

# Write to Freedom

Your Life · Your Story · Your Choice



## Annual Report 2015/16

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.

## Creative Director's report: Caspar Walsh

2015-16 has been a busy and rewarding year for W2F. We were delighted to start a new partnership project with HMP Parc and Barnardo's, working with newly released prisoners and their families.

The children of prisoners are a hugely overlooked group in society, who can be deeply affected by their parent's imprisonment and often experience a great deal of shame about their family situation.

Growing up with a father who was regularly in and out of prison, this project feels close to my heart.

We named the project 'New Leaves' to reflect both the tenderness of childhood and the sense of helping to give each family a fresh start – one that will need continual nurturing in family life.

We are enormously grateful to the Worshipful Company of Weavers who have funded this innovative project. We are currently evaluating Year 1 and look forward to sharing our findings soon.

This financial year, we also delivered a few programmes in partnership with the Plymouth Youth Offending team. We were initially commissioned to run two courses over the Summer holidays. You can read about these in the 'Summer Arts' project snapshot. Following the success of these programmes, we started a fortnightly support group for young male offenders, which met inside

a forest school area of a Plymouth park. This led to further courses in the Autumn and Winter.

Running a regular support group gave us real insight into the daily challenges young people were facing, as they frequently asked for support with managing anger and learning new ways of coping with difficult situations. We have since been weaving anger management techniques into our courses and are planning to invest in more training for our facilitation team.

We also ran a partnership project with Key 4 Life and a group of young male offenders which culminated in the young men writing and performing original lyrics and music for a series of hard hitting, life-themed tracks with a positive message. Island Records played a key part in the production and distribution of the work.

Huge thanks and gratitude to our two core funders, the Frederick Mulder Foundation, and Lady Edwina Grosvenor for their continued support over this financial year – without which this crucial work could not happen.

## 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 2015 to 2016, approximately 60 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: New Leaves



***“We needed it to reconnect our bond”*** writes one father, recently released from prison.

This year we launched a new initiative with HMP Parc. New Leaves offers fathers a unique chance to get back to nature and reconnect with their family after spending time in prison.

Dads, partners and children are invited to join Write to Freedom staff for a magical minibreak where myth comes alive.

Sharing food and stories around the fire, gazing at the stars and a 'digital detox' is all part of the re-bonding experience.

Research shows that the children of prisoners are significantly more likely to suffer from mental health problems, do poorly at school, engage in antisocial behaviour and to go on to offend themselves.

Research also states that fathers who experience positive family relationships are far less likely to reoffend in the future.

We are working with HMP Parc's Family Interventions Unit and renowned Invisible Walls Wales project, to help break the cycle of reoffending which is too frequently carried down across generations.

The residential weekends away offer precious time together for divided families to reconnect in the beautiful Welsh countryside. A Family Mentor from Parc explains

*“The majority of the families reside in inner-city estates where access to nature and the countryside is not easily available—especially with a lack of transport.”*

Storytelling, nature-based activities and creating an illustrated family storybook to document their special time together, lie at the heart of each course.

Families focus on the positive qualities of each parent and child, with each course culminating in a carefully held process in which family members receive praise and affirmations from other family members and W2F facilitators. This was often a very powerful and healing process for those taking part: *“It makes you realise I ain’t*

*such a bad person. You think about the impact on your family and that. You feel a bit ashamed like. And that’s going through your mind. I went up there [to New Leaves] and that all disappeared”*

Early evaluation suggests that New Leaves courses are an inspiring tool for helping to heal the divisions that arise as a result of parental imprisonment.

New Leaves is a pilot partnership project between Write to Freedom and HMP Parc, funded by the Worshipful Company of Weavers.



***“I remember Chloe in year 3 and 4 and we were quite worried about her, she seemed vulnerable, quite teary and used to just seem sad. This year she has really blossomed, really come out of herself... I remember when dad came out and she went away on a camping trip with him [New Leaves]. She brought her book in to show me and she was so proud. She loved it”*** Participant’s teacher

## Project Snapshot: Summer Arts, Plymouth YOT



**“I feel more confident, it opened my eyes to my potential and let me let go of what was holding me back”**

*Bradley, 16*

We ran two courses for young people aged between 15 and 17 during the 2015 summer holidays. This built on our existing partnership with the Youth Offending Team at Plymouth Youth Service. Five young men signed up for each course. All were at risk of, or convicted of, committing a crime.

Each session was held mainly outdoors, within Dartmoor National Park. Young people really enjoyed actively learning new skills in the outdoors, including archery and fire lighting, as well

as “*using my senses more*” and “*The way I learn from people*”.

They also learned about reflective writing as a tool for self-awareness and self-compassion. Most of these young men faced significant barriers around literacy and so the significance of this cannot be underestimated. An entry in a journal kept by one of the facilitators sums this up:

*“[Two participants] had conflict. [Another facilitator] dealt with it skilfully. I got them to channel*



*that anger into a writing piece, and we had to actually stop them writing to move onto the next task. They wrote some great pieces which they later shared around the fire as gifts."*

Participants were encouraged to be open, honest and share their thoughts. By the end of each course, the young men expressed learning around personal development and wanting to change.

This included *"listening and leaving things behind"*. Another person said [I've] *"matured. I've realised I zone-out a lot."* Another young man described learning about *"some of the targets to aim for [in life] and what to change."*

We asked participants what they wanted to change after taking part in the project. This ranged from *"Be more at peace with myself"* to *"The way I think – try to think before I've begun. [Take] notice [be more] aware."*

For one young man there was a very significant change *"I don't want to be involved in crime anymore."*

We also began to incorporate life-themed poetry into these courses, written specifically for this client group. Poems focussed on the challenges young men face in today's world and proved powerfully effective in bringing to the surface and supporting some of the key issues they face.



**"I won't forget a thing" Blake, 16**

## Project Snapshot: What lights your fire?



**“Staff were great and open with their feelings, so this helped me to share mine”**

*Dom, 18*

In the autumn of 2015, we worked with six young male offenders, aged between 15 and 18, on the theme of ‘What Lights Your Fire?’

At the start, the group discussed which areas of life they would like to focus on, and picked out anger as being a real issue for them.

*What Lights Your Fire?* encouraged participants to open up their worlds to the group, sharing experiences and recognising each other’s strengths, challenges and interests.

The course began with fortnightly

evening sessions held in a forest school area of a park in central Plymouth. As the nights gradually drew in, the group met for food around a campfire, providing an opportunity to talk about challenges in their lives in a relaxing and unpressured environment.

In the October half term, these sessions led on to a three-day Dartmoor residential. This experience challenged the young men to bond more deeply with each other, and to begin to enact some positive changes in their lives.

The fortnightly evening group continued to meet into early 2016, running as a drop in support group for those that needed it. The pull of a warm meal around a fire was another motivating factor for making the journey to the group sessions.

Our evaluation shows evidence for a growth in self-belief, creative expression and the ability to cope with negative thoughts and feelings. The key areas of impact were all around emotional literacy, in line with the initial aims of the project.

Spending enjoyable time in nature and having a trustworthy male role model were also of great value to participants

When asked what they would like to change in their lives following the course, two referred to “*anger*” and another said “*Just my whole attitude*”. For one, the course “*made me think about how I would handle different situations.*” One young man wrote: “*I have learned I can control my anger and use the skills I have learnt.*”

‘What Lights Your Fire?’ was part of our partnership work with the Youth Offending Team at Plymouth Youth Service.

**“I have learnt I can control my anger and use the skills I have learnt”**

*David, 16*



# Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 29th February 2016

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2016 £	2015 £
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>				
Donations and legacies	33,274	29,265	62,539	63,579
Other trading activities	280	-	280	257
Investments	41	-	41	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,595</b>	<b>29,265</b>	<b>62,860</b>	<b>63,882</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Charitable activities	(39,959)	(32,544)	(72,503)	(44,672)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(39,959)</b>	<b>(32,544)</b>	<b>(72,503)</b>	<b>(44,672)</b>
<b>Net income/ expenditure</b>	<b>(6,364)</b>	<b>(3,279)</b>	<b>(9,643)</b>	<b>19,210</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
Total funds brought forward	41,602	11,034	52,636	33,427
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>35,238</b>	<b>7,755</b>	<b>42,993</b>	<b>52,637</b>

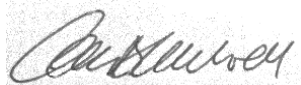
For the period ended 29 February 2016 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476,

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

These financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board and signed on its behalf by:



Ian Blackwell,  
Trustee/ Director

# Independent examiner's report for year ended 29th February 2016

## Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charitable company 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 you as trustees concerning any 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 my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006; and

- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of section 394 and 395 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities and in accordance Accounting and Reporting by Charities and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (the FRSSSE) (effective 1 January 2015)

have not been met, or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



## MAP Accountants & Business Advisors

2 Bridge Farm Offices  
Harberton  
Totnes  
Devon  
TQ9 7PP

## Balance Sheet as at 29th February 2016

	2016 £	2015 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible Assets	580	574
<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	280	11,250
Cash at bank and in hand	46,798	41,679
	<u>47,078</u>	<u>52,929</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within 1 year	(4,665)	(866)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<u>42,413</u>	<u>52,063</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	42,993	52,637
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>42,993</u>	<u>52,637</u>
<b>The Funds of the Charity</b>		
Restricted income funds	7,755	11,035
Unrestricted funds	35,238	41,602
<b>Total Funds</b>	<u>42,993</u>	<u>52,637</u>

## Income 2015/2016

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

Lady Edwina Grosvenor	£22,000
Worshipful Company of Weavers	£15,000
Plymouth City Council	£11,115
WEA	£2650
Norman Family Trust	£500

# 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 2015-2016:**

Ian Blackwell  
Ben Brangwyn (resigned 13.7.15)  
Clive Britten  
Nicola Glassbrook (appointed 17.2.16)  
Chris Lomas  
Amber Ponton  
Brett Sentence, Chair  
Laura Weedon (resigned 25.11.15)

**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.

## Contact

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

**[www.writetofreedom.org.uk](http://www.writetofreedom.org.uk)**

You can email us at:

**[info@writetofreedom.org.uk](mailto:info@writetofreedom.org.uk)**

or telephone:

**01803 473382**

Our office address is:

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