



# Being a Boy

## 2024 EVALUATION REPORT

*Eleanor Ball | Senior Access and Participation Officer |*

*Arts University Bournemouth*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Being a Boy Project 2024 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 122 attendees (64 unique learners in 2024, up from 42 unique learners in 2023) from 18 different education providers. For 2024, the Being a Boy Evaluation Star was developed, creating three key project themes that tailored outcomes to each workshop's creative mechanisms. Each workshop had a unique evaluation star, linking to the Taking Boys Seriously Principles (TBS P)<sup>1</sup> using statements developed by a focus group of previous participants. Further to the evaluation star data, 2024 workshops also collaborated with an education provider to see the impact of repeat participation across the workshops, resulting in qualitative data for the project.

The student facing workshops continue to foster creative environments that enable participants to express their views and feelings on their masculinity and lived experiences. The project continues to meet its targeted outcomes and aims, building upon learning from the young men. The Being a Boy workshops are growing in recognition locally and nationally, with the young men being at the centre of the project throughout. In addition to growing and strengthening the student facing workshops, the Being a Boy Celebration was enhanced to include the projects first exhibition, highlighting work from all three years of the project.

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<sup>2</sup> strategic intervention one 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 2024 Being a Boy activity and recommendations for the 2025 workshop series.

## INTRODUCTION

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.

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 evaluation<sup>3</sup> evidenced its positive impact for participants. In its pilot year, the project received national recognition for its innovative approach.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ulster.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/1511242/UU-TBS-Principles.pdf](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/1511242/UU-TBS-Principles.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://webdocs.aub.ac.uk/Access%20and%20Participation%20Plan%202024-25%E2%80%932027-28.pdf?\\_ga=2.52809965.415002430.1701775227-1692506891.1701775227](https://webdocs.aub.ac.uk/Access%20and%20Participation%20Plan%202024-25%E2%80%932027-28.pdf?_ga=2.52809965.415002430.1701775227-1692506891.1701775227)

<sup>3</sup> <https://webdocs.aub.ac.uk/Being%20a%20Boy%20Impact%20Report%202022.pdf>

Being a Boy is now firmly embedded in AUB's Access and Participation Strategy as a Strategic Intervention in the 2024-25 to 2027-28 Access and Participation Plan. The project firmly embedded Ulster University's Taking Boys Seriously Principles<sup>4</sup> into evaluation from 2023 onwards.

In February 2024, Arts University Bournemouth launched the third series of the Being a Boy project, mobilising creative subjects, including Creative Writing, Acting, Photography, Dance, Illustration, and Fashion Branding and Communication, and Make-Up for Media and Performance 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.

The 2023-24 academic year saw the student facing workshops increase from six workshops in 2023, to seven workshops in 2024.

## AIMS, OBJECTIVES, AND OUTCOMES

### OBJECTIVES

Across the suite of workshops, Being a Boy has four key objectives that underpin the project as a whole:

- Engage meaningfully with boys ([Taking Boys Seriously Principle 8](#)).
- Value the voice of boys ([Taking Boys Seriously Principle 10](#)).
- Challenge and affirm masculine identities ([Taking Boys Seriously Principle 4](#)).
- Utilise a 'strengths-based approach' to learning ([Taking Boys Seriously Principle 3](#)).

### OUTCOMES

Across the workshops, ten learner outcomes have been identified as key indicators of impact amongst the workshop participants. These outcomes have been aligned to the Taking Boys' Seriously Principles, with evaluation star statements measuring these across our three project themes: Being a Boy (Knowledge), Being yourself (Confidence/Self Efficacy) and Expressing Yourself (Skills).

The below table shows a breakdown of each workshops targeted outcomes and evaluation star statements participants will measure:

*TABLE ONE – Being a Boy 2024 Workshop Objectives, Outcomes, and Evaluation Star Statements*

Workshop	Outcome	Project Theme	Evaluation Star Statement
Identity	Participants connect more with subjects and being actively engaged in their learning ( <a href="#">TBS P 6</a> ).	Being a Boy	I am interested in learning where this subject could take me
	Participants discover new life skills, by learning in a range of different ways ( <a href="#">TBS P 9</a> ).	Being Yourself	I'm confident trying new activities
	Participants feel less boredom in the learning environment ( <a href="#">TBS P 9</a> ).	Expressing Yourself	I feel excited by the freedom of creative learning environments

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/social-work-and-social-policy/research-themes/taking-boys-seriously>

<b>Character</b>	Participants relate their life experiences within a broader socio-economic context ( <a href="#">TBS P 7</a> ).	<b>Being a Boy</b>	I can see how my life is shaped by those around me
	Participants demonstrate an increase in confidence, self-esteem, and self-image ( <a href="#">TBS P 7</a> ).	<b>Being Yourself</b>	I am confident being myself in front of others
	Participants have more self-awareness regarding their own stress triggers, fears, and anxiety ( <a href="#">TBS P 5</a> ).	<b>Expressing Yourself</b>	I can talk with those around me about things I find difficult
<b>Empower</b>	Participants are comfortable discussing sensitive and controversial issues not typically addressed in schools ( <a href="#">TBS P 4</a> ).	<b>Being a Boy</b>	I can comfortably talk about difficult thoughts and feelings with other young men  I will always give my opinion, even if it might offend someone
	Participants feel motivated, valued, and empowered ( <a href="#">TBS P 10</a> )	<b>Being Yourself</b>	I feel that being a young carer is an important and valuable part of who I am  I make a positive impact on the lives of others
	Participants feel more confident talking in front of others ( <a href="#">TBS P 10</a> ).	<b>Expressing Yourself</b>	I feel confident speaking in front of a group of people, even if it might be scary
<b>Lift Off</b>	Participants have a renewed sense of belonging to education ( <a href="#">TBS P 1</a> ).	<b>Being a Boy</b>	I'm proud to be a member of Ferndown Upper School
	Participants demonstrate increased self-determination, resilience, and independence ( <a href="#">TBS P 3</a> ).	<b>Being Yourself</b>	I'm independent
	Participants can articulate an appreciation of their abilities and potential beyond academic success ( <a href="#">TBS P 3</a> ).	<b>Expressing Yourself</b>	I'm good at things that aren't taught at school
<b>Capture</b>	Participants feel valued in the learning environment ( <a href="#">TBS P 2</a> ).	<b>Being a Boy</b>	I have valuable opinions
	Participants demonstrate increased self-worth ( <a href="#">TBS P 2</a> ).	<b>Being Yourself</b>	I expect myself to achieve good things
	Participants increased confidence in expressing and questioning their thoughts and beliefs ( <a href="#">TBS P 8</a> ).	<b>Expressing Yourself</b>	I'm not afraid to voice a change in opinion
<b>Transform</b>	Participants have an increased awareness of how traditional notions of men and masculinity can negatively impact societal, community and family attitudes to education and learning ( <a href="#">TBS P 4</a> ).	<b>Being a Boy</b>	I think that masculinity means different things to different people  I think men can do anything....even study makeup

	Participants discover new social and life skills ( <a href="#">TBS P 9</a> ).	<b>Being Yourself</b>	I'm comfortable trying new things  I'm open to meeting people who are different to me
	Participants enjoy learning and having fun in a new creative studio environment ( <a href="#">TBS P 9</a> ).	<b>Expressing Yourself</b>	I feel excited learning in new creative spaces
<b>Freestyle</b>	Participants relate their life experiences within a broader socio-economic context ( <a href="#">TBS P 7</a> ).	<b>Being a Boy</b>	I can see how my life is shaped by those around me
	Expressing a shift in their attitudes towards education and a belief that they can succeed. ( <a href="#">TBS P 7</a> ).	<b>Expressing Yourself</b>	I think education will benefit me
	Improved relationships with peers ( <a href="#">TBS P 9</a> ).	<b>Being Yourself</b>	I feel accepted by my friends/ classmates  I feel respected by the people around me

## OUTPUTS

- A series of seven subject-specific workshops for young men at AUB.
- Production of a documentary following the journey of the young men in the Identity workshop.
- Further development of the Being a Boy Evaluation Star.
- Being a Boy 2024 Anthology.
- Two paper sessions linked to Being a Boy workshops at Boys' Impact National Conference.
- A Celebration for the 2024 workshop series.
- The Journey Being a Boy exhibition showing artworks from 2022, 2023, and 2024 workshops.
- AUB co-producing with Boys' Impact and MYTIME Young Carers the *Boys who Care: Inequality and the educational identities of young male carers report*.

## WORKSHOP SERIES

The 2024 Being a Boy project had seven 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 64 unique learners (aged 12-16) across seven different workshops:

- Identity (Fashion Branding and Communication) – 15 May
- Character (Acting) – 11 and 12 June
- Empower (Creative Writing) – 15 May
- Lift Off (Dance/ Movement) – 20 and 21 June
- Capture (Photography) – 3 July
- Transform (Special Effects Make-Up) - 9 July
- Freestyle (Illustration) – 16 July

## WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

The workshop series continues to be booked through individual student sign-up, facilitated through the team's engagement with partners including: third sector organisations, community groups, and providers of Alternative Educational Provision for students who may no longer be in mainstream schools. However, the 2024 series included two bespoke workshops which were open to voluntary sign up for select groups.

Lift Off, the movement/dance workshop was selected as a bespoke activity as it has historically been challenging to recruit participants, with 2023 having four participants, compared to 17 this year. The workshop was selected for participants from Ferndown Upper School (FUS) that are participating in the FUS Are Serious About Boys mentoring scheme. The recruitment for the workshop was also aided by pre-workshop taster session at FUS a few weeks before. Working with FUS is part of an ongoing partnership and local support network for young men in Dorset, with AUB and FUS as co-leads for the [Dorset Boys' Impact Hub](#), sharing partnership stories with schools and organisation within the Boy's Impact as a demonstration of good practice.

The Empower creative writing workshop was tailored for young men engaging with [MYTIME Young Carers](#), a local charity supporting young carers across Dorset and Hampshire. This is supporting a wider research project being led on by Dr Alik Tennant and Dr Alex Blower, focused on creatively exploring and examining the educational and masculine identities of young male carers. In supporting engagement with this bespoke workshop, members of the team met with the young men on social activities with the MYTIME Young Carers charity, promoting the workshop and allowing the young men to feel more comfortable with the practitioners leading the research. This workshop facilitated the initial activity and rapport building with the young men that supported AUB, Boys' Impact and MYTIME Young Carers coproducing the *Boys who Care: Inequality and the educational identities of young male carers report*<sup>5</sup> published in April 2025.

Participation in all workshops was voluntary, based on trust, mutual respect, and non-hierarchical relationships with students. While some attendees came from local mainstream schools, the same principles applied. The below table shows engagement across the series with some workshops being two days.

*TABLE TWO – Being a Boy 2024 Workshop attendees*

Workshop	Day 1	Day 2	Attendees	Participants at the workshop that attended multiple workshops
Identity	14	NA	14	6
Character	18	17	35	7
Empower	10	NA	10	2
Lift Off	17	16	33	2
Capture	10	NA	10	8
Transform	9	NA	9	6
Freestyle	11	NA	11	2
		TOTAL	122	33

<sup>5</sup> <https://webdocs.aub.ac.uk/Boys%20Who%20Care%20report.pdf>



## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### EVALUATION STAR DEVELOPMENT

The 2023 Being a Boy project series piloted the evaluation stars as a method to capture qualitative data from participants and measure the impact of the project across project themes.

Following the 2023 workshop series, one of the project recommendations was to redesign the evaluation star to ensure that numbers are shown for each statement, to limit confusion from participants when completing the stars. To measure the effectiveness of the individual workshop targets, an evaluation star was designed for each workshop with statements linking to targeted outcomes of the workshops. These outcomes provide evidence of the workshops meeting their linked TBS Ps for this specific activity.

In addition, statements on the evaluation star were limited to a maximum of five, allowing for more meaningful engagement from the participants and further activity time in the workshop. This also allowed deeper understanding of how the workshop activity has impacted the participants based on how the creative mechanism allowed for exploring the three key themes of the project: Being a Boy, Being Yourself, Expressing Yourself.

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### FOCUS GROUP

A focus group at Ferndown Upper School (FUS) developed and reviewed statements to be used for 2024 evaluation stars. Led by Kate Venables (Being a Boy Project Lead 2022 - 2024) and Dr. Aliko Tenant (Senior Research and Evaluation Officer), the group aimed to ensure clear language in statements for workshop participants, relating to language and aims that the young men can relate to.

The Focus Group looked at suggested statements for the 2024 evaluation stars, ranking them in order of importance and reviewing the language used. The following key findings from the focus group include:

1. **Engagement and Shorter Statements:** The focus group preferred shorter, engaging statements, noting that they didn't recall completing the 2023 evaluation stars due to their length.
2. **Clarity and Ambiguity:** Some of the suggested statements they found too vague or ambiguous. For example, "I have a bright future" was difficult to answer confidently due to its academic connotation and perceived pressured response.
3. **External vs. Internal Motivation:** Some of the statements had potential to emphasise external pressures. For example, "I expect myself to achieve good things" felt driven by external factors like teachers and parents. The group recommended removing examples from "I can see how my life is shaped by those around me" to allow personal interpretation.
4. **Combining Statements:** Some workshops had two statements assigned to a theme. Statements like "I can change my mind" and "I'm not afraid to disagree" were initially confusing. The group suggested merging the objective statements for clarity, especially for younger participants.

The focus group's key takeaways emphasised using concise and clear statements that align with the themes. Rephrasing should reflect how boys would express their ideas. The revised Evaluation Stars for 2024, as shown in the accompanying images, directly result from this feedback.



*Being a Boy 2023 Evaluation Star*

**Name**

**School**

**Workshop**

# Being a Boy

Rank your agreement with the below statements: 1 = completely disagree, 10 = completely agree

## Being a boy

## Being yourself

**Being a boy**

- I know how to express what I think about things that are important to me
- I understand why it can be harder for boys to tell how they feel
- I know why questioning my beliefs can be important
- I respect women and I'm not sexist
- I'm treated like a young adult

**Being yourself**

- I feel motivated, valued and can make my own choices
- I feel like I own my story and can cope with the ups and downs that life has to offer
- I know what I'm good at, with my strengths and my weaknesses
- I feel confident in my own abilities in front of others
- I'm respected when I'm doing my job and I'm not seen as a doormat
- I'm able to talk about things which are difficult

## Expressing yourself

### Being a Boy 2024 Character

**Rank your agreement with the below statements:  
1 = completely disagree, 10 = completely agree**

**BEING A BOY**

I can see how my life is shaped by those around me

**BEING YOURSELF**

I'm confident being myself in front of others

**EXPRESSING YOURSELF**

I can talk with those around me about things I find difficult

## PROJECT THEME ANALYSIS

## ANALYSING THE DATA

The workshop statements differed this year, preventing direct comparisons across individual workshops. Analysis focuses on whether each workshop met its outcomes within the project themes linked to the TBS Ps: increasing participants' knowledge of masculinity (Being a Boy), confidence and self-efficacy (Being Yourself), and communication skills in expressing thoughts on masculinity (Expressing Yourself). These themes aim to equip young men with metacognitive tools to navigate their challenges, fostering educational outcomes and a stronger connection to learning.

Participants rated their agreement with evaluation star statements on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 indicating complete disagreement and 10 full agreements. Collated data analysed differences in pre- and post-evaluation scores, measuring percentage changes in agreement. Workshops with two statements per theme calculated mean averages for comparison. An overview was created showing average pre- and post-survey scores across all seven workshops per project theme. Due to the workshops having small data sets, this necessitates caution to avoid data assumptions in percentage analysis.

## COLLECTED DATA

The table below provides the number of participants whose survey responses that were included in the analysis of each workshop, excluding instances where participants did not complete both pre- and post-evaluation surveys.

*TABLE THREE – Participants Data Included in Analysis*

Workshop	No. of Participants data included	No. of Participants data excluded
Identity	14	0
Character	17	1
Empower	6	4
Lift Off	16	1
Capture	8	2
Transform	8	1
Freestyle	9	2
	<b>78</b>	<b>11</b>

#### DATA HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS PROJECT THEMES

The following tables show the percentage of participants whose agreement with the evaluation star statements either decreased, increased or had no change in response to statements relating to each theme.

In instances where workshop evaluation stars included multiple statements from a theme, an average across multiple statements were calculated. A breakdown of statement responses data can be seen later in the individual workshop analysis. This is indicated with an asterisk \*

*TABLE FOUR – Being a Boy: Knowledge Data*

<b>Being a Boy: (Knowledge)</b>			
Workshop	Difference in agreement with Being a Boy evaluation star statements from pre and post workshop surveys		
	Decrease	No Change	Increase
Identity	21%	50%	29%
Character	0%	12%	88%
Empower*	17%	17%	67%
Lift Off	0%	56%	44%
Capture	0%	50%	50%
Transform*	13%	50%	38%
Freestyle	0%	44%	56%
<b>TOTAL % AVERAGE ACROSS ALL WORKSHOPS</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>53%</b>

The table shows an average 53% increase in the Being a Boy project theme across workshops, with the Character workshop achieving the highest at 88%. Arguably, the workshops additional day allowed participants more time to build trust and rapport, enabling a deeper exploration of this theme. While some workshop data indicated a decrease, this was accompanied by higher percentages reporting no change or an increase overall. 40% of participants overall reported no change, with Lift Off seeing the highest percentage here. Reflecting on content, methods and tools could further improve workshop outcomes by encouraging a greater exploration of what it means to be a boy.

*TABLE FIVE – Being Yourself: Confidence/Self-Efficacy Data*

<b>Being Yourself: (Confidence/Self-Efficacy)</b>			
Workshop	Difference in agreement with Being a Boy evaluation star statements from pre and post workshop surveys		
	Decrease	No Change	Increase
Identity	7%	50%	43%
Character	24%	12%	65%
Empower*	8%	25%	67%
Lift Off	19%	38%	44%
Capture	13%	50%	38%
Transform*	19%	25%	56%
Freestyle*	0%	50%	50%
<b>TOTAL % AVERAGE ACROSS ALL WORKSHOPS</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>52%</b>

The data above shows an average 52% of participants indicated an increase in the Being Yourself project theme across the workshops, with Empower reporting the highest at 67%. This supports the assumption that providing supportive and mutually respectful educational spaces can increase confidence in young men. However, it should be noted that some participants reported a decrease in agreement with statements related to this theme. For example, the Character workshop recorded a 24% decrease, with participants reporting that they found the performative nature of the workshop challenging, especially in front of unknown peers.

*TABLE SIX – Expressing Yourself: Skills Data*

<b>Expressing Yourself: (Skills)</b>			
Workshop	Difference in agreement with Being a Boy evaluation star statements from pre and post workshop surveys		
	Decrease	No Change	Increase
Identity	7%	50%	43%
Character	12%	29%	59%
Empower	17%	17%	67%
Lift Off	25%	38%	38%
Capture	0%	25%	75%
Transform	0%	50%	50%
Freestyle	11%	67%	22%
<b>TOTAL % AVERAGE ACROSS ALL WORKSHOPS</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>50%</b>

The table above highlights the Expressing Yourself project theme, which saw an average 50% increase in participants' communication skills across workshops. This theme aims to equip young men with tools to express their views and feelings on masculinity while empowering peers to do the same. The Empower workshop achieved the highest increase, as its activities closely aligned with these objectives. In contrast, 67% of participants in the Freestyle workshop reported no change, suggesting its activities may require adjustments to better support the educational outcomes of the Expressing Yourself theme.

## CREATIVE WORKSHOPS ANALYSIS

### WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

The 2024 workshops series saw the following workshops return as part of the series: Identity (Fashion Branding and Communication), Character (Acting), Empower (Creative Writing), Lift Off (Movement/Dance) and Capture (Commercial Photography). Each of the returning workshops followed the same previously set aims and objectives with only slight changes to the activities to ensure they met the desired outcomes.

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#### NEW WORKSHOP

This year, the Being a Boy project launched a new creative workshop to add to the series, allowing the project to explore new creative mechanisms for the young men to explore their identity and lived experiences. The new workshop further develops the series, allowing previous participants to engage across multiple years.

#### TRANSFORM

Transform was a brand-new workshop for the 2024 series, exploring special effects make-up focusing on creating with prosthetics and casualty style make up looks. The workshop was led by Kat Fisher, BA Make Up for Media and Performance Course Lecturer. The workshop focused on special effects make-up, looking at creating bruises, cuts and scars. These experiments were created on each other and on themselves, following guidelines on make-up application used in industry settings.

The boys took inspiration from superhero film special effects looks, focusing on creating a character that is about to go into battle to overcome their fears. In creating these final looks, the boys were briefed to take inspiration from their own personal fears and imagine themselves as this character. The boys were also shown examples encourage of male make-up artists from within industry, challenging stereotyping when exploring make-up and how it is used. The workshop challenged perspectives of traditional masculinity and created an environment where the boys could safely explore what their version of masculinity within a creative learning environment (TBS P4).

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#### RETURNING WORKSHOPS

##### IDENTITY

The workshop introduced participants to creative skills and concepts challenging gender stereotypes and exploring masculinity. To address timing challenges, the 2024 workshop introduced simplified and practical activities, like designing personalised baseball caps, which were well-received ([TBS P 6](#)). Current AUB undergraduate students continued supporting the workshop, taking on more defined roles, enhancing engagement. Mood boards were adapted to a paper and collage format, fostering collaboration. Participants styled clothing on mannequins, discussing styling choices and male fashion's impact on identity ([TBS P 9](#)).

##### CHARACTER

Held over two days at AUB's Palace Court Theatre, the Character workshop worked with participants in two groups, devising characters and short performances reflecting everyday challenges ([TBS P 7](#)). They created a spoken word group poem titled "Being a Boy is...". The number of participants doubled from 2023 to 2024, impacting the depth of group discussions around experiences of masculinity and positive mental health ([TBS P 5](#)).

##### EMPOWER

The creative writing workshop, led by author Ashley Hickson-Lovence, explored the Being a Boy project themes through poetry and lyrics. For 2024, it was tailored for young male carers engaged with MYTIME Young Carers. The workshop provided insights into the intersectional challenges young male carers face in their

educational journey ([TBS P 10](#)). This workshop facilitated the initial activity and rapport building with the young men that supported AUB, Boys' Impact and MYTIME Young Carers coproducing the *Boys who Care: Inequality and the educational identities of young male carers report*<sup>6</sup> published in March 2025.

#### LIFT OFF

Promoted as a movement workshop instead of dance to increase engagement, past attendance was low, with just 4 attendees in 2022 and 2023. The 2024 workshop was a bespoke event for Ferndown Upper School, leading to 19 sign-ups after a taster session was held ([TBS P 1](#)). While the workshop showed progress, the increased attendance introduced some distractions for participants due to pre-existing relationships which also presented challenges for having open conversations on masculinity amongst their peers.

#### CAPTURE

The photography workshop guided participants through three creative studio environments, focusing on past, present, and future selves. The professional environment encouraged participants to feel valued and trusted, despite challenges related to their socio-economic backgrounds ([TBS P 2](#)). Future workshops aim to enable continued exploration of masculinity beyond the workshop, exploring taking photos outside of professional studios. Participants enjoyed teamwork and creative autonomy, resulting in increased openness and expressiveness in their creative choices.

#### FREESTYLE

The young men explored how the skateboard deck has been used as an art form across history and different ways that digitally manipulate and transform their artwork, communicate a different version of their story and voice ([TBS P 7](#)). In addition to exploring the skateboard the Illustration team also gave the young men further information on how they could use their designs in industry, linking to projects and businesses previous students have gone on to.

### WORKSHOP ANALYSIS

#### WORKSHOP EVALUATION STAR DATA

The data in this section is broken down by workshop and corresponding unique star statements. The project aims to demonstrate an increase in the knowledge, skills and confidence of young men in educational settings through measuring changes in levels of agreement with the workshop statements. However, each of the workshops had small numbers of participants, ranging from six to 19 participants across the suite. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the limitations this has for making generalisations about broader trends in the population. However, the findings do speak to the experiences of the young men who have participated in the Being a Boy series across the years.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.boysimpact.com/reports>

## IDENTITY

*TABLE SEVEN – Identity Workshop Evaluation Star Data*

	Being a Boy		Being Yourself		Expressing Yourself	
	I am interested in learning where this subject could take me		I'm confident trying new activities		I feel excited by the freedom of creative learning environments	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
<b>DECREASE</b>	3	21%	1	7%	1	7%
<b>NO CHANGE</b>	7	50%	7	50%	7	50%
<b>INCREASE</b>	4	29%	6	43%	6	43%
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	14		14		14	

The data in the table above shows responses to assigned evaluation star statements in the Identity workshop. Participants reported 29%, 43% and 43% increases across the Being a Boy, Being Yourself, and Expressing Yourself themes, respectively. However, 50% of the participants reported no change from their pre workshop across all three themes. Analysis of the pre survey scores shows at least half of participants already scoring highly in response to these statements calling into question whether they had left enough 'room' for perceived improvement.

## CHARACTER

*TABLE SEVEN – Character Workshop Evaluation Star Data*

	Being a Boy		Being Yourself		Expressing Yourself	
	I can see how my life is shaped by those around me		I am confident being myself in front of others		I can talk with those around me about things I find difficult	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
<b>DECREASE</b>	0	0%	4	24%	2	12%
<b>NO CHANGE</b>	2	12%	2	12%	5	29%
<b>INCREASE</b>	15	88%	11	65%	10	59%
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	17	100%	17	100%	17	100%

The above table highlights responses from the Character workshop evaluation stars. As previously noted, this two-day workshop achieved the largest increase across all workshops, with significant improvements in every evaluation star statement. Acting remains a powerful creative mechanism, offering young men a safe and supportive environment to reflect on their lived experiences. By devising characters inspired by the challenges they face, participants are encouraged to be vulnerable, explore their emotions, and express themselves collaboratively, and in a meaningful way.

## EMPOWER

TABLE EIGHT - Empower Workshop Evaluation Star Data

	Being a Boy				Being Yourself				Expressing Yourself	
	I can comfortably talk about difficult thoughts and feelings with other young men		I will always give my opinion, even if it might offend someone		I feel that being a young carer is an important and valuable part of who I am		I make a positive impact on the lives of others		I feel confident speaking in front of a group of people, even if it might be scary	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
<b>DECREASE</b>	0	0%	2	33%	1	17%	0	0%	1	17%
<b>NO CHANGE</b>	2	33%	0	0%	2	33%	1	17%	1	17%
<b>INCREASE</b>	4	67%	4	67%	3	50%	5	83%	4	67%
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	6	100%	6	100%	6	100%	6	100%	6	100%

The table above shows the evaluation star responses for the Empower workshop. Similarly to Character, Empower also saw significant increase in statement agreements from pre to post workshop with all project themes seeing an increase. The most significant increase was for the Being Yourself project theme, responding to 'I make a positive impact on the lives of others'. As a bespoke workshop for young male carers, Empower created a unique opportunity, through the medium of creative writing, for the young men to explore their experiences at home and in education.

## LIFT OFF

TABLE NINE – Lift Off Workshop Evaluation Star Data

	Being a Boy		Being Yourself		Expressing Yourself	
	I'm proud to be a member of Ferndown Upper School		I'm independent		I'm good at things that aren't taught at school	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
<b>DECREASE</b>	0	0%	3	19%	4	25%
<b>NO CHANGE</b>	9	56%	6	38%	6	38%
<b>INCREASE</b>	7	44%	7	44%	6	38%
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	16	100%	16	100%	16	100%

The table highlights evaluation star responses for the bespoke Lift Off workshop with Ferndown Upper School. While a lack of familiarity between participants may have resulted in the increased nervousness and caution discussing masculinity and identity, the statement 'I'm independent' saw a notable increase, as participants recognized their unique contributions despite the group performance setting.



## CAPTURE

TABLE TEN - Capture Workshop Evaluation Star Data

	Being a Boy		Being Yourself		Expressing Yourself	
	I have valuable opinions		I expect myself to achieve good things		I'm not afraid to voice a change in opinion	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
DECREASE	0	0%	1	13%	0	0%
NO CHANGE	4	50%	4	50%	2	25%
INCREASE	4	50%	3	38%	6	75%
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	8	100%	8	100%	8	100%

The above table shows the evaluation star responses for the Capture workshop. Participants reported a 75% increase in agreement with the statement *'I'm not afraid to voice a change in opinion'*, which participants were actively encouraged to do as part of their creative exploration. Thirty eight percent of participants reported an increase in agreement with the statement *I expect myself to achieve good things*, however, 50% reported no change. The workshop may need to explore how it can more explicitly link the workshop activities with the themes.

## TRANSFORM

TABLE ELEVEN - Transform Workshop Evaluation Star Data

	Being a Boy				Being Yourself				Expressing Yourself	
	I think that masculinity means different things to different people		I think men can do anything.... even study makeup		I'm comfortable trying new things		I'm open to meeting people who are different to me		I feel excited learning in new creative spaces	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
DECREASE	1	13%	1	13%	2	25%	1	13%	0	0%
NO CHANGE	3	38%	5	63%	1	13%	3	38%	4	50%
INCREASE	4	50%	2	25%	5	63%	4	50%	4	50%
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	8	100%	8	100%	8	100%	8	100%	8	100%

The above table shows the evaluation star responses for the Transform workshop. Most of the statements saw an increase in from pre to post workshop, with the most significant increase across the two statements from the Being Yourself project theme. The 63% increase for statement *'I'm comfortable trying new things'* is particularly significant due to the workshop's exploration of make-up and the gendered stereotypes with this creative tool.

## FREESTYLE

TABLE TWELVE - Freestyle Workshop Evaluation Star Data

	Being a Boy		Being Yourself				Expressing Yourself	
	I can see how my life is shaped by those around me		I feel accepted by my friends/ classmates		I feel respected by the people around me		I think education will benefit me	
Agreement with statement difference after the workshop	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
DECREASE	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	11%
NO CHANGE	4	44%	4	44%	5	56%	6	67%
INCREASE	5	56%	5	56%	4	44%	2	22%
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	9	100%	9	100%	9	100%	9	100%

The above table shows the evaluation star responses for the Freestyle workshop. The largest percentage in this data set was from the participants reporting no change from pre to post workshop when responding to the 'I think education will benefit me'. Despite increases for this workshop, the outcomes for this workshop do not match the activities and therefore a review of aims for next year's workshop is recommended.

## ANALYSING THE DATA – PROJECT THEMES

Each workshop measures outcomes that are linked to the TBS Ps, which in turn, aim to remove barriers for boys and young men in their learning. The Being a Boy workshops mobilised creative mediums to explore themes related to identity, masculinity and educational success.

### BEING A BOY PROJECT THEME – CHARACTER AND EMPOWER

When reflecting on the data from Character and Empower we can see significant increases in outcomes related to the young men's confidence and self-esteem, as well as in their ability to discuss potentially sensitive issues in front of others. It is not insignificant that both workshops had elements of poetry and spoken word or performance.

Previously focussing on the creation of a character inspired by the young men's own lives and experiences, the Character workshop tasked the participants with developing of a scene where they overcome a challenge. However, with the number of participants doubling from nine in 2023 to 18 in 2024, the young men found it more challenging to engage in open discussions about their own experiences when in a larger group. To create a comfortable space and bring the group together, this year the young men devised a 'Being a Boy Is' poem, sharing their own experiences and performing one line each to complete the poem. This ultimately contributed to the reported increase in the young men's self-awareness of, and confidence to overcome their fears and anxiety, promoting a positive sharing space ([TBS P 5](#)).

The impact of using of spoken word and poetry as a mechanism for self-expression has been demonstrated at Empower workshops through-out the Being Boy Series. Selected for a bespoke workshop aimed at giving young male carers the opportunity to explore and express their thoughts and feelings, the data again highlights how creative educational environments can lead to a greater sense of empowerment and value. Using the creative writing and performative tools meant that participants were directly putting into practice

the targeted outcome of feeling comfortable when talking about difficult thoughts and feelings with other young men.

#### BEING YOURSELF PROJECT THEME – TRANSFORM AND FREESTYLE

In addition to increasing the ability of the participants to discuss potentially sensitive thoughts and feelings in front of others, the workshops aimed to boost participants' confidence when trying new things and increase their exploration of possible masculine identities. This theme was central to Transform, the newest workshop exploring special effects make-up. For many, experimenting with make-up creatively was unfamiliar, with the workshop challenging stereotypes by showcasing male leading make-up artists. These examples eased participants into a creative environment stereotypically/ traditionally dominated by women. Activities included pairing young men to create scars on each other's hands and faces, fostering trust through collaboration. Unlike other workshops where nerves initially created playful humour, Transform saw immediate calm focus, potentially influenced by a space that encouraged idea sharing. The one-to-one format helped participants form meaningful connections, with 50% of participants seeing an increase in agreement with the statement 'I'm open to meeting people who are different to me'. Many participants left wearing their final make-up looks, expressing pride in their creations, with 63% agreeing with the evaluative statement, 'I'm comfortable trying new things' with one participant sharing they have continued to use the make-up wheel given to participants and showed their new skills to family members.

Freestyle, the Illustration workshop, had similar aims in these areas, looking to increase participants confidence in feeling accepted by friends/classmates and feeling respected by those around them. From the workshop data we can see that over half of the participants saw an increase in feeling accepted by friends/classmates, with the workshop activities allowing for this subtle collaboration that was similar in Transform. Participants were not all working together on their skateboard designs, but in working side by side, idea sharing naturally evolved across the space. However, the key difference in activity to Transform, was that Freestyle had no group or paired work meaning that despite 44% of participants reporting an improvement in peer relationships, there is potential for the workshop to develop this aspect or to potentially explore other Taking Boys Seriously Principles that align more closely with the workshop's activities.

#### EXPRESSING YOURSELF PROJECT THEME – LIFT OFF, IDENTITY AND CAPTURE

Building the young men's ability to express themselves in performance can be challenging, with Lift Off facing engagement difficulties due to perceptions of dance. In 2024, a bespoke workshop with Ferndown Upper School increased participation from four in 2023 to 18. Teamwork-based activities, like group lifts, resonated with participants' experiences in physical education, reporting a greater sense of resilience and independent expression ([TBS P 3](#)). Whereas appreciation of their abilities or potential outside of academic success with 38% reporting an improvement and 38% reporting no change.

The Identity workshop explored gender stereotypes through the lens of fashion. With fashion playing an important part in our self-image, this workshop offered opportunities for self-expression. Activities included designing baseball caps, creating moodboards, and styling outfits on mannequins. Participants challenged stereotypes by incorporating traditionally female garments, such as skirts, to express their identity. One group styled a denim skirt, initially playfully, but engaged further when realizing the focus was on wearable creations. However the winning look for the group was a styled football kit, which may have been influenced by participants preexisting male role models. Significantly, 43% of participants reported feeling excited by the freedom of a creative learning environment suggesting that to improve educational engagement with young men, particularly in subjects they may not usually engage with, creating the right learning environment reduces boredom([TBS P 9](#)).

Capture, the photography workshop, also focuses on how males are represented in photography, using postures and lighting to play with this. To reflect on the participants improvement in expressing themselves,

participants were given the evaluative statement 'I'm not afraid to voice a change in opinion' to respond to, using three studio set ups to explore these changes in opinion. The Workshop Lead encouraged the participants to think about their current role models and take inspiration for how they want to present themselves in the future. These discussions influenced the participants facial expressions, poses, lighting and photo angel when taking the images. Across the day participants showed an increased sense of ease when experimenting with the different studio set ups, using conversations to inspire their creative decisions ([TBS P 8](#)). One participant explored this self-expression when using the 'Present' themed studio set up, drawing a smiley face on their hand and hide behind it. When asked why they made those creative decisions the participant explained that it was to represent how boys hide their emotions. Captures participants reported a 75% increase in confidence in expressing and questioning their thoughts and beliefs. Therefore, by creating a space for creative freedom and safe self-expression, the participants were able to reflect deeply on and express their thoughts more confidently about sensitive issues, such as masculinity and identity.

*Capture Workshop Image – Experimenting with ideas on Masking for 'Present' Workshop Activity Theme*



## THE QUALITATIVE TURN - REPEAT PARTICIPATION

*\*A pseudonym has been given for this case study to protect anonymity*

This case study evaluates Being a Boy's impact on 2024 workshop participants. Dr. Alik Tennant interviewed repeat participant, Daniel\*, gathering qualitative insights, amplifying participants' voices and guiding the project's direction.

## PROJECT REFLECTIONS

When discussing the workshops, Daniel reflected that the overall aim of the project that came across in the workshops was "to find out what it's like to be a young boy in this generation". The Being a Boy team begins workshops by emphasizing their goal to learn from and listen to young men's voices and experiences. This introduction ensures continuity across workshops, despite varied activities, empowering participants.

***"It was definitely something you wasn't expecting. I was expecting it to be like something that wasn't enjoyable but it was actually quite enjoyable".***

Daniel reflected on his expectations for the workshops, noting he thought they would push him out of his comfort zone, which he does not enjoy. The most enjoyable workshops were ones where he had previous experience, like Capture and Identity. Illustrating this further, Daniel did not participate in the Lift Off workshop, though he now wishes he had taken part due to Character instilling increased confidence. Despite Daniel noting that he made a performance mistake in Character, Daniel reflected that he now feels more comfortable to try something new, even if he makes mistakes. Concurrently, Daniel was initially concerned about taking part in workshops with young men from other schools. He explained that by the end of the project he still finds it scary meeting new people but felt that connecting with young men that he had not met before was the key skill he had gained from attending the series:

***“Being around new people, that was kind of the main bit. it's still scary, but then when you get to know them, it's nice.”***

This reflection demonstrates that repeated engagement with the workshops provides the time and space for young men to increase their social confidence, allowing for a greater freedom to be themselves and better engagement with the workshop content.

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#### MASCULINTY AND IDENTITY

Exploration of masculinity and identity is central to each workshop's activities, using creative tools to help young men tell their stories. With the project being led by women and incorporating female workshop leads, the facilitators emphasised to the participants that they are the experts in what it means to be a boy. In interview Daniel was asked to reflect on whether having female facilitators or workshop leads made a difference when engaging in topics such as masculinity.

***“I feel like women are kind of more understanding in a way...mean it was alright in both, but I felt like you work more when there's ... being brought up by women and then being in a class taught by women, it's like the same as how you're brought up”.***

Daniel found it more beneficial to be in a classroom lead by women, regardless of topic, because it reflects his own lived experience with nurturing female family members and matriarchal roles. Interestingly, this contrasts with his desire to follow in the footsteps of the men in his family and pursue a career in the armed forces.

This understanding of gendered assigned roles for Daniel also came through thinking about the pressures that he faced within the workshops to mask his emotions. He defines masking as “not being who you are, acting a certain way to fit in”. These pressures to mask his emotional responses may also be an influence on why he feels that men don't understand emotions as much as women, with continued intergenerational masking happening in other male interactions.

***“You have to put on a mask; you have to act a certain way to fit in. I'd rather fit in than stand out... [men] have to act tough, and like the bigger person, stereotypically men don't cry... that is what you hide”.***

The workshop activities also see these gendered assigned roles, which may have influenced Daniel's experience. Thinking about Transform, he explained that they weren't sure what to expect as “stereotypically

make-up is for women so putting it on yourself as a boy it just doesn't feel right". Whilst Daniel may not have felt initially comfortable, it was observed that because of a growth in confidence built across the workshops, they connected with other young men and displayed enjoyment throughout the day, with high levels of engagement in the activities. They also went on to share that they had continued to experiment with the make-up tools given to the boys to take home, showing his family what he had learnt. These developments in trying creative activities that are stereotypically assigned to women, allowed Daniel the opportunity to explore sharing his masculinity and creative ideas with new tools.

## REFLECTIONS

In analysing Daniel's interview, the following key takeaways can be taken when looking at how repeat participation across the workshops impacts the young men. The following impacts also mirror the key themes within the Being a Boy project, showing that repeat participation allows for these outcomes to develop.

### DANIEL KEY PROJECT IMPACTS:

- **Growth in Confidence:** Despite initial fears of the workshop's expectations, through taking a challenge by choice approach to activities, participants feel empowered to build this confidence in a supportive environment.
- **Challenge of Stereotypes:** Through gained confidence in the workshops, Daniel explored expressing masculinity through materials stereotypically assigned to women, fostering a deeper understanding of these constructs.
- **Empowerment and Self Expression:** Daniel identified the pressures to mask emotions and how they affect male interactions, reflecting on the broader impact of societal expectations.

## BEING A BOY RESEARCH OUTPUTS 2024

Alongside measuring the impact of the workshop series on young men in the Dorset area, the project also highlights and celebrates the impact of this work across the sector through dissemination via publication and at conferences. The following outputs demonstrate the impact of the 2024 Being a Boy series.

### CONFERENCE PAPERS:

- Blower, A., & Tennant, A. (2025, April 23-25). *Boys who care: Inequality and the educational identities of young male carers*. British Sociological Association Annual Conference, Manchester
- Venables, K. (2024, October 24-25). *Engaging with Alternative Provisions*. HELOA New Practitioners Conference, Nottingham
- Venables, K. (2024, September 11-12). *Being a Boy: Identity*. Boys' Impact Conference: Energise and Mobilise, Wolverhampton
- Tennant, A., & Johnson, D. (2024, September 11-12). *Boys who Care: Exploring the Negotiation of Young Male Carers' Educational Identities and Future Orientations*. Boys' Impact Conference: Energise and Mobilise, Wolverhampton
- Venables, K. (2024, May 23-24). *Engaging with Alternative Provisions*. HELOA New Practitioners Conference, Leeds
- Venables, K. (2024 March 7). *NEACO's Free School Meals Community of Practice*. Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach, Online

### RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS:

- Blower, A., & Tennant, A. (2025). *Boys who Care: Inequality and the Educational Identities of Young Male Carers*. Arts University Bournemouth.

## BEING A BOY 2024 CELEBRATION

As part of the project programme, the Being a Boy 2024 Celebration was hosted at AUB's Palace Court Theatre on Tuesday 28 January 2025, opened by Lisa Mann, AUB's Vice-Chancellor and CEO. The event included talks from workshop leads, opportunities for the young men's voices to be shared, special recognition of their achievements.

The event was free to attend with over 200 people registering their attendance and 137 attendees on the night, compared to 67 attendees and 100 registered in 2023, showing a 104% increase. Contributing to the increase in attendees was the inclusion of a private view for [The Journey of Being a Boy exhibition](#) within the celebration programme. The exhibition not only showed artworks from the 2024 workshops but also included 2023 and 2022 allowing for previous participants to also be invited.

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. The event celebrated all seven of the 2024 workshops: Identity, Empower, Character, Capture, Lift Off, Freestyle, and Transform. The event premiered the latest documentary, Being a Boy: Identity, following the young men who participated in the Identity workshop. Additionally, to the premiere, screenings were shown to the participants of the Identity workshop, allowing for further opportunities to celebrate their creative achievements and share their reflections on the documentary. When discussing the documentary being shown more widely across the education sector and nationally through Boys' Impact resources, the young men stated that "it makes me feel good that people get to see how much fun we had".

The event also included the launch of the 2025 workshop series highlighting three new workshops.

The 2024 Being a Boy Anthology was also created - a further celebration of the participants work across the workshops, featuring artwork and artefacts from all seven workshops.

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#### EXHIBITION – THE JOURNEY OF BEING A BOY

The Journey of Being a Boy exhibition was a collaborative activity with Access and Participation, BA (Hons) Interior Architecture and Design, Palace Court Theatre, and TheGallery. The curation of the exhibition, led by second year BA (Hons) Interior Architecture and Design students, used scaffolding structures to bring the exhibition to the Clubroom at Palace Court Theatre. The students worked as a team to design the artwork posters and the space, utilising their design skills for the event and developing further knowledge of special designs with live briefs. This collaboration increased the audience of the project and utilised the strengths of AUB as a collaborative hub.

To encourage engagement, interactive elements were included within the exhibition. These enabled visitors to understand the social and economic context of participants from the Being a Boy project and celebrate the diversity and lived experienced of the participants.

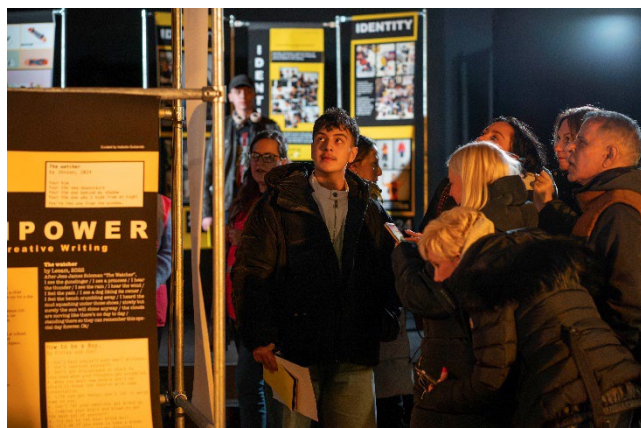
To allow for further opportunities for the young men and their supporters to see the exhibition, an Exhibition Open Day was held on Saturday 1 February 2025. Exhibition group visits were hosted through-out the exhibitions run, allowing for alternative provisions to get to know more about the Being a Boy project. Additional visitors also included Arts Council England, meeting with the AUB Charitable Foundation at Palace Court Theatre, celebrating AUBs collaborative and transformative use of Palace Court Theatre as an exhibition space for the project. The average viewing time for visitors was 60 minutes, with the total exhibition attendees being 173.

***"[The exhibition] reflects the modern expectations well and how they clash with outdated views on being a man" - Teacher from Local Alternative Provision***



To allow for further opportunities for the exhibition and the young men from the Being a Boy project to be celebrated, a [virtual tour of the exhibition tour](#) was created and shared on social media with the education sector alongside a [press release](#) sharing the collaborative event and successes of the young men.

*The Journey of Being a Boy Exhibition, Being a Boy Celebration January 2025, Palace Court Theatre*



## MOVING FORWARD

The Being a Boy Celebration highlights the project's impact and participants' successes, serving as a key opportunity to learn from the young men and amplify their voices. While not currently aligned with Taking Boys' Seriously Principles, there is potential to include these as an evaluative mechanism in the future. Workshop Leads are keen to gather additional data from participants post-workshops which this event may be able to support. Challenges may arise as the event audience largely comprises project supporters, education providers, and the general public, though insights from this broader audience could also benefit the project. Reflection on integrating TBS Ps and appropriate evaluative tools is ongoing with suggested principles for the event listed below:

- [TBS P 8 – Engage Meaningfully with Boys](#)
  - Participants and audience have a deeper understanding of diverse values, beliefs, and life experiences.
- [TBS P 10 – Value the Voice of Boys](#)
  - Audience shows strong active listening skills and respect when sharing their thoughts, concerns, and opinions.

Although the exhibition was well received, there are currently no plans to include an annual exhibition due to the repeated materials that participants and their supporters would see. However, the exhibition did provide an additional space within the event to have informal conversations with participants and project partners, building deeper connections across the project that strengthen the project outcomes. This additional opportunity for networking and collaboration has established AUB as a creative hub in Dorset, as well as showing an institutional passion for celebrating the young men. Therefore, further collaborative opportunities will be explored to showcase a wider project outcome from the young men.

Additional successes from the event were the live elements, with participants performing poetry to the audience allowing for further meaningful engagement with the young men's voices across the sector. There are opportunities to keep the programme fresh each year, with increased participant voice to be developed. Further conversations will happen with participants across future workshops, looking at how they might like to share the outcomes of the workshops through informal conversations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEING A BOY 2025

Evaluation of the 2024 series gave us six recommendations to focus on in planning the 2025 series:

1. AUB is committed to delivering six workshops as part of the Access and Participation Plan
2. Create a structure template for the workshops, allowing for continuity across the workshops and familiar structure for repeat participants.
3. Explore opportunities with Graphic Design who have expressed an interest in delivering a Being a Boy workshop.
4. Develop the Being a Boy Evaluation Star
  - a. Allow participants opportunity to leave additional comments providing further qualitative data.
  - b. Change the scale of the evaluation star to five to allow for a true medium.
  - c. Reflect on the statements assigned to each workshop, ensuring they are linked to the workshop aims and activities.
5. Review workshop capacity numbers to ensure participants meaningful engagement with group discussions surrounding masculinity and identity
6. Explore evaluative methodologies for the Celebration event and align to TBS Ps.

## SUMMARY

The Being a Boy Project 2024 was an effectively targeted project that engaged a key underrepresented demographic at AUB. The project continues to open up conversations with young men, teachers, advisors HE practitioners and researchers on how to support working-class boy's attainment, being a leading example of good practice within the sector.

The aim of the Being a Boy project is 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 commitment is a key objective in the Access and Participation Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28, with the project being continuously evaluated to inform next steps and learn from the young men, allowing their voices to lead the project.

The continued development of the Being a Boy Evaluation Star has allowed for increased meaningful data, seeing the impact that the workshops have on the young men. Adjustments to the Evaluation Star will be made for the 2025 workshop series, including a Likert scale and further qualitative data from all participants allowing them to provide further comments and thoughts on the project. With the national development of Boys' Impact, AUB is proud to co-lead the Dorset Boys' Impact Hub, using the national and local platform to continue discussions on programmes of support for young men.

