

Appendix 1

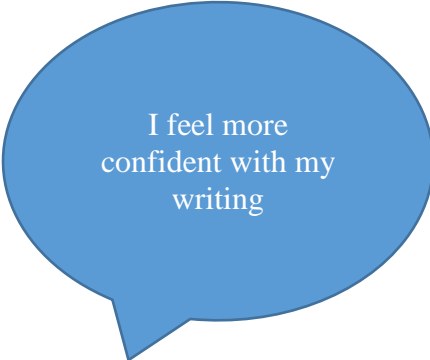
Arvon Writers' Bloc 1-5 August 2016

Six Brent LAC attended Writers' Bloc, a five day course for young writers that took place at the Ted Hughes Arvon Centre, Yorkshire. They were part of a group of 12, the other six were members of Harrow Virtual School for LAC. Four of our pupils were in Year 10(2015-16) and two in Year 9. The group was accompanied by two staff members each from Brent and Harrow Virtual Schools. There were two tutors, both experienced in leading workshops with a wide range of participants.

The students mostly engaged willingly in the writing sessions and particularly liked writing about personal experiences in a group where all were in Care. Each writer had an individual tutorial session with both tutors. There were notable social and therapeutic benefits - the two groups assimilated into one bigger group, relationships were built and fun was had. We arranged two afternoon trips, the first to Heptonstall Village with a visit to Sylvia Plath's grave where one of the tutors read 'Lady Lazarus' at the graveside, a moving experience for most. Our second visit was to Hebden Bridge where the group enjoyed exploring the quaint streets and market.

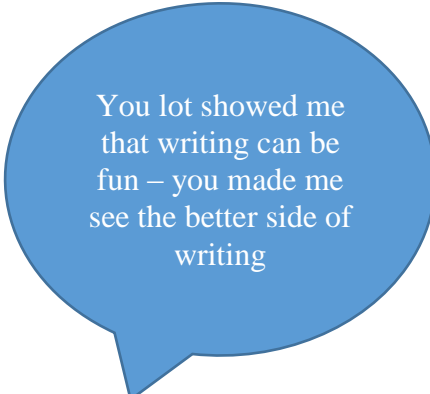
The following are the students' summing up of their experience of writing during the week:-

S...



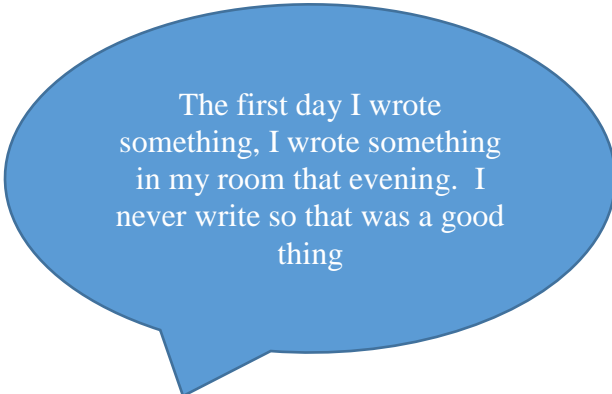
I feel more confident with my writing

J...



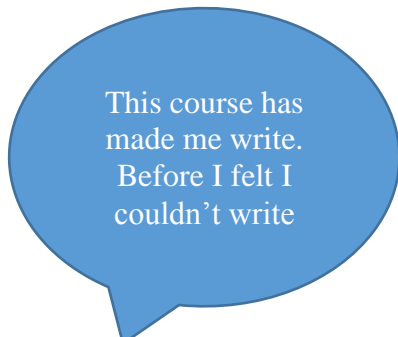
You lot showed me that writing can be fun – you made me see the better side of writing

Z...



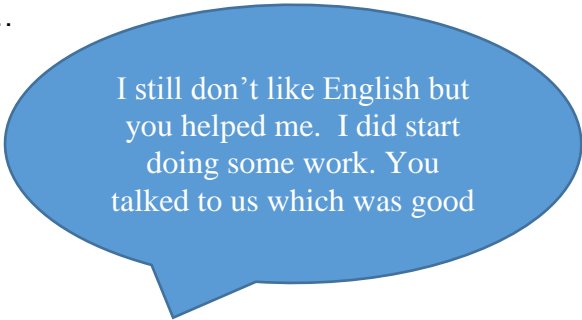
The first day I wrote something, I wrote something in my room that evening. I never write so that was a good thing

S...



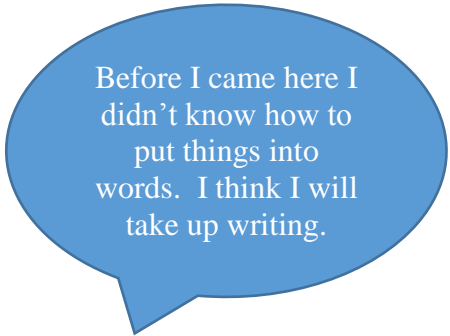
This course has made me write. Before I felt I couldn't write

H...



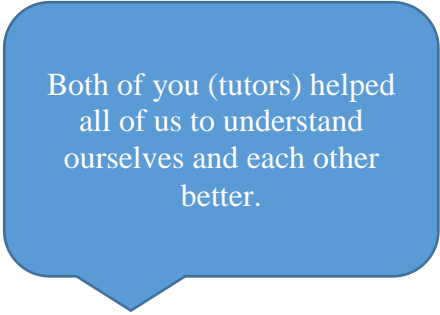
I still don't like English but you helped me. I did start doing some work. You talked to us which was good

K...



Before I came here I didn't know how to put things into words. I think I will take up writing.

And the final word came from K



Both of you (tutors) helped all of us to understand ourselves and each other better.

Evaluation: overall the Arvon week was a worthwhile and enriching experience for students, leaders and tutors. The core objective which was to help participants to improve their writing skills was achieved in that, as students reported, barriers to writing were broken down and students felt empowered to record their thoughts in written form.

On reflection, a discussion with tutors at the beginning of the week to discuss possible writing topics would be helpful as some exercises were more successful than others. Also there was too much unstructured time in the afternoons and students were bored. This could be dealt with in the future by planning a mid-week visit to a place of interest in the general area.

It is to be hoped that our young people will use the knowledge and skills acquired in their writing in school and beyond.

**Margaret Curtin and Emma Gavin
Brent Virtual School
September 2016.**