

Write to Freedom

Your Life • Your Story • Your Choice



Annual Report 2014/15

Write to Freedom

Registered Charity Number 1141288

Company Number 7143510

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An Introduction to Write to Freedom

We want to do things a bit differently. We believe that each of us experiences life as an ongoing narrative or story. The things that really matter to us, or have deeply hurt us, stand out as chapters in that story. They affect everything that happens in later chapters, sometimes in a destructive way if they haven't been resolved.

For people that become engaged in destructive cycles such as crime or addiction, seeking community support can be emotionally and psychologically difficult. However, such support is often invaluable in helping people understand their past and present, and turn their lives around for a more positive future.

Write to Freedom programmes aim to act as a bridge for these people; to reconnect them to natural environments in their local areas, and to reconnect them to their deeper selves through creative writing, mentoring and group work; the self beyond crime or abuse or addiction.

Our staff are passionate about using wilderness and creativity as routes to finding a new way to live and be in the world, and to pass this enthusiasm on to those we work with.

Our courses use a mythical text, Tribe Warrior, written by our

founder Caspar Walsh. This provides a tool that is used in courses to fuel discussion around a variety of themes, such as absent fathers, addiction, community life, mentoring, rehabilitation and redemption. These themes are also brought off the page in live theatre through activities and rites of passage.

Myth is used as a mirror to facilitate participants' understanding of their own personal story, and offer a framework for working with and overcoming what is blocking them.

We prioritise work with socially excluded groups such as young offenders, people in recovery from addiction and prisoners and their families. We increasingly find that the benefits reported by our project participants are profound and far-reaching.

Chair's report: Brett Sentance

Hello, and welcome to our Annual Report. My name is Brett Sentance and I am in my first year as Chair of the board of Trustees, taking over from our previous Chair, Ben Brangwyn.

I want to acknowledge the work of our outgoing Chair, Ben, who led the board of trustees since Write to Freedom became a charity in 2010. Ben was there at the very beginning of the Write to Freedom journey and has overseen the development, governance and successes over the past 5 years. Thanks Ben for all of your commitment and energy over the years, from everyone at W2F.

A bit about me - I have worked in a variety of sectors over the past 28 years; working in Homelessness services for the last 7 years. Most recently I have been managing a large staff team working with homeless young people; many of whom are involved with services such as Youth Offending Teams and alcohol/ drug addiction support services—so there is a lot of crossover with W2F's beneficiaries.

I am a passionate 'people person' and jumped at the chance to volunteer on one of W2F's Dartmoor projects this summer. I was truly amazed at the impact this project had on the young people involved, and felt inspired to do much, much more. I can honestly say that W2F are making huge progress with young people, in a

way that I believe no one else is doing at the moment, especially in Devon.

2014/15 has been a busy year and many new projects and partnerships are developing. We also welcomed our first Social Work student placement from Plymouth University. Our placement student, Matt, was a great asset during his time with us and we hope to welcome another student in 2015/16.

Our most successful new partnership has been made with Plymouth Youth Service, who now regularly refer young people to our projects and directly commissioned two courses this summer.

This partnership grew out of our Awards for All funded 'Wilderness and Mentoring' project which took place in spring 2015. The project was a huge success; in the words of a Youth Service team member "it's too good for our young people not to access these courses in the future".

I think this will be the start of something very exciting and I am very hopeful for the future of W2F, something special is taking place and I am very grateful and blessed to be a part of this amazing charity.

Write to Freedom's Vision and Aims

Our vision is of a society where people's actions (for example crime, substance abuse) are understood as being an expression of dysfunctional families, communities and societies when healthy means of expression have not been modelled or available.

Write to Freedom believes that all human beings should have equal access to supportive communities; to learning healthy ways of expressing and untangling confusing pasts and behaviours; to accessing natural environments; and to exciting, creative and inspirational experiences.

Statement of public benefit

Write to Freedom exists in order to positively impact on the lives of under-privileged and socially excluded people through offering creative writing, personal development and nature-based courses.

Programmes are offered free of charge to participants, and priority is always given to socially excluded groups.

In 2014 to 2015, approximately 40 people directly benefited from our programmes, with far ranging knock-on effects due to reductions in crime and addictive behaviours.

Our aims:

- To promote values of respect, equality, authenticity and trust, and create spaces where healthy communication and sharing can occur
- To increase access to, and deepen people's connection with, natural environments
- To promote meaningful self-expression through the written and spoken word
- To provide positive, authentic role models
- To offer contemporary 'rites of passage'
- To demonstrate the use of story and narrative as a means of transformation
- To increase participants' self-awareness, self-belief and self-compassion
- To build stronger communities through inter-generational sharing and mentoring
- To shift attitudes away from 'labels' and towards 'stories'
- To prioritise engaging with people who are socially excluded and would otherwise be unlikely to access similar interventions.

Project Snapshot: Talking Young Men



“Before I came to the group I was getting arrested like every other week, every weekend and stuff, and now I don’t” *John, Participant, 17 years old.*

Encounters Arts approached us in early 2014 to run a collaborative project in Torbay for young male offenders aged between 14 and 18. Participants were referred to the programme by the Torbay Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS). Sessions took place that summer, once a week over a 10 week period.

We were interested in exploring a creative collaboration to see how our methodology might work alongside Encounters’ approach, which was largely based on group work and drama/movement

therapy. The plan was to offer a series of weekly group meetings, punctuated with Write to Freedom nature days based on Tribe Warrior, the text used as a focus for most of our courses.

Although participant attendance fluctuated in the weekly meetings, the young men who came always brought the troubles of their chaotic lives to the group, sharing and finding ways of expressing their feelings through writing, sharing circles and reflecting on Tribe Warrior.

It was in our outdoor sessions that the participants really woke up to the possibility of change and how this could be achieved in their lives.

One young man who had been the hardest to engage in the regular sharing circles dramatically sparked to life on the outdoor day and became fully engaged in all activities. Another participant's criminal activity rapidly decreased during the course - in his words: *"before I came to the group I was getting arrested like every other week, every weekend and stuff, and now I don't."*

As part of the project evaluation participants completed the YAR-PET Life Effectiveness Questionnaire pre- and post-intervention.

This measured 12 domains of self-reported personal effectiveness. It was found that the project had a particularly positive impact on participants' goal setting, creative self-expression, healthy risk taking, conflict resolution and effective problem solving.

Healthy risk-taking was one of the domains or outcomes showing the biggest change between survey 1 and survey 2, with a 53.8 percentile change and effect size of 0.86.



"...it's like trying to find your way, your path to who you want to become. That's what I think, that's what it is to me." Charlie, 17 years old

Project Snapshot: Finding the Mentor Within You



“I gained a lot ... A sense of belonging, a part of something. I have always felt odd, or on my own, and the weekend helped me to connect to other people and to ground me.” *Steve, participant, 2014*

This financial year, we ran a hugely successful addiction recovery course in partnership with the Torbay Recovery Information Project (TRIP). This was our first addiction recovery course and it involved us working with an older, mixed gender client group, all of whom were in active addiction recovery, bar one, who was on a methadone reduction programme.

The course was structured around

a series of lead-in sessions, a residential weekend on Dartmoor, post-residential group sessions and 1 to 1 mentoring for those that requested it after the course had finished.

Addiction is often a key factor in criminal activities and is strongly linked to numerous mental health issues, since many addictions begin with people self-prescribing substances to remedy their mental discomfort.

The course was evaluated using the ROPELOC evaluation tool, which asks participants to self-assess their competence in various areas of their lives by scoring a series of statements out of 10 at intervals throughout the project.

Our findings showed a statistically significant increase in the following areas: leadership ability, social confidence, cooperative teamwork, social effectiveness, time efficiency and open thinking.

Further positive improvements were noted in all of the 'domains' that ROPELOC measures.

This weekend proved to be one of the most successful we've ever delivered, proving beyond doubt that our methodology adapts perfectly to the needs and aspirations of this client group.

One participant became a regular W2F office volunteer. All of the course participants cited Tribe Warrior as a transformational element of the course, reflecting back to them their own journeys into recovery. Many of our staff team have personal experiences in recovery, which was considered invaluable by those who took part in this project.



“It gave me the chance to experience total peace...it was a very profound experience”

Project Snapshot: Into the Wild, With Pens!



“This course has made me think about my own direction in life and how I’m going to achieve it”

Jo, participant, 18 years

In late 2014, we were delighted to secure Awards for All funding for our ‘Into the Wild’ programme for young people in Plymouth and Torbay. We then very gratefully received further funding support from two Devon based funders; the David Gibbons Charitable Trust and the Norman Family Trust.

We initially planned to accept referrals onto the programme from a number of different services related to youth offending and substance abuse. However, after a few teething problems with this approach it was decided to start again with one sole referral partner who could offer a continuity of

support for participating young people throughout the project.

We re-launched the project in partnership with Plymouth Youth Offending Team and commenced a series of day-long ‘Wilderness’ days on Dartmoor, once a week for 5 weeks. These focused around Tribe Warrior, writing exercises, and a wide range of adventure and nature connection activities.

This was followed up with smaller group mentoring and archery sessions for those who wanted to attend. Plymouth Youth Service staff picked up participating young people from their homes and drove them to sessions, staying

on as support staff during each session.

Staff were encouraged to participate in the sessions alongside the young people; sharing their own stories and experiences alongside them as equals.

One young man went on to secure work and another came back as a volunteer staff support.

A powerful evaluation film was created to document the project. You can watch it on Youtube by following this link:
<http://ow.ly/VUgnP>

The project was also evaluated using the outcome stars method, focused on areas chosen by W2F through previous experience of like-ly project outcomes.

These indicated that all participants experienced personal growth and development in a number of areas; most significantly in conflict resolution, personal connection with nature, self-expression, goal setting and problem solving.

From the success of this course we were then commissioned and funded to run another series of courses as part of Plymouth Youth Service's 2015 provision.

In the words of one participant: "It showed me a lot of things really, which I didn't really think or see before. So now I can see, I wanna be someone...I actually wanna build a life and one day maybe have money, family and all that stuff. Not end up dead or in prison."

"I was close to tears when he turned round and said 'I can start to trust people now, I've never done that before'." *Annalise, YOT support staff*



Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 28th February 2015


	Unrestricted funds 2015 £	Restricted funds 2015 £	Total funds 2015 £	Total funds 2014 £
Incoming resources				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income:				
Donations & grants	48,350	11,500	59,850	48,920
Investment income	46	-	46	36
Incoming resources from charitable activities	257	3,729	3,986	8,492
Total incoming resources	48,653	15,229	63,882	55,448
Resources expended				
Charitable activities	36,158	8,160	44,318	39,266
Costs of generating funds	-	-	-	3,000
Governance costs	355	-	355	424
Total resources expended	36,513	8,160	44,673	42,690
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	12,140	7,069	19,209	12,758
Gross transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Net income/(expenditure) for the year				
Net movement in funds	12,140	7,069	19,209	12,758
Fund balances at 1 March 2014	29,462	3,965	33,427	20,669
Fund balances at 28 February 2015	41,602	11,034	52,636	33,427


The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 28 February 2015. No member of the company has deposited a notice, pursuant to section 476, requiring an audit of these financial statements.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act and for preparing accounts which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to accounts, so far as applicable to the company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008).

These financial statements were approved by the Trustee Board on 25th November 2015 and signed on their behalf by


Ian Blackwell
19.11.15


Brett
Sentence
19.11.15

Independent examiner's report for year ended 28th February 2015

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is our responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- follow procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's statement

Our examination was carried out in accordance with general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with our examination, no matter has come to our attention which gives us reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met.

Independent Examiner

Signed

Dated 24.11.2015



MAP Accountants & Business Advisors
2 Bridge Farm Offices
Harberton
Totnes
Devon
TQ9 7PP

Balance Sheet as at 28th February 2015

	2015 £	2014 £
Fixed Assets		
Tangible Assets	574	-
Current assets		
Debtors	11,250	250
Cash at bank and in hand	41,678	33,869
	<u>52,928</u>	<u>34,119</u>
Net current assets/(liabilities)	<u>52,062</u>	<u>33,427</u>
Net assets	<u>52,636</u>	<u>33,427</u>
Incoming Funds		
Restricted funds	11,034	3,965
Unrestricted funds	41,602	29,462
	<u>52,636</u>	<u>33,427</u>

Income 2014/2015

We would like to thank the following funders for their support this year:

Awards for All	£10,000
Frederick Mulder Charitable Trust	£15,100
Gibbons Family Trust	£1,500
Lady Edwina Grosvenor	£22,000
Torbay Recovery Information Project	£3,719

Legal and Administrative

Name of the charity:

Write to Freedom

Registered charity number:

1141288

Company Registration number:

7143510

Registered address:

Room 27

Chimmels

Dartington Hall Estate

Totnes

Devon

TQ9 6EL

Trustees during 2014-2015:

Ian Blackwell

Ben Brangwyn (resigned 13.7.15)

Clive Britten

Chris Lomas

Amber Ponton

Brett Sentence (Chair, appointed 26.3.15)

Laura Weedon

Chief executive officer:

Caspar Walsh

Independent Examiner:

Melanie Pierce

MAP Accountants

2 Bridge Farm Offices

Harberton

Totnes

Devon

TQ9 7PP

Organisation and Constitution:

Write to Freedom is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of

Association and was incorporated on 2 February 2010. It became registered as a charity with the Charity Commission on 11 April 2011. The liability of the Members is limited. In the event of the Company being wound up every Member of the Company undertakes to contribute such amount as may be required (not exceeding £10) to the Company's assets.

The directors of the company form its Committee of Management and Governing Body and are empowered to act as necessary in order for the company to fulfil its objectives.

Appointment of trustees:

Trustees can be appointed at any general meeting, provided the conditions outlined in the charity's governing document are met.

Risk management:

The Trustees assess the risk to which Write to Freedom is exposed on a continuous basis. This includes the on-going monitoring of core reserves (see the reserves policy below).

Contact

For more information about Write to Freedom please visit our website:

www.writetofreedom.org.uk

You can email us at:

info@writetofreedom.org.uk

or telephone:

01803 473382

Our office address is:

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