



# WoC Theatre Project

## Project Report

### September 2024 to July 2025

Prepared by Alesha Pryce, Project Manager

Weapon of Choice (WoC) is a creative youth theatre project that empowers young people through drama, poetry and performance.

Across 31 weeks, participants explored themes of communication, identity, love, and self-expression through games, writing exercises, devising, and rehearsals, culminating in a final performance.

The project provided a safe, supportive, and inspiring space for young people to grow in confidence, build skills, and form meaningful connections.

Many young people face challenges around self-expression, confidence, and communication, particularly in a world where their voices can feel overlooked. WoC Theatre Project supports these needs by offering an inclusive, creative environment where participants can share experiences, develop performance skills, and explore themes relevant to their lives.

The project addresses social isolation, lack of creative outlets, and barriers to confidence by providing structured opportunities for collaboration, leadership, and storytelling.

Through theatre, poetry, games, and collaborative devising, WoC gives participants tools to express themselves in new ways. The sessions encouraged vulnerability, resilience, and leadership - for example, when participants supported peers to take risks on stage.

Activities combined fun, confidence-building games with structured performance practice, leading to personal development and the creation of a final showcase.

The project nurtures creativity while equipping participants with transferable skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication, and emotional expression.





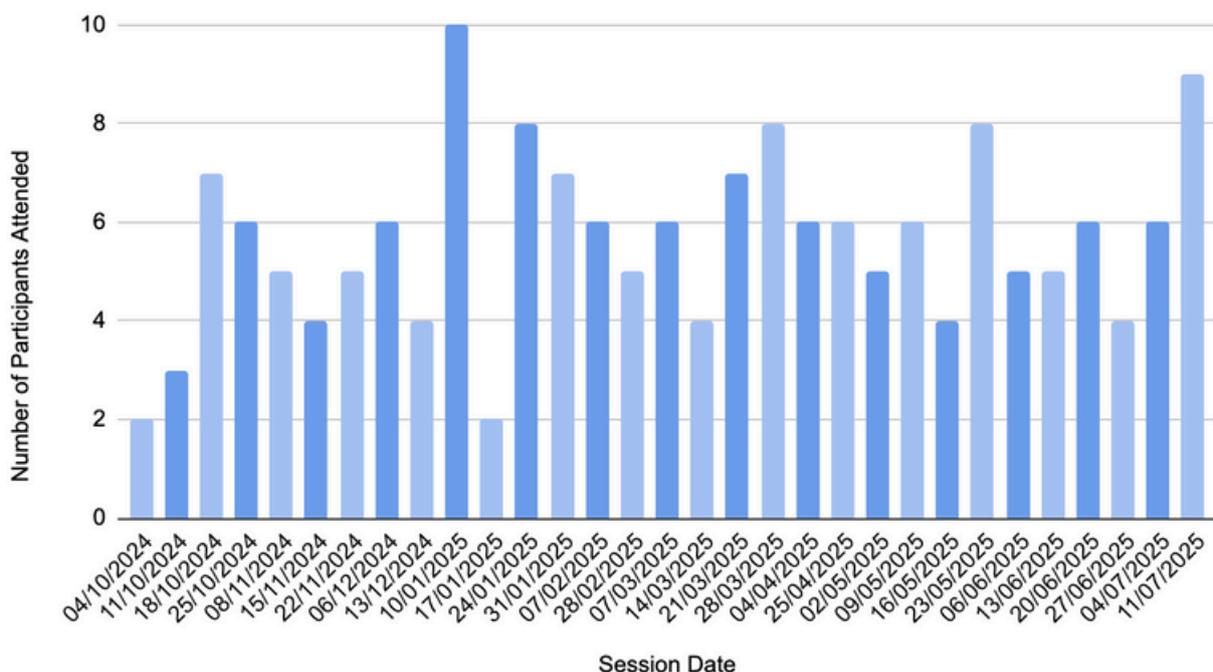
# Throughout the Year

## Sessions:

- We delivered **31 regular sessions**, once a week, during term time 04/10/24 to 11/07/25, on Fridays between 6pm and 8pm at Coram’s Fields Youth Centre.
- We provided sessions for a total of **12 participants**, with 83% of these participants attending 5 or more sessions.
- In all we delivered **350 participant hours** of workshops.

## Attendance:

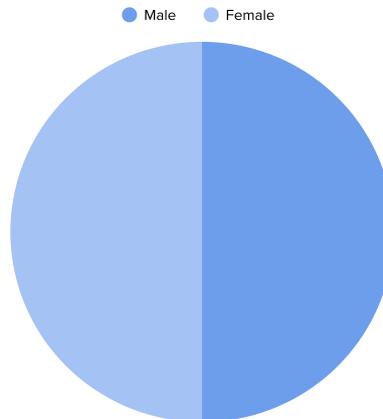
- Several long-term participants remained committed, showing significant growth, while some newer members gradually gained confidence and integrated into the group.
- Word of mouth, outreach, and peer networks played a key role in recruitment. New members reported feeling comfortable and welcomed from their first sessions.
- Most participants heard about Weapon of Choice through word of mouth and peer recommendations, with friends inviting each other to join.
- Others were recruited via Coram’s youth services and community networks, while some returned from previous years of the project.
- Outreach activities, such as theatre trips and visiting practitioners, also inspired interest and encouraged new members to get involved.
- Attendance varied due to school, work, and university commitments. Some participants were unable to commit consistently, which impacted rehearsal progress. Despite this, a strong core group remained throughout, ensuring the project’s continuity.



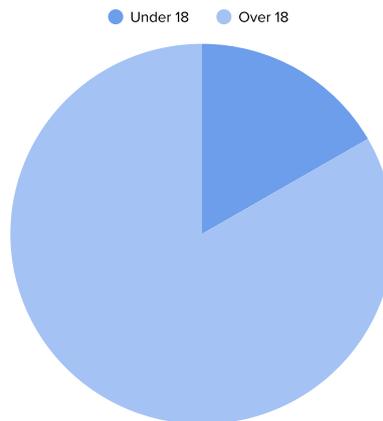
Participant Attendance September 2024 - July 2025

## Participant Demographic Breakdown

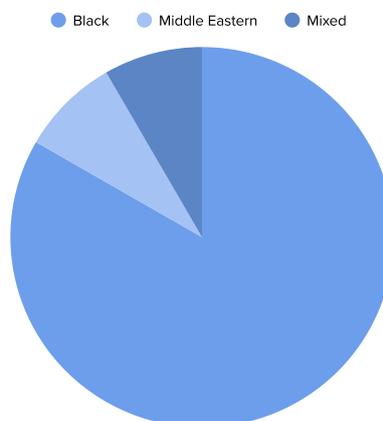
- The participants are equally male and female 50%. This reflects the inclusive, non-gender-specific nature of the project. It is open to all, with no gender bias, ensuring anyone can attend and benefit from the experience.



- 83% are over 18 due to many of them have been with us for several years and have grown up alongside the project, with some now in further education or employment. We have had relatively few new participants join recently.



- The ethnic breakdown of the group is 84% Black, 8% Middle Eastern and 8% Mixed.



## Project Overview

The initial weeks focused on reintroduction, trust-building, and creative play through theatre games and improvisations.

Participants explored vulnerability and stage presence while creating scenes around personal and imagined futures. A highlight was a theatre trip, which inspired participants to integrate poetry, writing, and performance into their own devising.

The next term deepened creative exploration, with poetry masterclasses, free writing, and devised scenes around achievements, communication, and identity.



Participants worked collaboratively to devise and perform scenes, often inspired by their lived experiences. Themes of self-image, family, and love emerged organically, leading to powerful personal reflections and dialogue..



The final term focused on refining and rehearsing the devised material. Participants explored character embodiment, blocking, and performance skills.

Despite fluctuations in attendance, participants demonstrated leadership by co-directing, supporting each other, and taking ownership of scenes. The project culminated in a final performance, showcasing the group's creativity, growth, and collective voice.

*"I loved [the performance] last year and now this year - I'd love for you guys to come in to do more workshops with our students at Croydon College."* - Audience member

Our trip to Camden People's Theatre was an inspiring and insightful experience. The performance, 'Why a Black Woman Will Never Be Prime Minister', demonstrated how poetry can be powerfully integrated into drama, offering participants new ways to think about writing and performance. The show explored important themes of race, class, and gender politics, sparking meaningful conversations among the group. It not only deepened their understanding of theatre as a medium for social commentary but also encouraged them to reflect on how they can use their own voices to address complex issues creatively.

Our performance at Brixton House was a great success, drawing a supportive friends-and-family audience and strong ticket sales. The production explored themes of communication and love, touching on gender roles, toxic masculinity, family dynamics, and self-love.

The actors truly came into their own, transforming heavy topics into something both light and educational. This was reflected in the Q&A, where audience members praised the group's growth from last year, noting a higher level of maturity, intellectual depth, and confidence. Many also highlighted the outstanding comedic timing, with subtle yet powerful messages. Overall, the performance showcased not only artistic development but also the closeness and commitment of the group's family-like dynamic.

*"Really impressed by the level of intellectual maturity in these scenes, a very subtle yet powerful message coming through, outstanding performances."* - Audience member



## External Partnerships, Funders & Supporters

### Masterclasses:

After attending ‘Why A Black Woman Will Never Be Prime Minister’ at Camden People’s Theatre, participants had the opportunity to take part in a masterclass with the show’s writer and director, Zakiyah. The session was hugely beneficial, as participants explored how poetry can be integrated with drama, experimented with different writing and performance styles, and gained practical tips on performing and navigating the theatre industry. Zakiyah also shared her own journey of creating her debut show, which participants found both encouraging and insightful.

The trip to see ‘Why A Black Woman Will Never Be Prime Minister’ was an inspiring experience that tackled themes of race, class, and gender politics, while also showing how poetry can be powerfully staged within a theatre context.

### Partnerships:

We continue to maintain strong partnerships with organisations such as New Diorama, where we held our technical rehearsals.



Our performances have also been filmed by Kids on the Green (KOTG) in collaboration with Stomping Pictures, last year for our first in-house show, and this year at Brixton House. KOTG brings their own young people into the collaboration, and in exchange for filming our work with Weapon of Choice, they gain valuable creative experience. This partnership has grown into a long-standing and mutually supportive relationship.

More recently, we have developed a partnership with Brixton House, facilitated through my own connections as Project Manager. Brixton House is committed to working with local communities and arts organisations supporting young people, and we are now written into their future programming plans. With our move into the local area, we are excited to deepen this partnership and establish longer-term collaboration.



### Funders:

WoC Theatre Project was generously funded by BNP Paribas, St Andrew Holborn and Arts Council England this year. The work would not be possible without this funding.



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Participant and partner feedback has been overwhelmingly positive:

*“Really inspiring and talented group.”* - Zakiyah, Masterclass Lead

*“Always love working with WoC, the energy is always vibrant.”* – KOTG

*“It’s refreshing to see a group of performers who genuinely get along and want the best for each other. The banter and laughter—you can see the love and everyone genuinely connecting. It’s really nice to see and be part of, my heart is warm.”* - Technician, Brixton House



Technical Rehearsal at New Diorama June 2024

## External Partnerships, Funders & Supporters Continued

### Taster Sessions & Participant Referrals:

Most participants first heard about Weapon of Choice through word of mouth and peer recommendations, with friends encouraging each other to join and gradually getting involved.

Others were introduced via Coram's Fields youth services and community networks, including referrals from youth workers or social programmes. Some participants were returning members from previous years, which helped maintain a core group and pass on the project's culture to newcomers.

Outreach activities, such as theatre trips also inspired interest and motivated new participants to join after seeing the project in action.

Attendance fluctuated at times due to school, university, and work commitments, as well as venue closures, but the project maintained strong engagement through flexible activities, supportive peer networks, and a welcoming, inclusive environment. These factors combined to ensure that participants remained motivated, connected, and invested in the project, even if their attendance varied.

### Taster Sessions:

This year, there were no taster sessions as the focus remained on developing the show. Last year, both staff and participants felt pressure and anxiety balancing taster sessions with the show's creation, given the heavier workload and commitments. To take a more organic approach, and following the Project Director's request, we decided not to prioritise school performances during this period. However, recruitment, which usually takes place through taster sessions, was also impacted as schools did not respond in time, and rehearsals soon took priority.

Moving forward, a stronger model would be to workshop the show throughout the year. This would involve ongoing Research and Development with participants and schools, much like a Theatre in Education model.

With feedback and creative input from students from local schools, the final performance could emerge from regular bi-monthly meet-ups, weekly sessions and the school taster sessions. This approach would not only enrich the creative process but also strengthen connections with local schools and local organisations, build wider audiences, and create more opportunities for engagement.



## Evaluation

We examined the impact of the project on this year's participants using a mixture of self reported reflections from the participants, both written and verbal, session reports from the Project Director, as well as observations from the sessions, using the Pan project objectives to measure the success of the project which are:

- Improved confidence
- Improved communication/expression skills
- Increased engagement in creative activities

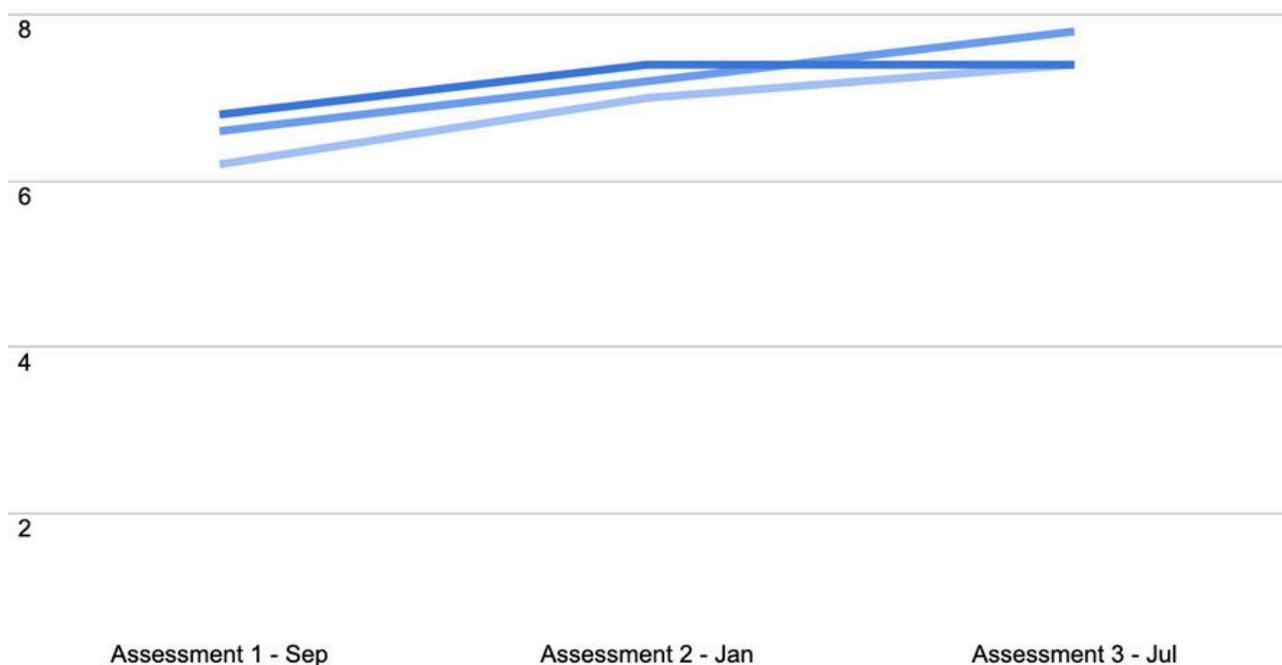
A baseline assessment is taken of each individual participant when they first attend the project, with further assessments taking place each month. At the end of each term, participants are asked for their feedback and to share their experiences of the project. Case studies for a few participants are also written at the end of the project.

The variety of evaluation methods allows the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The weekly staff monitoring allows the team to see small changes in an individual participant's progress, as well as identifying any additional needs a participant might have. Participants have a wide range of life-experiences, so monitoring exercises focus on observing the change in participant progress against outcomes, rather than observing the overall level. The individual case studies allow a focus on the journey of each participant. Direct feedback from the participants allows us to fully cater to their needs and for our project goals to be led by them.

There are some limitations to our evaluation methods, including written and spoken language barriers, experiences of trauma resulting in a loss of agency in participants expressing their feelings and participants responding to questions with what they 'think you want to hear'. The goal is that the variety of methods mitigates these limitations as much as is possible.

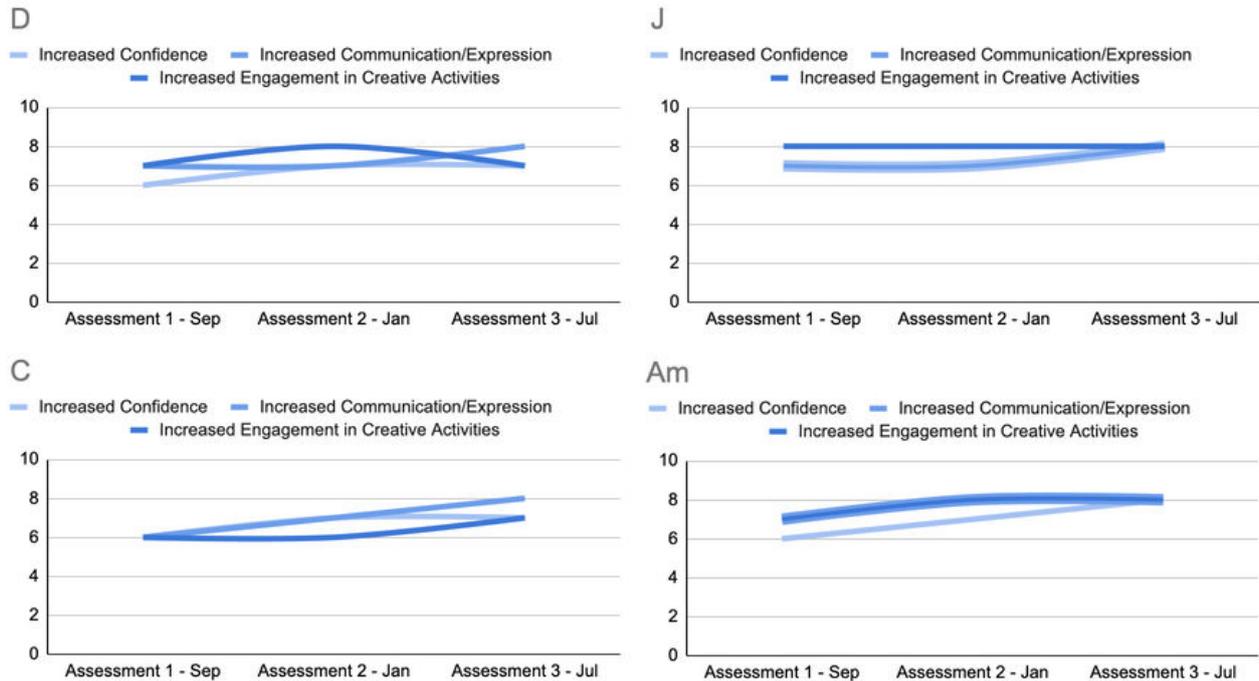
Below is a graph showing the average progress of all of the participants across the year. There was noticeable improvement across the year for all three categories that we measure.

— Increased Confidence    — Increased Communication/  
— Increased Engagement in Creative Activities



## Individual Participant Evaluations

Below is a sample of individual participant growth in our key areas across the year.



All participants increased in all three areas across the year.

## Key Words

From the evaluations run across the year, the following key words and themes have emerged as the most prevalent, and give a snapshot towards the impact of the projects on the participants.

**fun**  
**inspiring**  
**supportive**  
**representation**  
**CREATIVE**  
**expressive**  
**family**

## Key Outcomes

Participants showed clear progress in communication, self-expression, and confidence. They experimented with poetry, drama, and improvisation, gaining skills transferable to education, work, and personal life. Friendships were formed, teamwork strengthened, and participants showed resilience in navigating challenges such as stage fright or absences.

It's important that we also nurture the participant's wants from our sessions as well as focusing on the key objectives. However, with feedback from the participants, it is clear that there has been good growth within Pan's key objectives, as shown below.

### Improved Confidence: Participant feedback

#### Participant Feedback/Observations:

- Two new participants in Week 3 *"felt very comfortable in the space to participate and perform"* on their first day.
- In Week 4, Am\* encouraged S\* by saying *"if you do it then I'll do it with you"* which helped S\* overcome shyness - showing peer support and growing confidence.
- By Week 10, S\* *"has really come out of his shell and has become a real team player, bringing a lot of positive energy into the space."*
- Do\*, who was once quiet, *"came out of her shell and participated in the whole session without any prompting."*
- M\* and Ac\* *"stood out due to their risk-taking in their scenes and extremely bold acting"* showing willingness to push themselves creatively.
- Participants increasingly took leadership roles, for example J\* and Am\* co-directing scenes and guiding others in rehearsal.

### Improved Communication/Expression: Participant feedback

- Participants demonstrated stronger communication and expression throughout the project. They shared honest and vulnerable poems about worries, joys, and personal experiences, which showcased their ability to articulate complex emotions.
- One participant, De\* reflected, *"I want people like me to know that it's OK the way you look"*, using performance as a tool for self-advocacy.
- Group scenes explored themes such as family relationships, cultural differences, and communication barriers, allowing participants to express themselves through dialogue and performance.
- Collaborative discussions also encouraged openness about difficult topics, including love and self-image, which participants transformed into devised theatre.

#### Participant Feedback/Observations:

- *"I want people like me to know that it's OK the way you look."*
- *"If you do it then I'll do it with you."* - One participant encouraging another
- Scenes exploring cultural differences, family communication, and expressing love demonstrated improved ability to articulate complex ideas through performance.

**The participants used the following words to describe WoC Theatre Project; "Fun, inspiring, supportive, creative, expressive, family."**

## Increased Engagement in Creative Activities: Participant feedback

Participants became more involved in creative tasks, showing enthusiasm, imagination, and initiative in games, improvisation, and facilitation activities.

### Participant Feedback/Observations:

- Participants reported feeling inspired after the theatre trip and Zakiyyah's poetry masterclass.
- S\*, once shy, became an active team player bringing "*a lot of positive energy into the space*".
- After the theatre trip, participants said "*it's so easy, fun and creative to incorporate poetry, writing, acting and performance*" and shared that they felt inspired by the show and excited to build on their own work.
- During the poetry session, participants "*shared their poems when they put it all together, they were honest and vulnerable, some were funny, deep, thought-provoking, all very creative*".
- One participant reflected: "*I didn't think I could write like this, it just flowed*", showing surprise at their own creative capacity.
- Do\* "*came out of her shell and participated in the whole session without any prompting*", showing greater willingness to take part in creative games and acting.
- S\*, initially shy, "*has really come out of his shell and has become a real team player, he has brought a lot of positive energy into the space.*"
- Participants "*expressed how easy and fun it is to link poetry, writing, acting, and performance*", which demonstrates their growing confidence and enjoyment in creative expression.

### We also asked the participants what they would like to do at WoC Theatre Project in the future, and they said the following:

- Participants expressed interest in continuing to explore poetry and devising.
- They want future projects to incorporate more live performance, writing, and professional artist-led workshops.
- They are keen to deepen themes such as communication, love, identity, and self-expression.
- Participants would like to "*to expand on our poems and potentially use them for the show*".
- Participants want more opportunities to combine "*poetry, writing, acting and performance*" as they found this creative mix fun and inspiring.
- To continue working with professional artists and writers like Zakiyyah, who they found motivating and impactful.



## Artist Facilitators

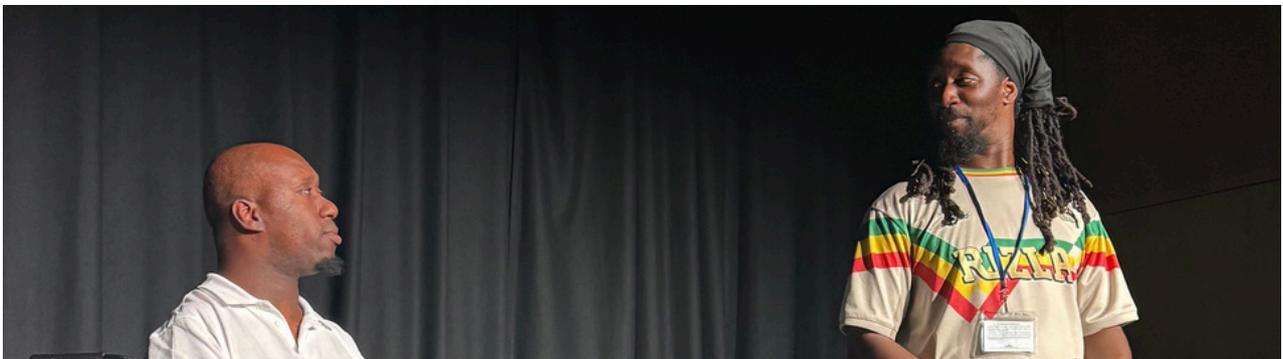


### **Ehireme Omoaka** – Project Director

Ehireme Omoaka is the Project Director of the Weapon of Choice Theatre Project, the after school theatre group, and the producer of Pan Talks: Poetry Night.

A former participant of WoC, he went on to become a facilitator and now directs one of the WoC projects, bringing his lived experience and passion full circle.

Alongside WoC, Ehireme works with Poetic Unity, is a freelance facilitator, and the published author of 'Points of Contact', a poetry collection exploring themes of family, fatherhood, nature, the Black experience, and youth identity. A performance poet and storyteller at heart, he uses his craft in creative writing and spoken word to empower young people, helping to fill the gaps he once faced himself.



### **Bruno Correia** – Project Director

Bruno Correia is an actor, musician, and facilitator, and the Project Director for Weapon of Choice's work in alternative provision.

A former participant turned facilitator, he now leads the Beachcroft Residencies and has over five years' experience delivering projects in pupil referral units such as Beachcroft AP Academy and Camden Centre for Learning.

Bruno also helped pioneer WoC's first school residencies, working across schools including Haverstock, Hampstead, and Acland Burghley.

Passionate about empowering excluded young people, he combines artistic excellence with youth work values, training young leaders and ensuring all voices are heard.



### **Brie-Morgan Appleton** – Peer Facilitator

Brie-Morgan Appleton is a facilitator, actress, youth worker, and teaching assistant.

She first connected with Pan after seeing Weapon of Choice perform at her school, joining through a taster session.

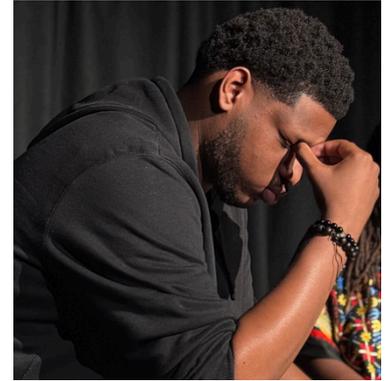
From there, she became a peer facilitator, and has since grown into a facilitator for both WoC and Fortune projects. Drawing on her own journey from participant to leader, Brie brings relatability, creativity, and commitment to supporting young people through her work.

## Case Studies

The following are a few case studies of participants, mapping their progress across the year.

Am\* consistently demonstrated strong leadership and a supportive approach to his peers, often encouraging others to step out of their comfort zones and take creative risks in performance.

He took initiative in co-directing scenes, showing responsibility and confidence in shaping the group's creative process. Am\*'s contributions went beyond his own performance, as he actively listened to others' ideas, offered constructive feedback, and fostered a collaborative atmosphere. Over the course of the project, his growth in leadership, communication, and teamwork was evident, reflecting both his artistic development and his ability to inspire and guide those around him.



De\* used the project as a platform to explore deeply personal themes around body image, self-acceptance, and identity. Through poetry and performance, she courageously articulated her experiences with scars and how they affect her self-perception, using her voice to challenge societal expectations and norms around appearance. She shared that in public, she often feels stared at because of her scars, acknowledging that while everyone is different, her appearance is not seen as 'the norm'.

De\* expressed a strong desire to inspire others, stating, *"I want people like me to know that it's OK the way you look."* Her journey reflects the project's success in providing a safe and supportive space for authentic self-expression, empowerment, and the development of confidence.

Do\* initially began attending the sessions because her sister was looking after her, and at first she was very hesitant to engage. She often appeared cautious and reserved, particularly during the drama games and activities, which can sometimes make participants feel exposed or vulnerable.

In the early weeks, it was clear that she needed encouragement and reassurance to even attempt joining in, as her fear of 'being seen' was a significant barrier.

Over time, however, Do\*'s confidence has grown steadily. The safe, supportive environment created by the group, alongside the playful and collaborative nature of the activities, allowed her to build trust in both the facilitators and her peers. What once felt overwhelming, gradually became manageable.

Recently, she has started participating in games and exercises without any prompting, showing a willingness to step outside her comfort zone. This shift is especially meaningful because it demonstrates not only her increased confidence but also her sense of belonging within the group.

Do\*'s journey highlights the importance of patience and consistency in creative programmes. Her progression from reluctance to self-motivation is a powerful example of how drama and play can build resilience, self-expression, and social confidence. It also reflects the project's wider impact in creating spaces where young people can take risks, feel supported, and grow at their own pace.



## Conclusion

Over 31 weeks, Weapon of Choice Theatre Project provided a dynamic, inclusive, and supportive creative space where young people explored theatre, poetry, and performance. Sessions combined games, improvisation, writing exercises, masterclasses, and rehearsals, allowing participants to experiment with self-expression in a safe environment. The project encouraged risk-taking, collaboration, and personal reflection, helping participants develop confidence, creativity, and communication skills. All of these elements culminated in a compelling final performance that showcased the group's collective growth, artistry, and unique voices.

Participants made significant progress in self-expression, confidence, resilience, and leadership. Shy or hesitant individuals found their voice and actively engaged in performances, while others developed boldness and risk-taking in acting and creative tasks. Many participants enhanced their writing, poetry, and performance skills, translating personal experiences into devised theatre. Friendships deepened, peer support strengthened, and participants demonstrated increased collaboration, empathy, and sense of belonging, reflecting the positive social and emotional impact of the project.

Next year, the project will build on these successes by continuing to integrate poetry, devised theatre, and collaborative performance work. Plans include expanding professional artist collaborations to inspire creativity and provide mentorship, alongside consistent rehearsal schedules to support more polished final productions. Emphasis will be placed on enabling participants to further explore personal stories, experiment with new techniques, and take creative leadership within the group.

Next year, the project aims to strengthen engagement, continuity, and the overall impact of our work. To address attendance challenges, we will establish clearer commitment agreements while maintaining flexibility for participants balancing work or study. Recruitment and outreach will be enhanced to attract new participants, increase diversity within the group, and ensure fresh perspectives.

We plan to reintroduce and expand taster sessions, potentially running them bi-weekly or monthly at local schools. These sessions will serve as both recruitment opportunities and research/development spaces to collaboratively devise performances with students. Outside of school settings, weekly sessions will continue to focus on devising work, informed by participants' insights and creative input.

Larger scale performances will be scheduled to showcase participants' voices to wider audiences, offering opportunities for recognition, creative growth, and public performance experience. Partnerships with local organisations will be explored to establish long-term collaborations and further embed the project within the community. Having our own dedicated space will allow greater ownership, creative freedom, and consistent programming, even if it may reduce some referral-based recruitment which we had at Coram's Fields Youth Club, the aim would be to expand to other organisations for referrals in Lambeth and Southwark.

We look forward to another year of WoC Theatre Project and the joy and development it can bring to our participants.

