to “Increase the GCSE attainment of boys in Dorset, who are eligible for free school meals, working with educational partners to close gap in GCSE attainment for the group.”.

This document highlights the key findings from the 2023 Being a Boy activity and recommendations for the 2024 workshop series.

61

Attendees engaged across the programme.

42

Unique learners engaged across the programme.

18

Increase in learners from 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The Being a Boy Project was launched in the 2021-2022 academic year as a new pre-16 Access and Participation initiative to support working-class boys at AUB. Activity was developed to meet the challenge of supporting boys' educational attainment on a local and national level.

Playing to our strengths as a world leading provider of creative Higher Education, the project mobilises AUB's expertise to provide mechanisms for students to **explore issues relating to masculinity, identity, and the educational success of young men**.

The 2022-23 academic year saw the student facing workshops double, from three workshops in 2022, to six in 2023.

AUB is committed to the continued learning and development of the Being a Boy Project, including it as one of the initiatives in the Access and Participation Plan, allowing continued learning for the next five years.



RATIONALE

In 2023, The Office for Students highlighted the importance of supporting attainment raising in schools as part of the 2024-25 onwards access and participation plans. With the expectations that higher education providers consider:

1

How they can address the risk posed to fair access and successful participation by knowledge, skill and attainment gaps emerging across childhood by making meaningful and effective contributions to supporting schools to raise pre-16 attainment.

2

How they can expand and promote diverse and flexible pathways and provisions.

3

How they can improve the mental health of their students.



For the last decade, discourse on the substantial gap in rates of progression to higher education for working-class boys has been a regular focus of politicians, educators, and those with an interest in equitable access to educational opportunity.

Recent TASO research¹ has outlined the link between metacognition and attainment at GCSE. This is supported by EEF² studies exploring metacognitive skills and attainment at both primary and secondary school level. To support the efficacy of metacognitive strategies to raise student attainment, this Strategic Intervention assumes such an approach to be a robust vehicle by which to develop activity in this area. Evidence from Pinkett and Roberts³ also asserts that mental health, peer pressure, relationships, and socio-economic inequality are also contributory elements to the gap in GCSE attainment for boys in receipt of Free School Meals. With regard to the role of educational professionals who work with young men, research suggests (Heyder and Kessels, 2015⁴; Myhill and Jones, 2006⁵; Jones and Myhill, 2004⁶) that gendered perceptions and assumptions play significant role in pedagogic practice. As such, in parallel to activity facing young people, the Strategic Intervention will conduct activity focused on the development of professional practice.

AUB's Access and Participation Strategy for pre-16 has involved building strong partnerships with alternative provisions, widening participation schools, community and third sector organisations to support activity to raise attainment. With a clear focus on the issue with gaps in GCSE outcomes and HE progression for working-class boys. Positioning itself as a university leading discussions, sharing best practice and innovative activity to support these young men. Being a Boy was launched in 2021-22 as a newly established access programme

at AUB and early evaluation⁷ evidenced its positive impact for participants. In its pilot year, the project received national recognition for its innovative approach. This Strategic Intervention builds on that foundation, deploying more robust evaluative practices, and expanding the model to engage a larger cohort of young men in a broader suite of creative activity.

The team had previously engaged with some fantastic research by academics such as Diane Reay, Mike Ward, Nicola Ingram and Steve Roberts in the development phase of the project to develop a greater understanding of working-class boys' negotiations of identity, masculinity and educational success. However, the 2023 workshop series took this research further by embedding Ulster University's TBSPs⁸ into evaluation and piloting the Being a Boy Evaluation Star.

The heart of the project will always be taking the time to listen and work with the young men, as they are the experts on being young men right now. Our aim is to avoid rolling out activity 'to' groups based on stereotypical assumptions, and instead begin working with them to build relationships and understanding.

In February 2023, Arts University Bournemouth launched the second series of our Being a Boy project, mobilising creative subjects, including Creative Writing, Acting, Photography, Dance, Illustration, and Fashion Branding and Communication as vehicles for young men to express what being a boy means to them. The rationale for the projects continuation and development is an exercise in research to increase our understanding and ability to support working class young men. The use of creative subjects provide space for learning with our young men, as we tailor the project based on the learning and reflections each year.

¹<https://taso.org.uk/news-item/taso-launches-report-on-attainment-raising/>

²<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/metacognition>

³Pinkett, M. and Roberts, M., 2019. Boys Don't Try? Rethinking Masculinity in Schools. Routledge

⁴Heyder, A. and Kessels, U., 2015. Do teachers equate male and masculine with lower academic engagement? How students' gender enactment triggers gender stereotypes at school. *Social Psychology of Education*, 18, pp.467-485.

⁵Myhill, D. and Jones, S., 2006. 'She doesn't shout at no girls': pupils' perceptions of gender equity in the classroom. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 36(1), pp.99-113

⁶Jones*, S. and Myhill, D., 2004. 'Troublesome boys' and 'compliant girls': Gender identity and perceptions of achievement and underachievement. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(5), pp.547-561

⁷<https://webdocs.aub.ac.uk/Being%20a%20Boy%20Impact%20Report%202022.pdf>

⁸<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/social-work-and-social-policy/research-themes/taking-boys-seriously>

Recommendations for Being a Boy 2023

Evaluation of the 2022 series gave us three recommendations to focus on in planning the 2023 series:

1

Linking all workshops to the TBSPs to ensure clearer evidence base for evaluation of activities.

2

Continuing with Empower, Capture and Lift Off considering the recommendations from the evaluation.

3

Expanding the Being a Boy workshop series, by adding workshops with two new subject areas.

The 2023 series has seen us achieve all of the three recommendations above:

1

The workshop series as a whole has four key objectives from the TBSP that underpin the project as a whole and each workshop had two workshop objectives linked to the TBSPs and three workshop outcomes. These will be discussed in more detail in this report.

2

Empower, Capture and Lift Off returned for a second year, with key objectives for each workshop linked to the TBSPs and the introduction of the Being a Boy Evaluation Stars to expand our learning.

3

The recommendation was to increase the workshop series to five, we exceeded this adding three new workshops to the series. Delivering six Being a Boy workshops between May and July 2023.

Objectives and outcomes

The 2023 Being a Boy Project has seen the project align the objectives to Ulster University's TBSPs⁹. Taking Boys Seriously is a longitudinal research project committed to working alongside adolescent boys and educators to promote flourishing across diverse educational settings led by Professor Brian Murphy. The Access and Participation Team initially engaged with

this research during the evaluation process of the 2022 workshop series and contacted Professor Susan Morgan a member of the research team to share best practice and learn more about their work. In writing the Being a Boy Project proposal for 2023, it was very easy to see how the TBSPs aligned with what we are trying to achieve with Being a Boy at AUB.

The objectives for the project were as follows:

- Engage meaningfully with boys (TBSP 8).
- Value the voice of boys (TBSP 10).
- Challenge and affirm masculine identities (TBSP 4).
- Utilise a 'strengths-based approach' to learning (TBSP 3).

With each workshop benefiting from the expertise of different creative mechanisms for the young men to explore the themes of the project, each workshop was also given two objectives to focus on.

Across the suite of workshops, ten learner outcomes were identified as key indicators of impact amongst the workshop participants:

- Participants feel motivated, valued, and empowered (TBSP 10).
- Participants demonstrate increased self-determination, resilience, and independence (TBSP 3).
- Participants can articulate an appreciation of their abilities and potential beyond academic success (TBSP 3).
- Participants show increased awareness of how traditional notions of men and masculinity can negatively impact societal, community and family attitudes to education and learning (TBSP 4).
- Participants demonstrate respect when sharing their thoughts, concerns and opinions, or hearing those of others (TBSP 10).
- Participants articulate a deeper understanding of why boys, and men, may be reluctant to show certain feelings and emotions or actively seek support (TBSP 4).
- Participants feel more confident talking in front of others (TBSP 10).
- Participants are comfortable discussing sensitive and controversial issues not typically addressed in school (TBSP 4).
- Participants articulate increased confidence in expressing and questioning their thoughts and beliefs (TBSP 8).
- Participants feel as though they have been treated like young adults throughout their engagement in the session(s) (TBSP 10).

Each workshop had specific objectives and outcomes, these were embedded into the design of the workshops allowing us to use each creative mechanism to focus on different elements of what it means to be a boy for the young men involved in the project in Dorset.

⁹<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/social-work-and-social-policy/research-themes/taking-boys-seriously>

Objectives and outcomes

	OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	TAKING BOYS SERIOUSLY PRINCIPLE
EMPOWER	Challenge and affirm masculine identities	Participants are comfortable discussing sensitive and controversial issues not typically addressed in schools	TBSP 4
	Challenge and affirm masculine identities	Participants feel more confident talking in front of peers Participants feel motivated, valued, and empowered	TBSP 10
IDENTITY	Identify blocks to boys learning	Participants connect more with subjects and being actively engaged in their learning	TBSP 6
	Enable creative learning environments	Participants discover new life skills, by learning in a range of different ways Participants feel less boredom in the learning environment	TBSP 9
CHARACTER	Promote positive mental health	Participants are more self-aware regarding their own stress triggers, fears, and anxiety	TBSP 5
	Connect boys to learning content	Participants relate their life experiences within a broader socio-economic context Participants demonstrate an increase in confidence, self-esteem, and self-image	TBSP 7

Objectives and outcomes

	OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	TAKING BOYS SERIOUSLY PRINCIPLE
CAPTURE	Engage meaningfully with boys	Participants increased confidence in expressing and questioning their thoughts and beliefs	TBSP 8
	Demonstrate dignity and respect	Participants feel valued in the learning environment Participants demonstrate increased self-worth	TBSP 2
LIFT OFF	Recognising the primacy of relationships	Participants have a renewed sense of belonging to education	TBSP 1
	Utilise a 'strengths-based approach' to learning	Participants demonstrate increased self-determination, resilience, and independence Participants can articulate an appreciation of their abilities and potential beyond academic success and increased self-determination, resilience, and independence	TBSP 3
FREESTYLE	Enable creative learning environments	Participants enjoy learning and having more fun	TBSP 9
	Connect boys to learning content	Participants relate their life experiences within a broader socio-economic context Participants making clearer connections between their learning and everyday lives	TBSP 7

OUTPUTS

- Being a Boy 2022 Anthology
- A Celebration event for the 2022 workshop series
- A series of six subject-specific on campus workshops for young men at AUB
- Production of a documentary following the journey of the young men in one of the workshops
- Pilot of the Being a Boy Evaluation Star
- Higher Education Research and Practitioners Conference
- Being a Boy 2023 Anthology
- A Celebration event for the 2023 workshop series

Being a Boy 2022 workshop series celebration event

In celebration of the 2022 Being a Boy participants, the *How to be a Boy Documentary* and *Beneath the Surface* short film premiered at Pavilion Dance South West on Wednesday 1 February 2023¹⁰. The event was free to attend with all 170 seats “selling out” online. The young men were joined by their supporters (family members, friends, teachers, and careers advisors) as well as members of the AUB community, Education Providers and supporters of the Being a Boy project to celebrate their creative successes across the three 2022 Being a Boy Workshop: Empower, Capture and Lift Off.

The *How to be a Boy Documentary*¹¹ followed the young men as they participated in the Empower 2022 creative writing workshop. The celebration event also showcased work from the 2022 Being a Boy Capture and Lift Off workshops. And premiered a second film, *Beneath the Surface*¹², following one of the Being a Boy Lift Off Participants continued exploration in the world of dance

after the 2022 Being a Boy Series.

As part of the celebration activity an anthology was created showcasing the young men’s work across the workshop series.

The event also provided a platform to launch the 2023 workshop series.

170

Seats sold out via online booking

¹⁰https://aub.ac.uk/latest/being-a-boy-heads-to-pavilion-dance-south-west?utm_source=shorturl&utm_medium=link&utm_term=boy-pdsw&utm_campaign=marketing

¹¹<https://aub.ac.uk/schools-hub/widening-access-to-aub/being-a-boy-student-opportunities#gallery-3809411-1>

¹²<https://aub.ac.uk/schools-hub/widening-access-to-aub/being-a-boy-student-opportunities#gallery-3809411-2>



WORKSHOP SERIES

The Being a Boy project 2023 had **six student facing workshops**, that provided creative channels for participants to reflect on what being a young man means to them and their own lived experiences.

The workshops were an innovative mechanism to conduct an exploration of the possible implications for boys' future health, happiness and educational success.

The project engaged 42 unique learners (aged 12-16) across six different workshops:

EMPOWER

Creative writing workshop
11 May 2023
Ashley Hickson-Lovence

IDENTITY

Fashion Branding and Identity workshop
15 May 2023
Kieron O'Connor

CHARACTER

Acting workshop
13-14 June 2023
Dan Boyden

CAPTURE

Photography workshop
5 July
Conrad Tracy

LIFT OFF

Dance and movement workshop
12-13 July 2023
Lawrence James

FREESTYLE

Illustration workshop
17 July 2023
Joel Lardner

Workshop attendance and engagement

The workshops relied on individual student sign-up, facilitated through the team's engagement with partners such as third sector organisations, community groups, and providers of Alternative Educational Provision for students who may no longer be in mainstream schools. Participation was voluntary and built on non-hierarchical relationships with students, founded in the principles trust and mutual respect. Whilst the cohort did include some students from local mainstream schools, the same principles were employed in relation to their involvement with some young men signing up individually and with one of the schools working closely with their Pupil Premium Co-ordinator to engage the young men.

EMPOWER	Capacity: 15 Target: 15 Registered: 18 Education providers represented in total attendees: 3	14 attendees	Alternative provision: 1 Free school meals: 13 Care experienced: 0 Young carer: 1 Service child: 2
IDENTITY	Capacity: 15 Target: 15 Registered: 15 Education providers represented in total attendees: 4	12 attendees	Alternative provision: 2 Free school meals: 11 Care experienced: 1 Young carer: 1 Service child: 2
CHARACTER (DAY 1)	Capacity: 20 Target: 15 Registered: 13 Education providers represented in total attendees: 3	9 attendees	Alternative provision: 2 Free school meals: 9 Care experienced: 0 Young carer: 0 Service child: 0
CHARACTER (DAY 2)	Capacity: 20 Target: 15 Registered: 13 Education providers represented in total attendees: 3	9 attendees	Alternative provision: 2 Free school meals: 9 Care experienced: 0 Young carer: 0 Service child: 0
CAPTURE	Capacity: 12 Target: 12 Registered: 11 Education providers represented in total attendees: 3	9 attendees	Alternative provision: 2 Free school meals: 8 Care experienced: 0 Young carer: 1 Service child: 2
LIFT OFF (DAY 1)	Capacity: 20 Target: 15 Registered: 11 Education providers represented in total attendees: 2	5 attendees	Alternative provision: 1 Free school meals: 4 Care experienced: 1 Young carer: 0 Service child: 1
LIFT OFF (DAY 2)	Capacity: 20 Target: 15 Registered: 11 Education providers represented in total attendees: 1	4 attendees	Alternative provision: 0 Free school meals: 3 Care experienced: 0 Young carer: 0 Service child: 1
FREESTYLE	Capacity: 15 Target: 15 Registered: 15 Education providers represented in total attendees: 4	12 attendees	Alternative provision: 4 Free school meals: 12 Care experienced: 0 Young carer: 0 Service child: 0

Workshop attendance and engagement

100% of the participants met one or more widening participation eligibility criteria suggesting **the project was effectively targeted.**

We had capacity for 137 participants to engage in the project this academic year, with a target of 117 participants. Registrations fell short of this target by 11 participants. The number of attendees across the series fell short of the target by 43 participants. This is disappointing, however, given the wider challenges within

the Access and Participation Team during this period due to the Being a Boy Project Lead having to take significant sick leave, it is a real testament to the Access and Participation Team that all six workshops were still able to be delivered to such a high standard.

What's more, we engaged 44 more young men than last academic year (24 more unique learners).

137

Total workshop capacity

117

Target attendees

74

Total learners attended

42

Unique learners attended

The below table offers comparison of the number of learners engaged in 2023 compared to 2022.

Number of participants	2022	2023	Change
Total target	35	117	+82
Total attendees	30	74	+44
Unique learners	18	42	+24
Returning attendees	N/A	7	N/A
New attendees	30	67	+37



147%

Increase in total attendees

133%

Increase in unique learners attended

Workshop attendance and engagement

Across the project, students from Alternative Educational settings engaged with students from mainstream education settings. This year's marketing of the Being a Boy workshops aimed to increase the range of education providers involved in the project, while still working closely with our key supporters from the 2022 series. Young people attended from the following education providers:

- Iford Academy
- Ferndown Upper School
- Twynham School
- The Compass
- Livingstone Academy
- St Edward's RC/CofE School

In addition to the above, we had sign ups from the below education provider, but they did not attend on the day:

- Dorchester Learning Centre

Engaging seven education providers, compared to four education providers last academic year. Four of the 2023 education providers were new engagements in Being

a Boy, as unfortunately the Quay School were unable to participate in the series this academic year.

We worked closely with the participants' trusted adults to explain the project and research that the workshop artefacts would be feeding into. In particular, with the Careers Lead at one of the Alternative Provisions and Pupil Premium Lead at one of the schools. We also worked with parents/ guardians to discuss any of the participant's additional needs, worries and/or concerns.

The participants were treated as adults, which helped them feel trusted and confident while at AUB, and reassured that the team on each workshop had their best interests at heart, and confidence in their abilities and unique strengths as individuals. Building trust was really important with these young people. As demonstrated in some of the artefacts, some of the boys have challenging educational experiences, homelives and relationships.



Across the whole project our main priority was for the participants to **have fun and a positive experience in a creative university environment.**

Seven of the participants were repeat attendees from the 2022 workshop series, with 37 new to the Being a Boy Project. It was great to welcome back some of the 2022 cohort and **echoes the feedback that we received from the young men and their supporters that they do love being involved in the project and enjoy the workshops.**

This does pose a challenge for future years, ensuring that content is changing significantly enough to keep those returning engaged and creatively stimulated in the workshops.

Creating a safe and fun environment for each workshop was extremely important. We aimed to become familiar faces to the boys, supporting the development of a sense of belonging. Seeing that AUB, and

universities more widely, are environments where they are wanted, welcomed and appreciated for being their authentic selves. This was more challenging this academic year with the Project Lead being on sick leave, however the Project Coordinator and Access and Participation Manager were able to support in becoming those familiar faces. And unlike last academic year, there were more changes in the cohort across the series. In 2022 we had a core group of four young men that attended all of the workshops, with the workshop series increasing in size this was not as easy for education providers to fit into timetables so those that did attend multiple workshops averaged at two workshops.

All six workshops demonstrated positive impacts, with fairly consistent number of participants across all workshops apart from Lift Off, which again had significantly lower participants. This will be addressed further in the Being a Boy Lift Off section.

Evaluation methodology

Building on findings from 2022, our evaluation plan focused on **challenging ill-founded assumptions around stereotypes** and homogenisation, aspiration ‘deficiency’ and equality as a ‘choice’.

As an Access and Participation Team we want to learn from the experts, who are the boys themselves, mobilising creative tools as a listening exercise to learn from young men about what being a working-class boy means to them. While providing a conduit for cutting edge research on what works (and how) to teachers and advisors. And convening the HE sector around the issues with a national conference for researchers and practitioners to share best practice.

In 2022 we used exploratory outcomes evaluated through a mix of Mentimeter and analysis of the creative artefacts produced by the young men. A small pilot of qualitative research was conducted, including semi structured interviews with four participants who engaged in multiple interventions.

This year the evaluation has been formalised in alignment with principles developed by the Taking Boys Seriously initiative in Northern Ireland (Hardland & McCready, 2012). Aligning each workshop with intermediary outcomes linked to the development of metacognitive skills (Mannion & Mercer, 2016).

A mixed methods approach for evaluation has still been employed for the project due to the nature of the workshops. With the Being a Boy Evaluation Star being piloted this academic year. Ethical approval has been given for the analysis of the 2023 creative artefacts produced by the young men.



Being a Boy Evaluation Star pilot

The Being a Boy Evaluation Star pilot was developed to provide a quick, **non-digital mechanism for the project to gain vital data** on how the young men perceive their confidence/self-efficacy, skills and knowledge linked to the Being a Boy Project Objectives.

There had been several challenges using a digital mechanism for evaluation in 2022, including:

- **Not all of the young men had mobile phones that they could use to access the survey.**
- **Anonymous feedback meant that we couldn't explore the data across the workshop series when participants had attended multiple workshops.**
- **The word clouds that can be created using the system were initially displayed on the screen, which encouraged humorous responses.**
- **Technology distracted from what the participants were actually being asked to do and took them "out" of the workshop atmosphere to use their phones and/or laptop provided.**

With this in mind, and other recommendations from the 2022 workshop series influencing the development of the 2023 workshop series, it was a great time to pilot a new evaluation approach. As previously mentioned, the series objectives and outcomes have been linked to the TBSPs to ensure clearer evidence base for evaluation of activities. This resulted in many more factors that we needed to take into consideration when evaluating the impact of each workshop. Demonstrating a need for a more robust evaluation tool to be piloted.

Building on a concept used in counselling services, that was already familiar to the Access and Participation Team, that allows clients to self-assess their levels of confidence in particular areas.

Design of the Being a Boy Evaluation Star began with the focus on wanting the young men to leave the workshops feeling motivated, valued and empowered. With an appreciation of what they are good at beyond their schoolwork.

Outcomes stars are an evidence-based tool, designed to both support and measure change when working with people and has a key focus of collaboration¹³, which is fundamental to how the Being a Boy project wants to engage with its participants. With the project having clear outputs in terms of delivering the series of workshops, for our evaluation there was a need to focus on the outcomes, and possible changes for the young men engaging with the series (MacKeith, J., 2011 p98).

Further research highlighted the breadth of use of evaluation stars in a variety of settings, particularly around housing, care and support where a participatory approach to assessment has been taken (MacKeith, J., 2011¹⁴). With the project having ethical approval for using the young men's creative artefacts for further analysis, the Evaluation Stars could provide an additional tool to facilitate follow up interviews and conversations around their experiences, with a tangible physical document showing potential changes linked to each statement.

A key reason for choosing to develop an evaluation star for the project evaluation was because it supports the 'reversal of roles underlined by power and knowledge' putting the service user, or in our case participants in a more powerful role in the process when exploring their experiences of the workshops (Arvidson, M. and Kara, H., 2013¹⁵). The project is at the core a listening project to learn more about the young men and their experiences, therefore having an evaluation star that allows them to further tell us their experiences linked to the project's objectives and outcomes, supports us in this listening and learning.

Using the TBSPs, three key areas were identified that we wanted to address feelings of self, challenging and affirming masculinity, and healthy expression. The TBS principles were then reworded into statements, with the aim of making the terminology more participant friendly:

BEING YOURSELF (CONFIDENCE/SELF-EFFICACY)

I feel...

- I feel motivated, valued, and can make my own choices.
- I feel like I own my story and can cope with challenges that may lie ahead.
- I know what I'm good at, and can talk about how and why it's important.
- I feel confident sharing my thoughts in front of others.

EXPRESSING YOURSELF (SKILLS)

I can/I am...

- I am respected and respectful when sharing thoughts, concerns and opinions.
- I am able to talk about things which are difficult.
- I am treated like a young adult.

BEING A BOY (KNOWLEDGE)

I know/I understand...

- I understand that some assumptions about how boys 'should' act can negatively impact myself and others.
- I understand why it can be harder for boys and men to show their feelings.
- I know how to express and question what I think and believe about things that are important to me.

There were plans to run focus groups with participants from the 2022 Being a Boy workshop series for feedback on the statements and further development. However, this was not possible due to physical health challenges of the Being a Boy Project Lead. This is included in the recommendations for further development of the Evaluation Star for the 2024 workshop series.

The statements were collated and formatted into the Star, which was then printed and given to participants to complete pre and post workshop.

¹³www.outcomesstar.org.uk/about-the-star/what-is-the-outcomes-star/history-of-the-star/

¹⁴MacKeith, J., (2011). The development of the Outcomes Star: a participatory approach to assessment and outcome measurement. *Housing, Care and Support*, 14(3), 98-106.

¹⁵Arvidson, M., and Kara, H. (2013). Putting evaluations to use: from measuring to endorsing social value. Working Paper. Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC), Birmingham.

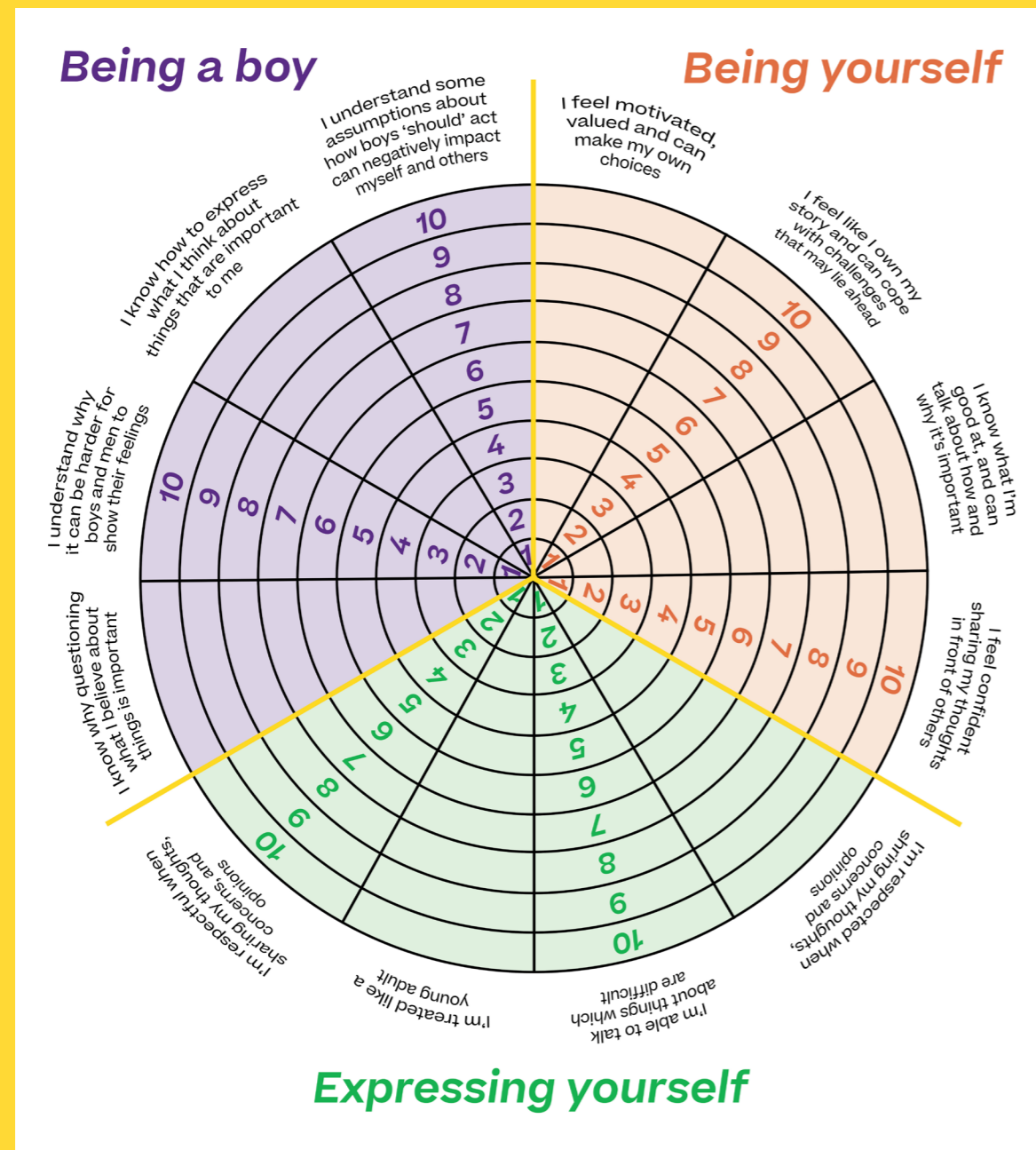
Being a Boy Evaluation Star pilot

The printed evaluation star was given to participants at the start of each workshop after a brief introduction to the Being a Boy project and explanation of the ongoing research as part of the project. These copies were collected in and marked with a number 1 to show they were pre workshop. At the end of the workshop, a second copy was handed out to the participants to complete and collected on departure.

Participants and their parents/ carers/ guardians had received information about the ongoing Being a Boy Project research when signing up for their chosen workshop/s, including receiving consent forms for data collected using the Evaluation Star, analysis of artefacts

created during the workshops and possible post workshop series interviews. These consent forms were either emailed back to the university before the workshop, paper copies handed in on arrival on the day of the workshop or collected post workshop. All participants consented to their data being used apart from one, whose data therefore does not feature.

Learning from the Evaluation Star data is included in the Access and Participation Team's Being a Boy 2022-2023 Project Evaluation Report. However, there are plans to simplify the star for use in the 2024 Being a Boy workshop series, tailoring it to meet the specific needs of each workshop.



Evaluation recommendations for 2024

The Being a Boy Evaluation Stars Pilot has highlighted areas to further develop and improve its use to evaluate the effectiveness of the project:

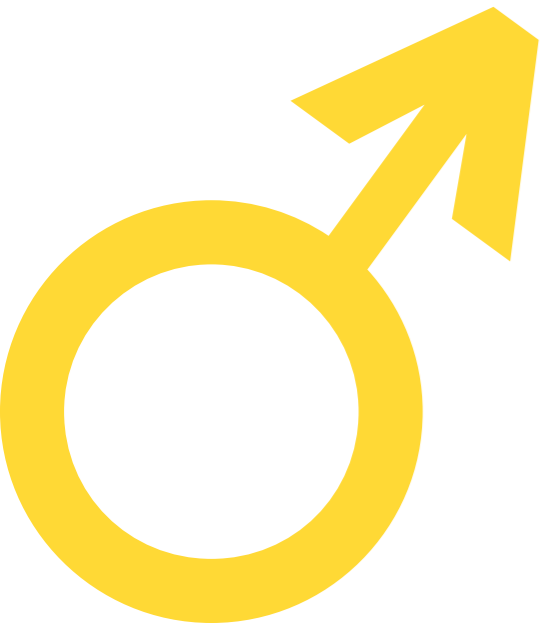
- 1 Redesigning the star to ensure that numbers are shown for each statement, to limit confusion from participants when completing the stars.
- 2 Working with a sample of young men from the 2023 workshop series to review the wording of the statements to ensure the phrases are as clear as possible for the young men aged 12-16 participating in the workshops.
- 3 Exploring opportunities to share/ reflect on work created with a wider audience at the end of the workshop to increase feelings of confidence, that was potentially demonstrated in data from Character and Lift Off
- 4 Developing a participant agreement to support creating a shared creation and ownership of the workshop environment.

Being a Boy: Empower

The creative writing workshop led by experienced facilitator and author of the 392 and Your Show, Ashley Hickson-Lovence, provided participants with the opportunity to explore the Being a Boy project themes through written and spoken word, with a focus on poetry and lyrics.

The workshop focused on challenging and affirming masculine identities (TBSP 4) and valuing the voice of the participants (TBSP 10). The young men left the Empower workshop with a note book of written and spoken poetry and a sense of feeling more confident talking in front of others (TBSP 10), motivated, valued, and empowered (TBSP 10). The written work created by the young men demonstrated that the majority of participants had felt comfortable discussing sensitive and controversial issues (TBSP 4).

The workshop content had evolved and developed, meaning that although some participants had come back for a second year, there were new elements of the workshop content for them to engage with. This year saw the introduction of a more formalised sharing element of the workshop downstairs, which provided a new challenge for the young men.



Being a Boy: Identity

A new workshop for the 2023 series led by Keiron O'Connor, Lecturer BA Fashion Branding and Communication, introduced participants to creative skills and concepts, that allowed opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes and explore their own ideas around masculinity. The workshop aimed to help the young men identify blocks to learning (TBSP 6) and explore creative learning environments (TBSP 9).

One of the key challenges for this workshop was timing and having a creative artefact for the young men to take away with them due to the nature of styling. Current AUB undergraduate students supported the delivery of the workshop, which provided an added level of learning and engagement and shared learning. Feedback from the workshop lead reflected on how the workshop supported the undergraduate students and their process, as well as inspiring one of the students to include the boy's agenda as part of their level 6 project.

Being a Boy: Character

A new workshop for the 2023 series, Character took place over two-days at AUB's Palace Court Theatre. The workshop incorporated Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed in the design and delivery of the workshop. Resulting in the young men all taking up the opportunity to perform in a live performance on stage in front of a small friendly audience, that was also recorded for the *Being a Boy Character Documentary*¹⁶. The workshop championed promoting positive mental health (TBSP 5) and exploring lived experiences of the characters the young men created and shared in their final performance. The structure of the two-days provided space for wider conversations with the participants that related their life experiences within a broader socio-economic context (TBSP 7). Feedback from the audience on day two, shown in the documentary highlighted that at the end of the two days the young men were more self-aware regarding their own stress triggers, fears, and anxiety (TBSP 5) and had demonstrated increased confidence (TBSP 7) from performing to an audience.

Being a Boy: Capture

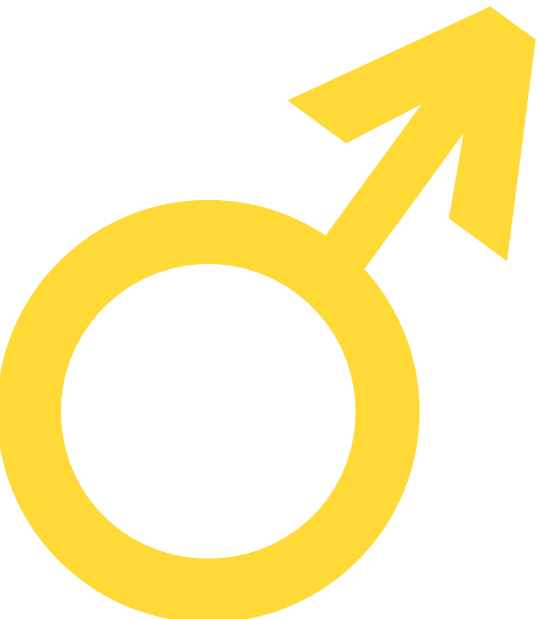
Capture, a one-day photography workshop led by Conrad Tracy, BA Commercial Photography Course Leader, with the support of Senior Lecturers, returned for a second year. Where the young men are guided through three creative photography studio environments focusing on past, present, and future selves. Participants left the workshop with a printed series of their past, present, and future selves photographs. This is one of the most popular workshops with the boys' teaching staff because of the quality of the photographs the young men leave the workshop with and the follow up conversations this then provides back in their education setting. There is a strong sense of feeling valued by being trusted to use such expensive equipment and producing work they are proud of (TBSP 2).

¹⁶<https://aub.ac.uk/schools-hub/widening-access-to-aub/being-a-boy-student-opportunities#gallery-3809411-1>

Being a Boy: Lift Off

Two-day Dance workshop, led by Lawrence James, Visiting Tutor, with the support of Jane White, BA Dance Course Leader, and Dance Student Ambassadors returned for a second year. This workshop continues to be promoted as a movement workshop instead of dance to support the accessibility of accessing this creative medium for the young men.

Four participants attended both days of the workshop, which was the same as the previous year, despite the workshop having a capacity of 20. We have considered that the date of the workshop is a factor for the smaller cohort size, since last academic year the workshop fell in the school holidays whereas this year we moved it to during school term time. Moving the timing of the workshop suggests that the content of the workshop and potential stereotypes and preconceptions of what is involved in a movement (dance) workshop may have a higher weighting in the fewer young men attending on the day. We did have increased registrations for the workshop this academic year with 11 registering, compared to five registering last year. Further exploration of how we can increase participation is needed, as the feedback from the participants and their supporters has been consistently extremely positive and complimentary of the two-day workshop. This is also echoed in the feedback from the friendly audience invited to watch the performance on day two of the workshop. The strong working relationships from the two days are great (TBSP 1) and the workshop utilises a 'strengths-based approach' to learning (TBSP 3). The workshop really allows for the young men to lead decisions and take ownership of the creative performances they choreograph.



Being a Boy: Freestyle

A new workshop for the 2023 series led by Joel Lardner, Senior Lecturer BA Illustration, explored the Being a Boy series themes, introduced participants to the skateboard as a canvas for exciting graphic statements. Participants looked back at the history of this object and looked forward to ways in which deck art can still surprise and delight. The workshop enabled participants to engage in creative learning environments (TBSP 9) with the flexibility for the participants to have lots of freedom in their design processes.

Key issues for consideration

WORKSHOP PRACTICALITIES

This academic year was more challenging, with the workshop series doubling in size and the Being a Boy Project Leader on sick leave for all but one of the workshops. This put additional pressure on the remaining Access and Participation Team, in particular the Access and Participation Coordinator, who has been integral to the planning and delivering of the workshop series.

Feedback on the days from the young men and their education providers was overwhelmingly positive. With the young men creating a variety of written, spoken, photographic, drawn and performed creative pieces throughout the series. This year's series saw slightly more time related challenges, with the need for clear pacing, breaks and an element of flexibility in activities for the participants. With the workshop series growing and the Project Lead on sick leave, the strong relationship building between participants and the project was more challenging without having a core group of students engaging across the whole series. This did allow for more young men to engage with the project as a whole but did change the dynamics in some of the workshops. As the series promotes individual sign-ups, when groups of students do sign up together it can impact the group dynamics and sharing environment. Having the workshops open to students aged 12 -16 means there is a breadth of student needs and abilities within the space which provides creative richness but can be more challenging for workshop leads.

Two of the six workshops involved current AUB students working with the participants. Identity saw current undergraduate Fashion Branding and Communication students supporting the young men on the day and volunteering to be styled by them. In Character, an AUB final year acting student (now graduate) acted as a supporting facilitator for the group work elements of the workshop and a background cast member in their performance. Having this additional element of seeing older young men, some of whom we know had similar backgrounds and experiences to the participants added a depth in shared learning for all involved. This is an element to explore further for 2024 delivery.

Beginnings and endings are so important in creating safe creative environments to share and explore the Being a Boy themes. The 2023 workshop series missed an element of this, and it will be introduced in 2024 to ensure everyone has a basic background knowledge on why AUB are doing the Being a Boy project, setting some expectations and ground rules to bring everyone to the same place. The Outcome Star pilot has provided rich data but requires fine tuning to make them much more user friendly and workshop specific to support the evaluation of each workshop meeting its objectives and outcomes.

The series successfully delivered three new workshops, expanding AUB's offering and reaching more young men. With great feedback from the young men and their supporters across the series.

With this growth comes additional challenges to maintain strong and supportive group dynamics across the series, as well as the time and space to explore masculinity and identity through these creative mediums.

Key issues for consideration

TRYING TO CAPTURE EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Participants were asked to complete the evaluation stars at the beginning and end of the day for each Being a Boy workshop. The table below shows the averages from all four statements in each section of both pre-workshop and post-workshop evaluation stars. Not all participants completed the pre and post evaluation, the table opposite includes how many participants were excluded from the averages due to incomplete data.

The opposite table shows a positive increase in self-assessed confidence, skills and knowledge across the whole series. With an average increase of +4.21 in confidence and self-efficacy, +3.45 in skills and +3.96 in knowledge.

It is important to consider the participants experiences before completing each evaluation star and to consider any pressure they may have presumed or felt when completing the evaluation stars. Feedback from staff was that more time and consideration was given to completing the evaluation stars at the beginning of the workshops, compared to at the end of the workshops when there was a perceived lack of time. This time and consideration varied from participant to participant, with some taking more time to consider and question each statement, asking for clarification when needed, compared to others who completed the whole star extremely quickly. We also had 12 participants attend multiple workshops across the series, having the same evaluation star and introduction to the star at each workshop was therefore potentially not as engaging for these young men as it was no longer something new and fresh. Considerations for how to adapt future variations of the evaluation star and how it is introduced at each workshop, to take into account those participants attending multiple workshops needs to be carefully considered.

There were some comments from participants saying things along the lines of “but you want us to show that we have improved” this was met with feedback from staff explaining that attending a workshop and realising you know less that you thought you did at the start is just as valuable as realising you’ve learnt more and that there are no right or wrong responses to the evaluation stars as it’s a personal reflection providing a snapshot

of that moment. Whether or not the young men accepted this as an explanation and whether this perceived pressure impacted their scoring is difficult to prove or disprove.

It is also likely that how much the young men enjoyed the workshop and the facilitation of the workshop itself, but also organisation of the day as a whole may have influenced their scoring. Some data has been removed from the data set due to it being incomplete (10 stars in total), the reasoning behind this can be seen to be some confusion around the layout of the stars at the start of the day, as not all statements had the numbers listed which caused some confusion. But also, at the end of the day some participants had to leave quickly and either missed completing the evaluation stars or chose not to complete it fully.

Having one evaluation star across the whole workshop series for the pilot year provided us with the ability to make comparisons across the series.

11%

Increase in confidence

12%

Increase in skills

7%

Increase in knowledge

BEING YOURSELF (CONFIDENCE/SELF-EFFICACY)

Workshop	Participant data included	Participant data excluded	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Change
Empower	13	1	27.8	31.3	+3.5
Identity	5	7	32.6	35.9	+3.3
Character	8 (7 post)	1 (2 post)	28.6	34.6	+5.9
Capture	9	0	31.9	34.4	+5.9
Lift Off	4	0	25	32.3	+7.3
Freestyle	11	1	26.4	29.2	+2.8
Average	8.33	1.66	28.71	32.95	+4.21

EXPRESSING YOURSELF (SKILLS)

Workshop	Participant data included	Participant data excluded	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Change
Empower	13	1	25.2	29.6	+4.4
Identity	5	7	33.7	35	+1.3
Character	8 (7 post)	1 (2 post)	29.3	33.1	+3.9
Capture	9	0	29.8	33.8	+4.0
Lift Off	4	0	30	34	+4.0
Freestyle	11	1	26.6	29.7	+3.1
Average	8.33	1.66	29.1	32.53	+3.45

BEING A BOY (KNOWLEDGE)

Workshop	Participant data included	Participant data excluded	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Change
Empower	13	1	29.3	31.3	+2.0
Identity	5	7	28.6	36.7	+8.1
Character	8 (7 post)	1 (2 post)	31.5	36.3	+4.8
Capture	9	0	32.6	34.3	+1.6
Lift Off	4	0	31.3	36.5	+5.3
Freestyle	11	1	28.5	30.5	+2.0
Average	8.33	1.66	30.3	34.26	+3.96

The table below shows the data for the series as a whole from the Being a Boy Evaluation Stars:

BEING YOURSELF (CONFIDENCE/SELF-EFFICACY)

Statement	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Change
I feel motivated, valued and can make my own choices	7.7	8.1	+0.4
I feel like I own my own story and can cope with challenges that may lie ahead	7.3	8.3	+1.0
I know what I'm good at and can talk about how and what it's important	7.3	7.9	+0.7
I feel confident sharing my thoughts and feelings in front of others	6.4	7.8	+1.4
Total	28.7	32.9	+4.2

EXPRESSING YOURSELF (SKILLS)

Statement	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Change
I'm respected when sharing my thoughts, concerns, and opinions	7.0	8.3	+1.4
I'm able to talk about things which are difficult	6.6	7.6	+1.0
I'm treated like a young adult	7.2	8.0	+0.8
I'm respectful when sharing my thoughts, concerns, and opinions	7.8	8.4	+0.6
Total	29.1	32.5	+3.4

BEING A BOY (KNOWLEDGE)

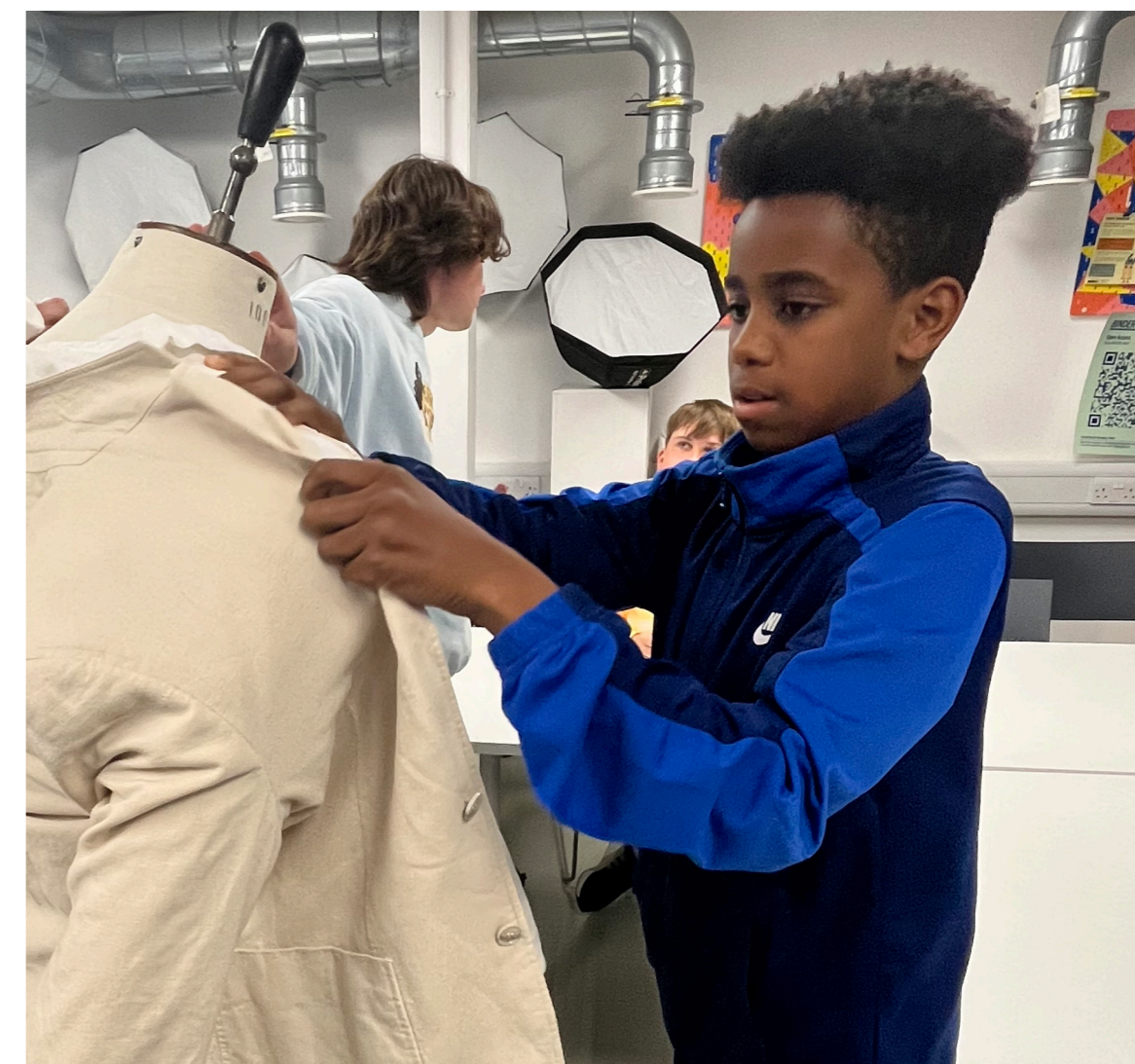
Statement	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Change
I know why questioning what I believe about things is important	7.2	8.2	+1.1
I understand why it can be harder for boys and men to show their feelings	8.4	8.9	+0.5
I know how to express what I think about things that are important to me	7.5	8.2	+0.8
I understand some assumptions about how boys 'should' act can negatively impact myself and others	7.8	8.7	+1.0
Total	30.3	34.2	+4.0

Using the data to evaluate the series as a whole we can see a positive increase across all statements. With the highest increases of +1.4 in confidence in sharing thoughts and feelings in front of others and in feeling respected when they are sharing their thoughts, concerns and opinions. This is great to see as a key aim of the Being a Boy project since its creation has been for the young men to feel as though they are being treated as young adults, and that dialogue is opened to begin discussing challenging topics and encouraging the young men to voice their opinions knowing that they will be listened to.

The section on confidence and self-efficacy had the highest increase of +4.2, which is particularly important as for some of the young men it is the first time they have engaged with AUB and therefore

the location and people are unfamiliar. With the exception of the Iford, Ferndown and Compass boys, all the participants attended as individuals so were coming into the workshop series without the presence of a previously known trusted adult and/or peers. So to see their confidence increase is a testament to the boys themselves for putting themselves out there and trying these new creative workshops.

The creative artefacts from the workshop series provide further stimulus for analysis. Including the difference in handwriting and care taken by one participant in the Empower 2022 compared to Empower 2023. This sustained engagement allows us to learn more insights into how the project can support their educational attainment.



Project outputs

From its outset, mechanisms to assess and evaluate the impact of the project were built into the programme design. Indeed, as stated in the overarching objectives of the project, it was designed to facilitate an opportunity for young men to creatively engage with issues relating to masculinity which may impact upon their educational success.

RESEARCH

It was important that the project not only provided an opportunity for the boys to engage meaningfully in reflections of the impact of masculinity on their day-to-day lives, but also that their voices were amplified so that others could learn from their experiences.

Work from the Being a Boy Project has featured and supported the following publications by Dr Alex Blower:

- Internalising the Present in the Articulation of the Future: Masculinity, Inequality, and Trying On New Possible Selves, *Journal of Boyhood Studies* (2023)
- Learning to level-up? Taking action to supporting working-class boys in education. Blog, Emerald Publishing (2023)

Findings from research aligned to the project have also been presented at national conferences organised by the British Sociological Association, the Forum for Access and Continuing Education, GuildHE and the QAA. Alongside this, the research contributed to an inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys, with further support of the research activity clearly stated as a recommendation in the subsequent report.



IMPACT

Being a Boy received national attention in the Higher Education Sector, winning **the Silver Award for Best Widening Participation Initiative at the 2023 HEIST Awards**. This builds on the project's success, winning two awards in January at the HELOA (Higher Education Liaison Officers Association) National Conference; **HELOA Best Practice Outreach and Recruitment Award, and HELOA Best Practice Collaboration Award**.

The Being a Boy Project was shared to demonstrate best practice at the two-day, Driving Impact Conference, at Manchester Metropolitan University in September 2023, which was co-hosted by Arts University Bournemouth.

Both the Access and Participation Development Manager and Senior Access and Participation Officer have been invited to speak about the event at various meetings, conferences and best practice forums.

We know that at a local level these workshops are supporting education providers with engaging their young men in their classrooms, but also having a positive impact on some aspects of homelife. Ferndown Upper School have launched their FUS are serious about boys programme which has also embedded the TBSPs, and has seen them close the attainment gap at their school for boys on Free School Meals.

A premiere of the documentary entitled *Being a Boy: Character* took place at Pavilion Dance South West in Bournemouth on the Tuesday 30 January 2024. Alongside the boys featured and their supporters, the event also brought together key stakeholders in the local educational and creative sectors. It was a first open viewing of the full-length documentary as well as a celebration of the young men's creative achievements across the 2023 Being a Boy workshop series and provides a basis to announce the launch of new provision related to the project for 2024.

In March 2024 the Access and Participation Team were contacted by the Open University asking for permission to use the Being a Boy 2023 *How to be a Boy Documentary* within their teaching resources for their module *E320: Contemporary Research with Children and Young People*. This is a large level 3 Interdisciplinary module across core undergraduate qualifications within the School of Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport, with a projected annual cohort of 1,400+ students per annum (7 years duration) and a team of approximately 90 Associate Lecturers and central academic staff (to launch in October 2024).

The E320 unit authors, Dr Joanne Josephidou and Dr Jane Dorrian, selected this resource as it represents an important and **excellent example of creative and participatory research with young working-class men to engage in reflections about the role of masculinity in their own lives and experiences.**

Recommendations for Being a Boy 2024

1

AUB is committed to delivering six workshops as part of the Access and Participation Plan:

- Opportunity to explore group dynamics in workshop delivery by delivering a bespoke workshop for Ferndown Upper School's young men involved in their FUS are serious about boys programme.
- Opportunity to continue learning, develop research and support for young men that are young carers through a bespoke workshop for MYTIME Young Carers.

2

Co-create a participant's code of conduct with young men that have engaged in the 2022 and/or 2023 Being a Boy workshops to support the creation of successful workshop environments.

3

Firm up structure of workshops, sticking within the 9.30 – 14.30 timings that work for our education providers, but to provide clear start, end and breaks to help with flow of the series.

4

Explore opportunities with BA (Hons) Make-up for Media and Performance who have expressed an interest in delivering a Being a Boy workshop.

5

Develop the Being a Boy Evaluation Star with further considerations being taken into account from the Being a Boy 2022-2023 Evaluation Report.

6

Engage more education providers in the workshop series. In 2023 we had young people join the workshop from six different educational providers, despite promoting the activity more widely. A target of having attendees from eight different education providers for 2024.

Higher Education Practitioners Conference

AUB co-hosted the Driving Impact Conference, at Manchester Metropolitan University in September 2023. This conference follows on from the success of the 2022 Learning to 'Level-Up'? Supporting Working-Class Boys' Progression to Higher Education Practitioners Conference hosted at AUB in partnership with the University of Portsmouth and University and Winchester.

The two-day Driving Impact Conference received financial support from UK University Search. This was as a result of conversations following the Being a Boy Project winning the 2023 HELOA Best Practice Outreach and Recruitment Award, which was voted for by colleagues in the HE sector.

Over 100 practitioners and researchers attended the conference, which featured a session on the learnings from AUB's Being a Boy Project and a screening of the *How to be a Boy* Documentary.

Keynotes at the conference included John Blake, Director for Fair Access, Office for Students and Susan Morgan, Chief Investigator and Lecturer, Taking Boys Seriously and Ulster University.



Recommendations for Boys' Impact Conference 2024

1

AUB will continue to take a leading role in co-delivering a conference in September 2024 supporting ongoing learning and development to support working-class boys' attainment.

2

Continuing to work with UK University Search to enable the conference to be a free event, to allow the sharing of best practice across the sector.

BEING A BOY 2023 CELEBRATION EVENT

In celebration of the 2023 Being a Boy participants, the *Being a Boy: Character Documentary* premiered at Pavilion Dance South West on Tuesday 30 January 2024¹⁸.

The event was free to attend with over 100 people registering their attendance and 67 attending on the evening. The young men were joined by their supporters (family members, friends, teachers, and careers advisors) as well as members of the AUB community, Education Providers and supporters of the Being a Boy project to celebrate their creative successes across the six 2023 Being a Boy Workshops: Empower, Identity, Character, Capture, Lift Off and Freestyle.

The *Being a Boy: Character Documentary*¹⁹ followed the young men as they participated in the two-day Character 2023 acting workshop, at AUB's Palace Court Theatre.

The event also provided a platform to launch the 2024 workshop series.

As part of the celebration activity the 2023 anthology was created showcasing the young men's work across the workshop series.

In addition to the premiere, a preview event for the Character workshop participants was hosted at AUB to give the young men the opportunity to see the documentary and share their thoughts before wider viewing. During this preview the young men shared that they thought the documentary provided an accurate reflection of their experiences during the workshop. The Access and Participation Team also hosted a AUB Staff Screening of the documentary to provide staff with an opportunity to see the documentary and learn more about the Being a Boy project and wider Access and Participation Activity as part of the launch of the new Access and Participation Plan.

100

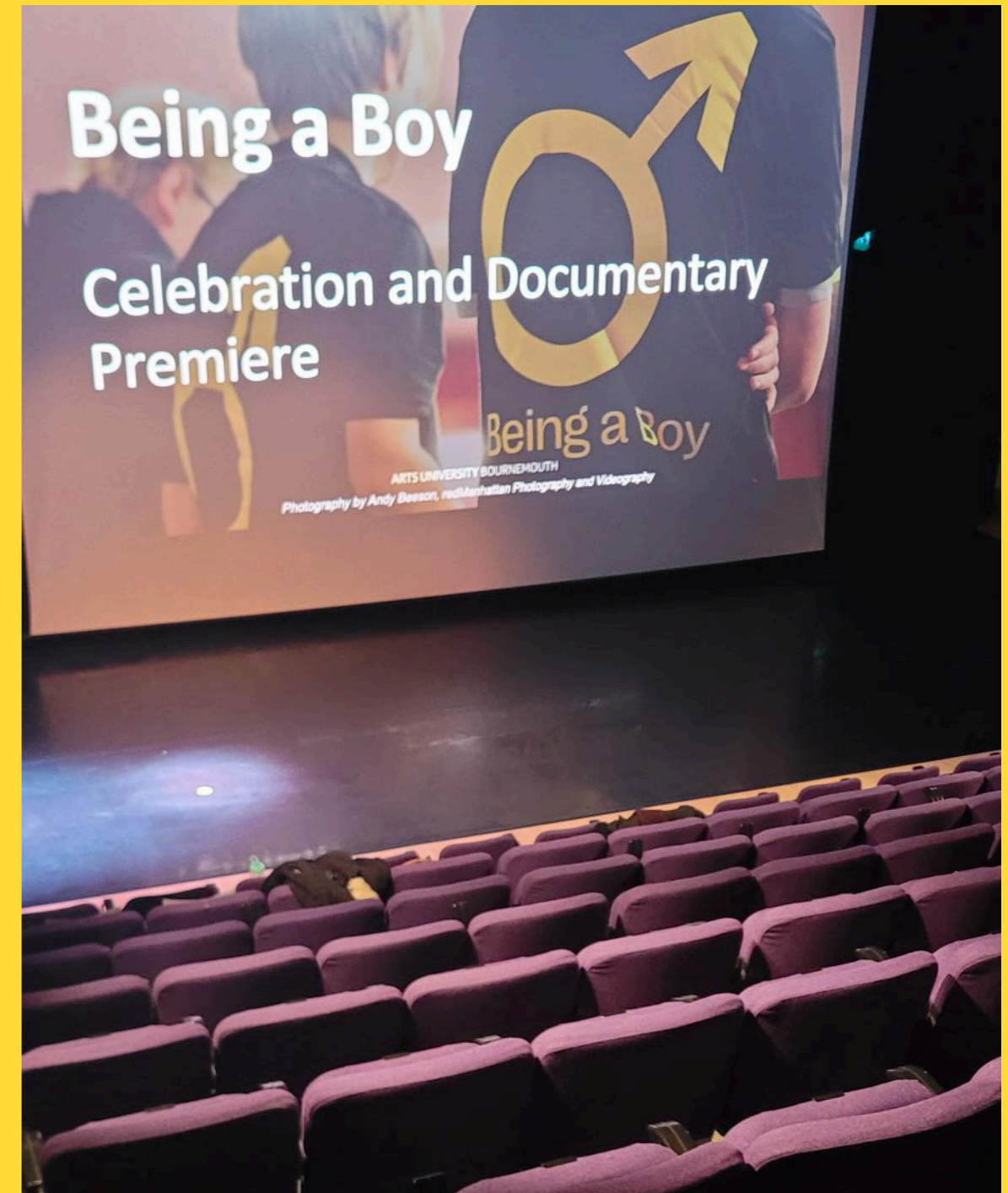
People registered their attendance at the event.

67

People attended the event.

¹⁸<https://aub.ac.uk/latest/being-a-boy-celebration-event>

¹⁹<https://aub.ac.uk/schools-hub/widening-access-to-aub/being-a-boy-student-opportunities#gallery-3809411-1>



Recommendations for the Being a Boy 2024 workshop series Celebration Event

1

Change location to AUB's Palace Court Theatre, which would allow participants' supporters to see the venue of one of the workshops, while maintaining hosting the event within the community.

2

Adding an exhibition element to the celebration to provide additional opportunities and more flexibility for participants, their supporters, the AUB Community and education providers to see the work created in the project.

DORSET BOYS' IMPACT HUB

AUB's commitment to building sector knowledge on effective practice with young men who are eligible for Free School Meals continues. AUB is the co-founder, along with Ferndown Upper School, of the Dorset Boys Impact Hub¹⁷.

This is the first in a series of regional networks being established to pilot evidence-based approaches with schools, youth and third sector organisations nationwide with the aim of closing the gap in GCSE outcomes for boys who are eligible for Free School Meals.

One of the most pressing challenges we face in education in Dorset, is the educational attainment and progression of young men who are eligible for Free School Meals. Before the pandemic, only 17% of

young men in Dorset who were eligible for Free School Meals achieved a grade 9-5 in GCSE Maths and English. For boys who weren't eligible, that number more than doubles to 42%.

Although it's an issue that's widely known, until now there have been few successful evidence-based approaches to closing this gap. Co-chaired by Dr Alex Blower, Access and Participation Development Manager at AUB, and Dennen Kenchington, Deputy Headteacher at Ferndown Upper School, Dorset Boys' Impact Hub seeks to address this.

It's part of a network dedicated to addressing the gap in GCSE outcomes for boys who are eligible to receive Free School Meals across the UK. The Hub celebrates the richness and diversity of young men's experiences, working to support them on their journey toward a happy, healthy future of their choosing.

17%

Of young men in Dorset who were **eligible** for Free School Meals achieved grade 9-5 in GCSE Maths and English before the pandemic.

42%

Of young men in Dorset who were **NOT eligible** for Free School Meals achieved grade 9-5 in GCSE Maths and English before the pandemic.

¹⁷<https://aub.ac.uk/schools-hub/dorset-boys-impact-hub>



SUMMARY

The Being a Boy Project 2023 was an effectively targeted project that engaged a key underrepresented demographic at AUB and opened up conversations with young men, teachers, advisors HE practitioners and researchers on how to support working-class boy's attainment.

The student facing workshops created the conditions for the participants to express themselves and share their experiences, which enabled the project to meet its key aims and build on this learning to inform the projects next steps.

AUB has committed to continuing with the development of the Being a Boy Project in the 2024-25 to 2027-28 Access and Participation Plan Objective 1 to:

“Increase the GCSE attainment of boys in Dorset, who are eligible for free school meals, working with educational partners to close gap in GCSE attainment for the group.”.

The Being a Boy Evaluation Star Pilot has allowed us to collate a much larger and richer data set compared to the 2022 workshop series. Further development of the Evaluation Star for the 2024 workshop series can support the continued development and learning in how AUB are supporting young men and our understanding of their lived experiences and learnings from participating in the Being a Boy Project.

The Boys Impact Coalition, with AUB as a co-lead of the Dorset Boys Impact Hub, will provide a structure to continue the discussions on a national level and provide a platform to share AUB's innovative approach. While the student facing opportunities provide a platform to support boys on a local level here in Bournemouth and the wider Dorset region.



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