

Title: Caban Sgriblio.

Subtitle – Creative writing for wellbeing project run by Peak for young people



Purpose of the Project

Caban Sgriblio offered weekly sessions using creative writing and digital media to promote positive mental wellbeing. Activities enabled children and young people aged 9 to 18 years, based in mid and south east Wales, to gain confidence, improve their communication skills, to make friends and to have their voice heard. Those taking part were facing challenges, including poor mental health, family break up and rural isolation.

Peak is an arts organisation based in the Black Mountains that works creatively with professional artists and communities, responding to the rural environment.

Aim: Caban Sgriblio aims to improve self-expression, confidence and ability to interact positively with peers and adults.

Artforms: Creative Writing, Poetry, Performance and Film Making.

Project Partners: Schools in South Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen, Blaenau-Gwen & Monmouthshire. CAHMS Brecon, Tros Gynnal Plant (Builth Wells), Brecon Library, Gypsy Traveller Education Officer: Blaenau Gwent, Skyline (WTOW).



Funders: Children In Need & Ffilm Cymru.

Artists: Tessa Waite, Sion Marshall Waters, Richard Greatrex, Gweni Llwyd, Jenny Valentine, Uschi Turoczy and Emma Beynon

Target Participants: children and young people aged 9 – 18 years failing to thrive due to challenges of rural isolation, family breakdown, social or health issues.

Location: Workshops took place in: Builth Wells, Bleddfa, Brecon Library, Crickhowell, Abergavenny, Tredegar, Treherbert, Ystradgynlais, Pontypool at The Green Man Festival and Abergavenny Food Festival.

Duration: The project ran for 3 years from September 2016 to September 2019, during this time **Caban Sgriblio led 237 workshops for 489 young people.**

Year 1

- 45 young people attended workshop programme
- 56 young people attended one-day workshops
- 115 Total young people
- 59 Caban Sgriblio Workshop

Year 2

- 76 young people attended workshop programme
- 208 young people attended one-day workshops
- Total 284 young people
- 88 Caban Sgriblio workshops

Year 3

- 59 young people attended workshop programme
- 40 young people attended workshop days.
- Total 90 young people.
- 90 Caban Sgriblio Workshops.

Outcomes:

Poetry-writing, led by professional writers, offered a medium through which children safely explored their feelings and experiences, and could imagine and describe their lives positively. The outcomes that were sought and measured were:

- Skills development – effective use of language, in writing and verbally
- Improved self-expression
'I write because it allows me to create my own land and express my mood in different and abstract ways. It allows me to go to different places and live different lives that are unlike my own'.



- Increased self-confidence
'Thank you for this whole club because my imagination spreads and confidence explodes inside my body'
- Improved interaction between peers and with adults
'The pair worked really positively together as this bond strengthened, the pair also became more talkative with the adults'
- Improved sense of mental wellbeing
'I write because it gets all my feelings and thoughts out and makes me feel happier'.

In addition, we noted:

- Development of improved coping strategies
'I enjoy writing because it is a very peaceful thing to do in your spare time. It helps you bring your imagination to life'
- Reduced social isolation – developing a network of friends within which they felt supported and appreciated
'they showed patience and respect for one another's ideas. Because they were working together on one end piece, there was an authentic need for communication and collaboration which they seemed to enjoy'

Evaluation:

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect evidence of the impact of the project. Creative Practitioners wrote weekly reflective diaries in which they recorded any development in the participants' behaviour:

'the group has transformed from quiet and tentative to excited and very co-operative, they listen to each other carefully and respect each others' ideas'.

Adult key workers wrote pre and post project evaluation.

'At the beginning of the project S had difficulty controlling her anger and would have regular outbursts. Throughout the project S has improved her ability to manage her anger and has had very few uncontrolled outbursts. There have been no physical outbursts for several weeks as a result of the project and S's relationship with her peers has improved. Her anxiety levels have decreased significantly and she is better able to talk about her anxieties. She appears much happier and calmer now'

The participants response to the project was captured through questionnaires, outcome stars, case studies as well as in their poetry. Creative writing had a positive



impact on the participant's sense of identify and ability to process their feelings and it gave them the skills to write honestly about their emotions, sharing difficult moments without become vulnerable, as is evident from this extract from a poem about being invisible which M wrote about herself, and shared with the group:

'There she is.

Nobody really remembers her arriving,

When, how or why.

But, look, she squirms under imaginary stares from the seats behind her.

She changed her hair over the summer.

That was all we knew about her. Now she's gone..'

The young poet's ability to write with such clarity and objectivity about herself, demonstrates a significant sense of control and confidence for a 16 year old girl who said she feels like an outsider.

Their writing journals were also used to capture their thoughts and reflections. *'I feel like I can be expressive with no criticism and rules. I can create whatever comes into my head freely. I feel included when I am in this group, I feel like I am a part of something when I walk into the room'*.

Registers were kept of participant attendance.

All the evaluation was effectively carried out using Children In Need criteria and structure.

Cost:

Per participant: Total Funding: £89,752 divided by total participants: 489 = £184.54

Per Workshop: Total Funding: £89,752 divided by total workshops: 1744 = £51.50

Outputs:

1. Publication of Poetry Anthology <https://peak.cymru/caban-sgriblio/anthologies/>

2. Films of their work <https://peak.cymru/caban-sgriblio/film-poems/>

3. Public poetry performances

4. Film Making:

<https://peak.cymru/caban-sgriblio/caban-sgriblio-at-ysgol-penmaes/>



Quality Indicators: Caban Sgriblio worked closely with network partners and participants to ensure the workshop content reflected their needs and interests.

ACW's 2018 appraisal noted the high quality of the work:

The outcomes of the project were innovatory, I thought, in that a highly skilled, experienced, and reputable film crew were booked in to film the young people, and in my 11 year experience as a creative writing facilitator, who has often created films / film poems with children, this was the most professional and impressive set-up I have seen in that time, with the highlight of a BAFTA-winning director at the helm. Very often filming on such projects is done 'in-house', or using local film-makers: this was a more high-end set-up, which meant the children learned about film-making both during an introductory talk given by director Richard Greatrex at the start of the day, and during filming itself, in which microphone use and different types of shot were explained and exemplified during the process.

(Quality Appraisal Report. ACW. March 2018)

The young people worked with professional artists.

Caban Sgriblio writers led successful creative writing sessions for professional content-makers attending BBC Creative Production training.



Photographs: Mike Erskine