

# Write to Freedom

Your Life • Your Story • Your Choice



## INTO THE WILD – WITH PENS! EVALUATION REPORT



### Spring 2015

Delivered in partnership with Plymouth Youth Service

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The Gibbons  
Family Trust 

 The Norman Family  
Charitable Trust

Write to Freedom supports people in changing their lives through mentoring, self-empowerment, wilderness experiences and the power of personal stories.

## Into the Wild

Write to Freedom with Plymouth Youth Offending Service

### Background

The Into the Wild project was a joint piece of work between Write to Freedom and Plymouth Youth Service. The main project was set up and referrals were initially sought from within the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and then from wider youth provision within Plymouth. Initially four young people were identified for the project: three from within YOS and one from a specialist support group for individuals with Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Three of the young people maintained attendance with one member of the group being asked to leave after unacceptable behaviour during the Coastal Day.

### “Tribe Warrior”

A five day course was created and facilitated by Write to Freedom staff, using a range of activities centred on the Tribe Warrior text:

“Tribe Warrior...was inspired by our work with young men, people in recovery from addiction and the W2F staff’s hard won freedom through their own personal journeys. The beauty of a work of fiction used as a teaching tool is that it invites the reader and listener to enter the story at a level they are comfortable with.”

<http://writetofreedom.org.uk/wp/tribe-warrior/>

The course was planned and built around activities which invite the young participants to become immersed within the Tribe Warrior narrative and reflect upon their own life circumstances within the context of the story.

Tribe Warrior



The Into the Wild Course consisted of five days set in the wilderness, mainly in woodland with one day on the beach. The aim of the course was to enable perspective and behaviour change of the individual participants through the use of story and connection to nature.

The following outline gives a flavour of each day's activities. All five days also contained protected time for self-reflection and personal sharing within the safety of the group.

Day 1 Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of all participants</li> <li>• Fire Building</li> <li>• Tribe Warrior introduction and reading</li> <li>• Outdoor walk and tracking</li> <li>• Past writing exercise and letting go</li> </ul>
Day 2 Coastal Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recap, discussion and more from Tribe Warrior</li> <li>• Fire Building</li> <li>• Writing Exercises</li> <li>• Water Activity</li> </ul>
Day 3 Nature Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recap, discussion and more from Tribe Warrior</li> <li>• Fire building</li> <li>• Blind walk</li> <li>• Strengths writing exercise</li> <li>• Foraging</li> </ul>
Day 4 Becoming the Hunter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire building</li> <li>• Hunting and community stories</li> <li>• Archery</li> <li>• Woodland hunt</li> </ul>
Day 5 Final Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recap, discussion and more from Tribe Warrior</li> <li>• Fire building</li> <li>• Shelter building</li> <li>• Sword out of the River</li> <li>• Hero's Chair</li> <li>• Evaluation and mentoring offer</li> </ul>

## Project evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation forms were completed with all young people who attended the course as well as by both members of YOS staff and Write to Freedom facilitators.

We also used *Outcomes Stars*, a visual tool for supporting and measuring positive change when working with people, to document participants' growth over the course. An eight-point Outcomes Star was created and completed with each young person three times; once at the beginning, at mid-point of the course and on the final day.

The eight outcome areas were selected by Write to Freedom through experience of course delivery and areas of impact the course has been shown to offer to participants. Each star was completed during a one to one session with each young person. It included eight questions, each to be scored on a scale of one to ten, with one signifying the lowest score in that area and ten being the highest. The eight questions asked of each participant were:

1. How healthy is your risk taking behaviour?
2. How well do you resolve conflicts?
3. How well can you set goals and achieve them?
4. Are you able to work well within a team?
5. How well do you feel you can achieve your aspirations?
6. How strong is your personal connection with nature?
7. How well do you feel you can overcome problems with the resources you have?
8. Are you able to express yourself effectively and creatively?

The collated data from each of these outcomes stars is shared below:



Young person 2 was unable to attend the first day of the programme but was present for the remaining four. Because of this only the middle and end stars are completed.



### End of course evaluation forms

Evaluation forms were completed with all young people who attended the course on a one to one basis to allow any explanation of the process, if this was needed. YOS staff and Write to Freedom facilitators also completed forms.

A summary of the responses to each question is shown below. Those in italics are from the three young people. Others are responses from Write to Freedom and YOS staff.

**1. What activity did you most enjoy?**

- *Hunting through the woods*
- *Archery (x2)*
- Blindfolded duel – For me it was a bit of fun but also a sense of awareness to what goes on around me

**2. Were there any activities you did not enjoy?**

- *The beach*

**3. When you started how did you feel about spending time in nature**

on a scale of 1(not interested) -10 (excited))

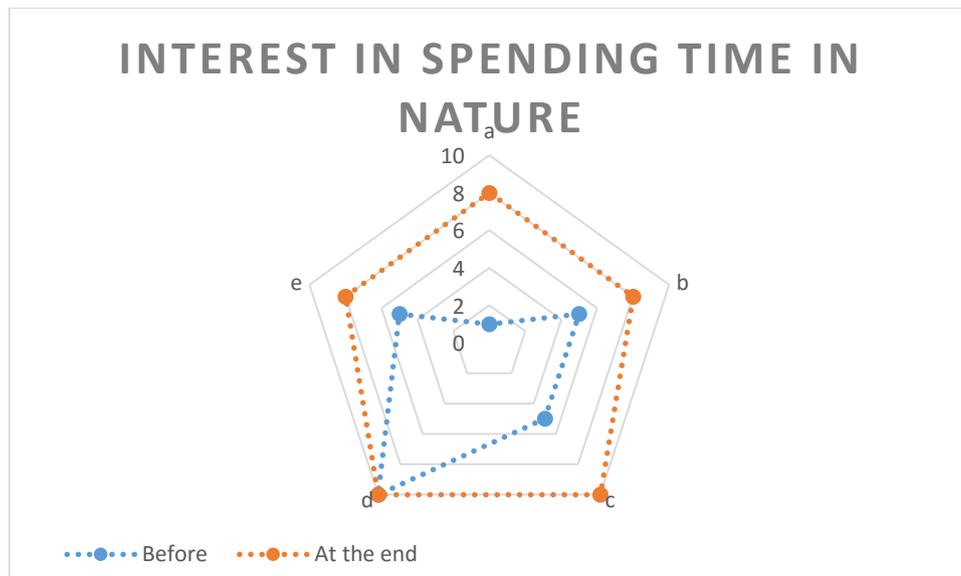
- *I wasn't too bothered*  
[And see the graph below]

**4. How do you feel about spending time in nature now?**

on a scale of 1(not interested) -10 (excited))

- *Having done this has opened me up to appreciate what we have around us.*  
[And see the graph below]

The change between Questions 3 and 4 is mapped on the graph below:



**5. Have you learnt anything or done anything new during your time with the project?**

- *How to light a fire*
- *To hunt with a [bow]*
- *Yes I have learnt a lot which is changing my life for the better*
- *Courage*
- *I have a new and open vision to life*
- *This course has made me think about my own direction in life and what/how I'm going to achieve it*

**6. Are there any activities you would have liked to have tried during the project?**

- *More archery ( x2)*
- *Paint balling*

**7. Were any thoughts or feeling evoked during the sessions?**

- *Happy*
- *Going to miss it when it ends*
- *Space to think and feel*
- *Many – I have been thinking about my own life, things that have happened in my past and how I need to let certain things go.*

**8. If you were to describe the project to a friend in a couple of words or a short sentence, what would you say?**

- *Quirky*
- *Educational*
- *An experience*
- *It's a great way to get out for a bit with some decent people*
- *Brilliant*
- *Totally worth it*

- I would probably suggest it is about thinking of where you are and how different techniques and thought process along with guidance can help you change certain aspects.
- A sense of place and a sense of self

**9. How did you find the pace of the sessions?**

Too Fast	Just Right	Too slow
0	5	0

**10. Is there anything about the five sessions you would change?**

- *Not at all*
- *No (x2)*
- *No it all flowed*

**11. Do you think the project holds relevance to your life?**

- *Yes, because I've always thought there ain't no way out of the gang and the life style I was living but this course has showed me there is a way out and they have helped me out.*
- *Think before I DO*
- *Yes I am a freak of nature*
- *All was relevant*
- *Completely, like I have already said it has made me think about my past and now I feel more confident in my decisions for the future*

**12. Do you have any additional comments or feelings about the project or Write to Freedom?**

- *Don't change a thing*
- *Had a good time*
- *Thank you*

**Practicalities**

Participants were invited to an introductory session held in Plymouth two days before the start of the course. This was to familiarise the young people with Write to Freedom and the ethos of the course, and to allay any fears and concerns the young people may have been holding. The location was a green space in Plymouth to offer some familiarity and for ease of access to the young people. None of the identified participants attended this introductory session.

Four participants engaged very successfully with the course nonetheless, but it may be that the unacceptable behaviour shown by one participant could have been avoided if this introductory session had gone ahead.

Five days is a significant commitment for young people in this client group and a couple of the young people lacked the self-motivation to attend the course regularly. A YOS staff

member transported all the young people to and from the venue each day, and this had the added benefit that they were able to offer encouragement on a couple of the mornings.

## Summary

The aim of the course was to enable perspective and behaviour change of the individual participants through the use of story and connection to nature.

The Outcome Stars indicate that all four of the participants experienced development over a number of the outcome areas with significant positive change in

conflict resolution,  
personal connection with nature,  
self-expression,  
goal setting,  
problem solving.

Where outcome areas show no marked improvement over the course, these areas were maintained at the same high level of self-evaluation as at the start.

Spring woodland - the setting for much of the course - provided a naturally held and sheltered environment which complemented the work of the facilitators.

Both the Outcomes Stars and participants' comments show a journey of opening up to new and positive perspectives and behaviours. In their own words:

*Having done this has opened me up to appreciate what [nature] we have around us.*

*Yes I have learnt a lot which is changing my life for the better.*

*[I have learnt] Courage*

*Think before I DO.*

*Brilliant.*

*I've always thought there ain't no way out of the gang and the life style I was living but this course has showed me there is a way out and they have helped me out.*

*I have a new and open vision to life.*

*Totally worth it.*

