



## **‘Storysharing for All’ project, 2015-18.**

### **FINAL REPORT.**

Jane Harwood, project leader.

*Background to the programme.*

Storysharing is a speaking and listening based intervention using personal narrative to build communication skills and confidence for young people (and adults) who have communication support needs.

The focus is on improved expressive and receptive language skills.

Storysharing for All builds on our previous three-year PHF funded project (“Storysharing in Schools”), during which Openstorytellers researched, developed and piloted Storysharing delivery in school and with families.

We began the Storysharing for All programme having proven that the Storysharing technique is an effective means to self-advocacy for young people with additional needs. Dr Karen Bunning, writing on Storysharing in Schools in the Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities (BILD) in 2016, reflects that *‘personal stories are relevant to all human beings regardless of language ability. The Storysharing intervention appears to have been a catalyst for change in the way personal stories were told. It has the potential to enable individuals with limited communication skills to join with supporters in the retelling of experiences and ideas.’*

At the close of Storysharing in Schools, Openstorytellers began to see increased enquiries about Storysharing, but did not have the trained staff, capacity, or resources to bring benefit to more children and young adults and the community at large.

Storysharing for All set out to build capacity within the organisation to develop and deliver effective and affordable training packages, work with wider communities, and influence policy and practice.

The programme would enable us to bring on three new members of the Storysharing team to a level where they could train others.

We were aware that there was a need for children with SEN to be confident with sharing their own stories and consequently, be ready to have a voice in their annual reviews, reflecting the requirements of the Care Act 2014 / SEND code of practice 2015 (*‘Local authorities **must** ensure that children.... are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.’*)

We aimed to close the programme with a costed, marketable package of training ready to deliver to a range of professionals working in SEN settings.

### **Overall Summary.**

- *Have we achieved what we set out to achieve with this project?*

Storysharing for All primarily aimed to build capacity for Openstorytellers through widening our reach - from pilot work in one local school, to a regional, and finally national presence; increasing our team of trained staff able to train others; and building an effective marketing plan for the resultant training packages.

Storysharing for All challenged us with a series of practical questions about the place of Storysharing in the development of Openstorytellers as a charity:

- Were our approaches relevant to professionals, robust and fit-for-purpose?
- Could we develop and deliver an effective series of training programmes, at practitioner and trainer level?
- Would the benefits these packages be clear, and would they be affordable?
- Could we bring the approach to 'the heart of everything the charity does?'
- Was the charity able to create an effective marketing strategy?
- Was the charity able to build connections and make a case for Storysharing in the future?

We had confidence that this was an achievable and clear vision. The charity in 2015 was small, fairly stable, and starting to grow; a progressive business plan was in place of which this work was a part. Our aims for developing a marketable Storysharing package were key to the business plan. We asked PHF to support the charity on its journey to become less reliant on grants and more financially independent.

Thanks to the previous PHF project, we were confident of our product. We were wanted to explore a potentially existing market for this product.

- *Outcomes achieved*

In our second stage application to PHF, the general proposed activities were listed as:

- Training of Openstorytellers staff
- Further development and production of Storysharing Resource Pack
- Roll out delivery of Storysharing
- Development of business plan and associated activities
- Delivery of one National Conference

Therefore, the aims of SfA were:

- To train 3 **new Openstorytellers staff** members to become Storysharing Level 2 trainers
- To refine the Storysharing **training programme** to become **affordable** to schools i.e. within a reasonable time-frame and cost effective
- To **practice the programme** with 4 new schools to **Level 1** (practitioner) with up to 3-4 students and 3-6 staff at each school
- To deliver the whole programme to **Level 2** (trainer) with one of the 4 schools i.e. trainer retained within the school
- **Research the market**
- Create a database of **prospective purchasers**

- Develop a **marketing strategy** for selling the Storysharing programme to schools
- Create **marketing materials** in print and on-line to promote the Storysharing Programme

This, plus outcomes and targets agreed with PHF, formed the basis of a three-year delivery action plan that was put together by the project leader (Jane Harwood), with initial support from the charity CEO.

It was envisaged that there would also be support from a communications officer; in effect, the project was in the main managed, developed and delivered by the project leader:

As the project has progressed, over the three years several unforeseen circumstances have necessitated changes. Openstorytellers have fully consulted with PHF about these changes and would like to note our appreciation of the flexible support and understanding we have received.

It is worth noting that these changes did not necessarily reflect risks identified in the initial risk assessment submission to PHF.

This report reflects on these changes, including altered targets / outcomes, and our adherence to the consistent underlying themes across the three years.

#### *Methods of assessment, monitoring and numbers*

##### *Assessments*

We have monitored and assessed the detailed project work throughout, through supervision and reviews, project delivery review meetings, one-to-one staff meetings, team meetings, partner / stakeholder meetings, and regular reports to our steering group, school management teams, charity trustees and the PHF.

Final assessments need to be seen in the wider context of the overall aims of the programme. The programme has been delivered on a '*plan, do, review*' basis over three years, with regular reflection on completed modules of work, and an enthusiasm to explore developments and suggestions for change.

This ethos has been very useful in working together with PHF to propose and implement the fundamental changes that became necessary to the delivery of Storysharing for All.

We've aimed to gather 'triangulated data' – that is to say, assessing and collecting impact evidence relating to three perspectives on the work:

1. those delivering it (against targets / expected outcomes); - *through documentation, individual self-reflection against aims, reportage, discussion, and development of the certified training programme*
2. beneficiaries (trainees, schools, parents, young people with SEN); - *through feedback, training, questionnaires, interviews both during and after interventions*
3. longitudinal reflection against overall programme aims – *through discussion, forward planning, impact tracking, and consultation with beneficiaries and stakeholders.*

This report seeks to present the narrative revealed by these data sources.

## Monitoring

Please note, some monitoring figures may not be strictly accurate, for reasons noted: all figures are guaranteed minimum.

focus	Actual numbers	notes	Target numbers
Project staff	5 (1 leader : 3 trained to Licensed Tutor Level; 1 trained to Licensed practitioner Level)	<i>Not including CEO (left in October 2016)</i>	3 (trained to Licensed Tutor Level)
Schools worked with: those who received interventions	6	<i>1 in BaNES, 2 in Wiltshire, 1 in Bristol, 2 in London</i>	6
Schools worked with: visits / presentations / training	3	<i>1 in Somerset, 1 in Wiltshire, 1 in London</i>	-
Community groups	2	<i>Both in Wiltshire</i>	2
Teaching staff involved in interventions	41	<i>Actual figure may be higher as some schools have 'floating' teaching assistants</i>	24 - 30
School staff attending training events	98	<i>Actual figure may be slightly higher</i>	200 (this included 150 projected delegates attending conference : please see revised targets)
Students involved in Storysharing in schools	97	<i>At least 12 students directly took stories to their annual reviews; we know this higher is higher but do not have exact numbers for all the children in all the schools across the programme.</i>	15 - 18
Young people in community group settings	15	<i>Plus 4 who attended but chose not to fully participate</i>	10 - 12
Staff in community group settings	10		Not specified
Peer mentors trained	1	<i>Unexpected outcome</i>	-

Attending storysharing circle: with LDs (all ages)	13	<i>Intergenerational</i>	-
Supporting staff attending Storysharing circle	11	<i>Openstorytellers, Three Ways School, adult services, volunteers</i>	-
Trainees to Licensed Practitioner status – in school	32	<i>Plus 3 more, who did not complete</i>	24 - 30
Trainees to Licensed Practitioner status – Openstorytellers	7	Unexpected outcome	-
Trainees to Licensed Tutor status – in schools	4	<i>1 in London, 3 in BaNES: plus 1 yet to complete</i>	2
Trainees to Licensed Tutor status – Openstorytellers	3	<i>Storysharing leaders</i>	3
Families reached	39 (directly)	<i>Undoubtedly a much higher number, through home 'school interactions and story gathering – not able to assess accurately</i>	10
Conferences / presentations	4	<i>PAMIS, Dundee; ASLTIP, London; Barnados regional conference, Dorset; IASSID 2018, Athens.</i>	-
Number of delegates at conferences / presentations	200	<i>Data not yet available for IASSID. Note this figure compensates for low numbers of school staff attending training: slightly different focus as some would be social care staff / SLTs</i>	0
Delegates at final 'celebration' gathering	20	<i>Replacing conference</i>	-

Publications associated with programme / Storysharing during the period of the programme	5	<i>Not a stated outcome</i>	-
Parent / carer / family events attended	6 (events)	<i>Wilts, Bristol, Somerset</i>	-

*Summary of project:*

*YEAR ONE. 2015 - 2016*

We began with staff recruitment, convening of a steering group, and the creation of a detailed activity schedule, listing and delegation of tasks.

On reflection, we recognised that targets and activities in year one were 'relatively low risk' and that we had exceeded our targets for this first phase. We also noted that targets for the rest of the project were 'more ambitious.'

<i>Targets year one</i>	<i>Outcomes year one</i>	<i>Reflections from the end of the project - what we achieved</i>
<u>Outcome 1</u> Our organisation has greater capacity in terms of trained staff to deliver Storysharing to a wider audience.	<u>Target 1</u> 3 new staff members are trained to Level 1 by end of year one	Three Storysharing trainees (Leah Harwood, Adam Varney, and Lara Ellender) were interviewed, recruited, and completed a training programme developed and delivered by Storysharing project leader Jane Harwood. The time allotted to this training phase, including much school-based experience, allowed them to gain hands-on understanding and the deeper knowledge that would be beneficial across the course of the project.

<p><u>Outcome 2</u> Organisation has support and commitment from 6 partners for the duration of the project</p>	<p><u>Target 2</u> 6 partners (5 schools and 1 youth group) are committed to the project, have scheduled workshops, training, Inset days and evaluation</p>	<p>At this stage we were developing these partnerships. Letters of agreement with the Bridge School and Warmley Park School were being acted on. Three Ways School have been a long-term committed partner and supporter of our work. The CEO was talking to youth groups and other schools; some partnerships evolved, others did not. This was due to either: 1) our offers not fitting with identified priorities; 2) lack of capacity in organisations to host the programme.</p>
<p><u>Outcome 3</u> Our organisation will have improved capacity due to an improved Storysharing Resource and Training Pack</p>	<p><u>Target 3</u> The Resource and Training Pack will be 45% complete – awaiting final trail with new audiences.</p>	<p>The Storysharing leaders' initial training pack has subsequently been of use in refining further training resources. It constitutes a foundation resource on which all the training packs have been developed. At this stage of the programme, the project leader, CEO and charity trustees were scoping out the viable logistics of a new 'cascaded' training model. We produced a workable, tested version of 'Level One' training, which later became renamed as 'Licensed Practitioner'.</p>

The CEO worked on the programme 0.5 days a week, involving himself in the recruitment of the trainee leaders, though not directly with the training programme or delivery once it was underway. He made budget revisions in year one, as per our first interim report. He noted an underspend due to an incremental salary scale for trainee Storysharing leaders, and changes to the budgets across the programme period accordingly. There was also discussion about match funding that had not been secured. This was agreed with PHF.

#### YEAR TWO 2016 -2017

##### *Challenge for the charity.*

The second year was a challenging time for the charity and consequently, the programme. During this period Openstorytellers underwent major re-organisation.

Discussions were held between the CEO, the trustees of Openstorytellers, and PHF, who agreed on request to repurpose a significant amount of the project funding.

The project delivery team were not included in these conversations, although ultimately these changes affected the targets and outcomes, and consequent delivery of the programme.

In retrospect, the project leader feels she would have benefitted from some part in these discussions.

After a period of financial uncertainty, the Openstorytellers board took steps to stabilise the charity. The project lost input from the CEO, who left the charity in October 2016. As this role was made redundant, there is currently no plan to reinstate this role within Openstorytellers.

The project leader took on main responsibility for implementing the work, including much of the roles tasked to the CEO.

The lead contact is now the chair of trustees, who line manages the programme staff. Trustee Dr Nicola Grove, who founded the charity and developed Storysharing, stepped in to provide support at this time of transition and uncertainty.

Emma Wilson, who stepped up to become charity manager, now manages the charity on a day-to-day operational level.

Openstorytellers acknowledge the positive support received from PHF, and the personal involvement of our grants officer (Sarah Beckett), which enabled us to agree on revised targets to the end of the programme.

In confidential correspondence with the ex-director, PHF had said *'We would not expect you to repay' the repurposed funds therefore we'd expect reduced delivery of PHF-funded work in year 2.*

The agreed 'way forward' was affordable, compatible with the work and general outcomes, of benefit to the charity, and manageable with a minimum of supervision.

The budget was ring-fenced, and our revised agreement allowed for some of the work to be subsidised, i.e. schools contributing financially to interventions rather than receiving the work gratis. This has supported us considerably, and also given us a working understanding of the product as a commercial entity – what organisations and schools can and will pay, and what their expectations are.

*What we did in year two.*

In this second year, as planned, we rolled out our delivery programme to regional schools (Bristol and Salisbury), with the new Storysharing team delivering interventions and training under the supervision of the project leader.

We made a training film ('Guess What Happened to Me?') The project leader worked on training packs, with an increased focus on developing workable Licensed Tutor training ("train the trainer"). This training was trialled at Three Ways School and also with the three Storysharing leaders.

We continued to explore the benefits of one-off community sessions and meet with families. The Storysharing leaders were now able to work with more autonomy.

With supervision, they worked individually, bringing their skills to explore the affordances attendant to distinct groups, including interventions in classes for pupils with ASD, PMLD, post-16, MLD, primary, and children using eye-gaze systems.



The Storysharing team all took responsibility for assisting in training of school staff to Licensed Practitioner Level, co-delivering sessions and providing valuable one to one mentoring for teaching assistants and teachers, as well as an in-house Speech and Language therapist.

The project leader continued to oversee the delivery in schools, whilst working on resource packs, extended training through Awareness and Licensed Tutor packages, marketing, promotion and monitoring / assessment.

The marketing and database, and discussions with commissioners, were impacted on by the changes in the charity. The CEO had begun conversations with potential clients or purchasers, but there was no specific or measureable output at this stage.

Original targets and outcomes for year two:

<i>Targets year two</i>	<i>Outcomes year two</i>	<i>Notes: reflections from the end of the project</i>
<u>Outcome 1</u> Greater capacity to deliver to wider audiences.	<u>Target 1</u> Three new staff members working in two news schools.	In year two we were working regionally, delivering interventions in Exeter House School in Salisbury and Warmley Park School, Bristol. We followed an experiential model with the new Storysharing leaders taking direct responsibility for class-based work, parent support and mentoring staff. The project leader continued to lead on training and assessments, putting the trainees through the second level, and school staff through Licensed Practitioner (Level one) training. The team received consistently positive feedback from school staff being trained.
<u>Outcome 2</u> Evidence of support and commitment from 2 partner schools and one youth group.	<u>Target 2</u> Delivery of scheduled workshops, training, inset days, and evaluation.	Successful interventions were completed in both participating schools, and one-off workshops delivered in community groups. Parent events and dedicated training sessions for staff were run at the schools.

<p><u>Outcome 3</u> Our organisation will have improved capacity due to an improved Storysharing Resource and Training Pack</p>	<p><u>Target 3</u> The Resource and Training Pack will be 100% complete – following final trail with new audiences. Costed business model complete. Database and marketing 66% complete.</p>	<p>Training was delivered at two levels, Licensed Practitioner and Licensed Tutor; we also began to offer 'Awareness' sessions and Foundation level, which does not result in certification but leads into Practitioner status. Resources were still in the process of refinement. Marketing and business model on hold because of instability in the organisational structure and finances.</p>
<p><u>Outcome 4</u> Increased number of children and young adults with LD (MLD, SLD &amp; PMLD) will be able to influence which services they use and / or planning for their futures</p>	<p><u>Target 4</u> A minimum of 2 schools will be trained in Storysharing and at least three children or young adults with LD will be able to take their story to their annual review – which can be case studies for future purchasers of Storysharing.</p>	<p>This target has been emphasised during the project and schools are interested and beginning to implement take-up. 6 young people in Salisbury used personal stories in their annual reviews, kick-starting a culture within the school. The acting head teacher said <i>'I'd be interested to see – you talk quite a lot about it being used in person-centred reviews – how that develops.'</i> A follow-up interview revealed that <i>'We use story in our parents meetings, but we don't in reviews.'</i> The Bristol School is beginning to engage: <i>'We had one pupil from the post 16 Storysharing group who did that, he showed one of his stories at the annual review; it was really, really positive'</i></p>
<p><u>Outcome 5.</u> Relationship formed with key commissioning personnel locally, regionally, nationally.</p>	<p><u>Target 5</u> <i>This outcome / target was reviewed</i></p>	<p>We discussed revisions to this target which were agreed with PHF, see below <b>in red</b></p>

The revised reporting targets agreed with PHF are as follows:

1. **'Openstorytellers have developed links with key organisations in order to build strategic support for the Storysharing Training Programmes .To be evidenced by networking with key supporting organisations locally and regionally (in Wiltshire and Somerset) by the end of year two.'**

**Reflections on this target:** This was a revision of a target that was written several years before and described what could be described as an altered landscape. We felt that 'key organisations' was more specific than 'commissioners at county level'.

The capacity for 'networking' was impacted on by the loss of the CEO, who had not succeeded in creating a foundation for strategic support over the time he worked on the programme.

In effect, the growth of links can be seen as more genuine, as they have been forged through emerging partnerships with direct beneficiaries - schools and hosting organisations, the steering group partners, organisations and individuals who have existing links with Openstorytellers, and those reached through presence at events organised by local groups such as Wiltshire Parent Carer Council, Engagement and Participation officers, and Somerset Parent Carer Forum - also, nationally through the Association of Speech and Language Therapists in independent practice, and publications (see below, dissemination)

## 2. 'Networking commenced and relationship building begun with key personnel in one London partner school.'

This was a revision of a target that was to approach schools through commissioners: originally 'Networking commenced and relationship building begun with key commissioning personnel in London Boroughs for the partner schools.'

Ed Ashcroft, head of integrated services from the Bridge School in Islington, has been on the steering group of the project. We have also been developing links with Stephen Hawking School (Tower Hamlet) through Liz Baxter, Education outreach lead. See year three.

## FINAL YEAR. 2017- 2018

This year has seen Openstorytellers re-assert its identity and consolidate its direction as a user-led disability organisation. The charity has moved to new premises after the difficult phase in year two, enjoying larger offices in the basement of an old chapel where many community events take place. There is an increased presence in the local community, which has been congruent with bringing Storysharing 'in house'.

Storysharing has become more assimilated in the charity's operations – it is no longer 'something that happens elsewhere', known about through being reported back on, but something that is familiar, used by staff and group members across the organisation. Although this obviously builds capacity for the charity, it was not listed as an original target or outcome of the programme.

The programme in this final year has been accountable to Tracy Rose, Chair of Trustees, and line managed by trustee and charity founder Dr Nicola Grove, who has helped with marketing and costing. Further support came from core staff, charity manager Emma Wilson and administrator Jade Ogden.

This final year of SfA has seen change, but also new developments for Storysharing, a strengthening and definition of the marketable aspects, and a focus on outputs: a celebration event, work on a website, consolidation of resources, publications and dissemination.

We began this final year with a degree of optimism (despite concerns around the charity's stability) having managed to secure a working agreement with PHF on a way forward for the project that seemed more in line with what was achievable and useful for our organisation in the light of internal changes, rescheduled budgets, and also the wider SEN education landscape.

*Summary of changed targets.*

General outcomes and targets to the end of the project: *please note, these are revised targets as agreed with PHF in year two.*

<i>Targets year three</i>	<i>Outcomes year three</i>
<p><u>Outcome 1</u> Openstorytellers has greater capacity in terms of trained staff to deliver Storysharing to a wider audience.</p>	<p><u>Target 1</u> To be evidenced by 3 new staff members working in 1 school in London and other schools in the south west, supervised by Project Manager/Trainer.</p>
<p><u>Outcome 2</u> Openstorytellers has improved capacity to deliver Storysharing through improved training and resources.</p>	<p><u>Target 2</u> 'To be evidenced by the development of a new Storysharing Training and Resource website, ready to trial by the end of year 3, and through delivery to other interested schools '</p>
<p><u>Outcome 3</u> A realistic costed business model for working with national schools and organisations is further developed.</p>	<p><u>Target 3</u> 'Market research, database and marketing material revised in accordance with consultation with end users '</p>
<p><u>Outcome 4</u> Children and young people supported by the new staff members will have a story for their annual review and have a voice in their person centred plan.</p>	<p><u>Target 4</u> '6 Children and young people supported by the new staff members will have a story for their annual review and have a voice in their person centred plan.'</p>
<p><u>Outcome 5</u> Showcasing the effectiveness of the programme.</p>	<p><u>Target 5</u> National recognition through staff presenting at national or international conferences; exploring the possibility of a showcase event in partnership with other providers.</p>

Outcome one.

*Staffing: in house training.*

As we have seen, the underlying theme of building greater capacity for the charity has been the main outcome of this programme.

With this in mind, the project leader has devised, trialled and adjusted a training programme that begins in-house with the project staff, and also the charity staff, and reaches out through a cascaded training model, including a marketable training pack that starts with short 'Awareness' sessions through to full 'train the trainer' programmes.

The training for project staff has enabled the charity to have a wider reach at a higher level, with an outcome of two experienced trainers, Leah Harwood and Lara Ellender, who between them bring a range of specific expertise to the work.

Their reflections on this programme are to be found in [appendices 1 and 2](#).

*Unforeseen changes.*

At the start of year three, in July, trainee leader Adam Varney handed in his notice.

This was unexpected and in the main due to significant changes in his personal circumstances. Adam had been a popular Storysharing leader in schools and in particular showed great skills in working with ASD classes.

In informal feedback on the interventions he ran at Exeter House school, he noted '*I had a very positive experience at the school due to (the teacher's) ability to adopt Storysharing from the start. She was approachable and keen to learn as she could see how it would help her pupils. Even with the mid-term changes they (teacher and support staff) were able to give us time to help develop their skills with gentle guidance.*

*The results have been amazing ... with engagement levels increased, use of language, responses, joining in, anticipation and so on.'*

In a one to one review, he noted that the best bits were '*getting hands on experience. Being part of some amazing moments – incredible*' but there was also a reservation: '*I'm looking forward to taking more control. I'm confident but not over confident. ... not knowing what is coming next.*'

Although we know that attrition is an issue in schools, it had not been factored in the risk assessments for this programme. There was no contingency in place, but we agreed that it was 'too late' to start a new school-based trainee from scratch. The remaining team were keen to find a solution and turn the situation into an advantage.

Again, we have to acknowledge the flexible backing of PHF, who supported us in plans for change. We proposed that we would use the budget freed up by Adam's departure to embed Storysharing internally in the organisation, whilst continuing to build capacity at a more grassroots level. This change has in fact contributed to a sense of recovery, growth and consolidation in the charity after the 'difficult phase'.

We proposed that, with budget accrued from Adam's unspent salary, we would

- Recruit a **new Storysharing trainee**, 1 day per week, September 2017 through to May 2018
- Recruit a **peer mentor with learning disabilities**, also one day a week, to work alongside the trainee. This peer mentor recruited was from Openstorytellers key group members.
- Create a new **'peer mentors' training resource**, and road-test our training packs.
- Host a weekly, open door **'story circle'** to create a community of practice based around Openstorytellers new premises.

PHF were in agreement. Please see below, under 'unexpected outcomes', for the details of this change.

*The work we did in year three.*

The Storysharing leaders did not run weekly school-based interventions in this year.

The focus was all on training, delivering specific programmes of development, reviewing, refining and reworking our offers to suit the market.

Leah and Lara were now fully trained to a level where they could confidently put others through Licensed Practitioner training, providing individual support and mentoring for staff in Chippenham and London as well as at Openstorytellers.

We saw that we need to have a working 'distance learning' model: previously, training had been delivered in the room, but as interest grows we cannot accommodate whilst making it affordable to purchasers. The model was refined in partnership with the Bridge School in Islington - a large and nationally prominent training school.

The Bridge School is in Islington : it has three centres (primary, secondary, integrated learning), and also has a dedicated training centre, where we ran intensive training days.

Lara, Leah and Jane then worked separately, taking a location each, training staff on a one to one basis. We made initial visits to train staff teams but, apart from one observation visit, the training was delivered online.

The final outcome is four members of staff now working as licensed practitioners. The target had been 6, but (interestingly) 2 were not able to find the time or capacity to complete the training requirements.

We do believe that if the school had purchased the training, rather than it being supported by funding, there would have been more support from senior management. This is a finding that recurs: staff can be very willing but there are many constraints, and support from above is often needed.

The team also delivered this training model at Frogwell School in Chippenham, to the entire staff team based in the SEN resource centre there, plus the SENCO. 6 staff are now qualified Licensed Practitioners.

In this instance, the training did generate some income for the charity as (with agreement) we used our programme funding to 'match fund' the training. The school contributed financially, which meant that they were very keen to receive training and did everything they could to welcome our team and work efficiently with us.

## Outcome two

*Wider delivery in schools; a website. Improved training and resources.*

In year three the project leader has been developing the resources and assessment models for Licensed Tutor training – ‘train the trainers.’

Working at this level, it has been essential to create an effective package that accommodates the busy schedules of teachers but also has 100% relevance to their work and fills the perceived gaps in their skills base.

As ever, Three Ways School have been very supportive in this development. We had already trialled the programme at the school, with two staff members passing at ‘Level Two’, but there has been a lot of user-led development since then. The school approached us again, asking us to train teacher Flo Hopwood to tutor level, and offering to purchase this as a programme partly subsidised by the PHF budget.

The school has Storysharing embedded in their curriculum, and consequently in their school improvement plan. They were happy to have a dialogue about their required outputs and also Flo’s capacity to train.

The end result has been a monitored process with a refined and working training package that we now can sell on with confidence.

## Outcome three

*A realistic, costed business model is in place, in consultation with end-users.*

Thanks to all the schools who have hosted our work, we have been in constant consultation with staff through our monitoring and feedback processes, and able to incorporate new elements into our training (for example, assessment toolkits in line with the Rochford review, advice on annual reviews, links to the early years foundation stage, etc.).

Schools have also helped with costings, and advised us on realistic pricing - though it is worth noting that generally the response is ‘there is no money.’ Our marketing challenge is to make the product attractive enough to countermand this.

Stephen Hawking School in Tower Hamlets came to us, wanting to train two members of staff to Licensed Practitioner, and subsequently Licensed Tutor level. We were able to sell the package to them and one staff member has completed the programme. (The other unfortunately left the school, but by coincidence has relocated to Bath and has been offered a job at Three Ways, the decision being swayed by the fact that she is a Storysharer. We are in dialogue with the school about her finishing her Licensed Tutor training next year)

The training is available at several levels. Licensed Practitioner and Licensed Tutor are both (internally) certified qualifications with conditions attached to the licensing. The tiered system:

- Awareness: 1 hour
- Foundation: ½ day
- Licensed Practitioner: ½ day plus 3 individual mentoring / assessment sessions
- Licensed Tutor: 1 training day plus 3 individual mentoring / assessment sessions.

**Attached: appendix 3 a, b: benefits of LP, and LT. Appendix 4 : Marketing leaflet.**

In our year two report, we said that we recognised that we had fallen behind with the marketing and database due to the change of circumstances in the organisation, and subsequent delays. This responsibility was the role of the CEO, and initially we expected there would also be a communications manager role within the organisation too.

Dr Nicola Grove has taken up market research in year three. She has consulted with a wide range of contacts built up over a long career in the field.

Initially in year three we also had support from a training co-ordinator, Jade Ogden. Jade continues to deal with front line enquiries and information and will manage the Storysharing database.

As well as talking to our host and partner schools, we have been able to consult with other professionals about the key features of Storysharing that form the backbone of effective marketing. Advice was sought from steering group members and other associated professionals, including two organisations that have grown their training business from small beginnings: PCAS (Person Centred Active Support, Julie Beadle Brown and Jill Bradshaw, Tizard Centre) and Talking Mats (Lois Cameron).

Peter Imray, who devised and manages the Equals curriculum ([www.equals.co.uk](http://www.equals.co.uk)), has been supportive and we are in discussion with him about including Storysharing in his nationally acclaimed training programme.

Locally, we have held consultations with Clive and Lynn Robson ([www.hapsfordassociates.com](http://www.hapsfordassociates.com)), and Lisa Millard ([www.thelittlethingsmagazine.com](http://www.thelittlethingsmagazine.com)), all of whom have extensive experience in the field of education / SEN and gave freely of their expertise and time.

We identified key points that felt contemporary and fundamental to marketing the product: –

- Reference and emphasise the Ofsted framework when speaking to schools
- Emphasise the capacity of the product for building links between parents and schools
- Make it clear how Storysharing enhances pupil voice, and is preparation for life and work - effective in transitions, annual reviews, EHCP
- Explain how it enhances quality teaching and learning
- Be clear about learning journeys and outcomes, both for pupils and staff
- Build a specific website (as opposed to having a page on the Openstorytellers website)
- Create a solid portfolio of evidence and endorsements supporting the product

We have worked on branding, bringing publicity and information into line. We have a dedicated Storysharing logo, which complements but is distinct from the Openstorytellers logo.

The website is our primary marketing tool. It is in completion and will feature endorsements and all of the key information listed here.

#### Outcome four

##### *Annual reviews*

Since the introduction of the Social Care Act and Education and Healthcare Plans ('EHCP'), young people with SEN at year 9 and above are 'preparing for adulthood' and it is statutory for their voice to be given priority at their annual reviews.



Consequently, Openstorytellers advocate the use of personal stories and Storysharing techniques in annual reviews.

Meeting this target depends on the schools involved. They need to be able to acknowledging the benefit, have a critical mass of trained staff available, and make a fundamental change to their systems.

A SENCO tells us it drew them to the programme: *"It fits into the context of us trying to increase (in my role as SENCO) the amount of student voice in the annual reviews, to enable the young people to be able to speak up for themselves. And because of that, what (Storysharing) provided was a sort of vehicle that could help enable that and it was something that we talked about and agreed upon as a school, so it wasn't just something that I was imposing and thinking was a great idea; it was something that the whole school was looking at."*

We are told what a difference the use of Storysharing makes in annual reviews. Teachers tell us it is more effective than the 'one page profiles' that are commonly in use, as the child themselves is enabled to literally 'have a voice' in their future.

A teacher says *'It has been great to be able to do these in annual reviews with pupils. It was amazing to be able to support B to share something with her parents and Jo (head teacher) in the room too. She was the most confident I have seen her do something like this in such a different situation.'*

Parents and multi-agency staff see the child's communication abilities in a real-life situation: furthermore, the stories shared have impact on choices made.

*'The other day – I was sat in an annual review with a teacher who previously had done some of the (Storysharing) training and we talked about how we could use the technique with one of the younger children, to support them in terms of their confidence in telling their stories to their class. I want it to become an ordinary tool that we reach for, not something exceptional or something we have to create special groups to do. The more we can do of that, the more one person can show another how it works. We had one pupil from the post 16 Storysharing group who did that, he showed one of his stories at the annual review; it was really, really positive. It went well and it enabled him to talk about the things that were important to him – particularly around his future. The other part of that is that we have been able to tell all our staff "this is something that you can do – it's an example of good practice". So we have recently done some training around annual reviews and we have said, "this is a really good example of the type of thing you can do". We also have other styles of presentations that people can do because we realise it's not 'one size fits all'. So we were able to show that off as a good example.'*

The prevailing way forward in schools that use Storysharing in reviews is to bring a film of the child Storysharing for everyone to watch. This is because annual reviews can be seen as stressful for the child, and potentially for supporting staff too.

A teacher of an ASD class says *'we use story in our parents meetings, but we don't in reviews. We advocate for the pupils instead as it's too hard and it puts the pupils off.'* Her colleague adds *'if more teachers and staff get trained there would be consistency in using storysharing.'*

The SENCO in Bristol is aware of his responsibilities to support pupil voice. *"There is an expectation that they (pupils) are listened to, but there's a difference between the reality and what is being asked for – it's a long way to go still, but the idea is because of the mental capacity act we should be listening to these young people; and they have the right to be wrong and that's really important. It's quite challenging*

*for a lot of parents but the more we can help our young people to tell coherent stories and really say what they want to say then we will achieve that- we will actually get them determining where they want to go and what their future is.*

*Knowing you've been listened to, and understood- that is such a powerful thing, and if you've got that then you are going to say something more. If you say something and no one's paying any attention to you, then why should you carry on?"*

We continue to advocate for input of the pupil, especially when education and health care plans are in place.

*"Having seen the videos in the annual review I know it does work- pupils are expressing themselves very coherently and you wouldn't necessarily expect them to do it. They've got structure, it makes sense and they are engaged with their story- and it is their story. Its personal- it's about them, rather than having to fit into someone else's structure."*

This application is prioritised in our Licensed Tutor training and we require evidence that tutors are advocating for this approach.

[Attached is appendix 5, a short case study of how Storysharing can be integrated in plans for learning and EHCP, including annual reviews. This case study was prepared as part of evidence portfolio for Licensed Tutor.](#)

Our partner school Three Ways, have suggested that a Storysharing 'code of conduct' is adhered to at all reviews where the student is present – i.e. no direct questioning, active listening techniques, and so on. This would need to be an agreement between all parties but would be an interesting step forward from where they are now: they have the techniques already embedded in the school improvement plan and curriculum.

If that can be achieved, then changes will happen. The SENCO again:

*In the past we have been the communication 'interpreters' and that's a very different thing. There's a danger of almost a paternalistic way that we treat our young people, in terms of trying to interpret what they want to say, but I also think that one of the strengths of this hopefully is allowing a young person to say something that may be in opposition to what their families are saying. That is tough. It still burns with us as we had a young man who we gave the ability to say everything he wanted to say, he was saying completely the opposite to his family and yet the social worker who was there heard what he said, and still he was sent away to a residential placement that he didn't want to go to. He was very clear on what he wanted, and what he wanted was clear and achievable. It didn't go particularly well for him. But that's our role, we've got to make those voices loud and clear and not give people excuses for ignoring them.*

We contributed to an article by Dr Karen Bunning, published in PMLD link in the winter edition 2017, on the subject of Storysharing for inclusion.

[Appendix 6 - article](#)

Outcome five

*Showcasing.*

Originally we'd hope to host an end of project conference; this target was removed but we did have a gathering and celebration which brought together 22 of the key players in the project to share practice and reflect on their involvement.

The day was hosted by Threeways with a keynote speech from the head. She says '*...thank you and your team Jane for such a wonderful day. Always great to network and share practice!*'

### *Unexpected outcomes*

There have been several, most of which are covered in other areas of this report. A summary:

- *Changes following the departure of Adam Varney*

When Adam handed in his leave it put us into a difficult situation, testing the line management systems put in place after the loss of the CEO. However, through consultation, we moved forward to create a good outcome, which resulted in:

- A new team member, Kay Williams, who trained to Licensed Practitioner level;
- The opportunity to recruit a train a learning disabled Storysharing peer mentor;
- The creation of a peer mentor's training resource pack;
- A new Storysharing circle within the organisation's offices;
- An opportunity to trial an intergenerational group that has seeded ideas for the future.

- *Subsidised training:*

#### *Frogwell School in Chippenham*

Frogwell have paid into the training programme, and have been fully engaged and very co-operative - plus of course generating some income for the charity.

#### *Stephen Hawking School in Tower Hamlets*

Although only slightly subsidised by the PHF grant, in the programme period, Stephen Hawking have purchased Licensed Practitioner and Licensed Tutor training for 2 key members of staff.

- *In-house training for Openstorytellers*

Although not detailed in the programme schedule, in year three we have been putting charity staff through the Licensed Practitioner training, continuing to build capacity for the organisation.

- *Targets that we did not reach, and why that was.*

A prevailing theme of the programme is the revision of targets in relation to the charity's change of circumstances and reduced budget.

This has been covered in detail, in the timeline, above.

The actual programme delivery has been scheduled to be target-driven, and in many ways that has been positive, keeping us on track – the delivery team feel they have fully achieved everything agreed with PHF. Annual reports are the opportunity to reflect and consequently re-act. We follow a 'plan, do, review' ethos.

Matters beyond the core staff's control such as the implementation in annual reviews, the initial marketing phase, senior management team involvement in schools, changes in the sector, have occasionally been 'threats' to meeting our targets, but this is realistic in such an ambitious programme. To summarise, we feel we have met all targets that we finally agreed.

Loosing a trainee Storysharing leader in year three was a blow to the programme but the resulting changes more than compensated in that they moved the programme on and enabled us to explore fresh approaches. (see below)

## **Our organisation: Openstorytellers**

- *How Openstorytellers has changed over the life of the grant*

It is worth noting at this point that outgoing CEO Cindy Moxham authored the proposal. Personnel changes resulted in a new CEO, Simon Morris, starting his role on the same day as SfA project leader, Jane Harwood. Jane had managed and delivered the previous PHF funded project. As detailed above, the charity has undergone considerable change over the course of SfA. These changes are mostly to do with the structure of the organisation, a revived emphasis on user-led work, and a move to new, larger premises.

*Storysharing in the business plan.*

Despite these changes, the mission statement and core intent remains constant. We continue to deliver a mixture of day services, funded projects, extra-curricular opportunities and performances, based on the central theme of narrative, communication and story.

*More information on the business plan and finances can be seen below.*

- *Challenges.*

*Financial changes*

During the period of financial uncertainty, in Year Two of the programme before the redundancy of the CEO post, considerable dialogue was exchanged between the CEO and PHF regarding repurposing of funds.

From emails exchanged, we see that on 4/10/2016 PHF agreed 'we could look at repurposing £15-20k of the most recent grant instalment as core support.' At this time, the trustees, our accountant and office manager kept a close eye on the finances to ensure the continuation of the project, including seeking an independent opinion.

As we have seen above, these changes did impact on Storysharing for All. A programme designed to have 0.5 days a week input from the CEO of the charity, over 3 years, has managed to keep to targets and create considerable impact without this support. This is in no small amount due to the focus, hard work and dedication of the project team, the charity manager, and extra input of Dr Nicola Grove.

*Income*

Through subsidised and purchased training, the work has generated some income over this period, which has bolstered the PHF funding and increased our potential both during and post-programme. Leah and Lara used some of this budget to scope out potential future work for Openstorytellers based on Storysharing. Leah has been researching Early Years interventions, with the idea of using our new premises to bring together young families with recent diagnoses. Lara has been visiting the local stroke group and consulting with academics at City University to explore the use of Storysharing to improve communication in adults with aphasia.

*Personnel changes.*

When Adam Varney left on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, the Storysharing leaders felt they had lost a valued team member. Adam was very popular in schools, both with staff and pupils, and brought a strong personality and wide experience of autism to the mix.

Adam's role was replaced by Kay Williams, who led the Storysharing circle, and Clemma Fleat, her supporting peer mentor. Kay has experience within Openstorytellers and has worked in schools. Clemma, who has fragile X syndrome, is a long-term Openstorytellers group member. Both Kay and Clemma have brought new area of skill and insights into the work that has been refreshing and exploratory.

*Clemma says: 'I enjoy hearing other peoples' stories.*

*I also enjoy telling my stories. I enjoy everyone's company.*

*I'd like to continue.... I would love to do more storysharing in the future if I get the chance'*

*Kay: 'What's been best? - Working with Clemma. It's great to see her journey. Our relationship has changed. But now, its time to move on. She's naturally a leader- and especially socially. She added another dimension.'*

*For herself, Kay notes 'I've learned how to do it, rather than just 'seeing it'.*

*It has influenced my relationship with my son (who has complex needs / ASD), and changed my way of communication.'*

Towards the end of the programme, Lara was able, through her work with us, to regain employment as a Speech and Language Therapist, an area she'd worked in before.

This did place some stress on her availability, and as we neared the end of the work she arranged a degree of jobshare with Leah.

*Community groups.*

The community strand has felt quite disparate and perhaps did not match the expectations in the mind of the CEO when she was putting the programme schedule together.

Placing short Storysharing interventions with community groups has been a challenge. Most short breaks or holiday club activity is biased towards 'fun' and it is difficult for staff (who may not have had much training or experience) to understand how Storysharing can fit with this.

We did devise and deliver child-led, user friendly, fun / activity based days but ultimately this is an activity that needs to be embedded, not just experienced as part of a programme of activities such as swimming and cookery.

We did not succeed in placing activities with the Pod, our local SEN/D youth group. They said they would favour physical activities and trips out.

A considerable amount of time was spent scoping out workshops for the 'Four and More club' in Salisbury. Eventually they said they were unable to staff the sessions adequately due to lack of budget.

We did work with Barnado's groups in Wiltshire, and a series with Elizabeth House in Salisbury.

Lara wrote some reflections on learning points from Salisbury workshops: after the second visit she wrote

- *The staff were receptive to us being there and we felt they were more engaged and supportive this time than our last visit – suggesting that they were more familiar with us and the idea of storysharing, making it easier to drop into storysharing for this short session.*

- *This follow-up visit and the opportunity to try storysharing again meant that the workshop could more successfully help to promote a positive communication environment and embed storysharing techniques.*
- *The positive feedback we received and the greater level of engagement suggest that the session was more successful than the first session.*

We were able to :

- *Develop social skills and creativity in the planning and sharing of stories*
- *Enable staff and most pupils to develop their storysharing skills, and for all to have a role during the workshop*
- *Model positive communication and storysharing*
- *Encourage positive social interaction between peers, including listening to others*
- *Experiment with different ways of sharing personal narrative.*

Considerations were:

- *Without visiting again, we can't know how Storysharing will be used in the future, or what the legacy of these 'one-off' sessions might be.*
- *There is more work to be done in training staff and convincing them of the benefits – it seems clear in this case that 2 workshops are better than 1.*
- *Will the group actually follow up their expressions of interest? How necessary are follow-ups for these types of workshops to be useful and successful?*
- *I think the workshop was successful in the timespan we had available, but to make it more long-term, we may want to consider a series of 3 + workshops over a specific period of time, with clear aims and outcomes. Therefore, it has been a good learning opportunity for us.*

Overall, we asked ourselves if stand-alone community based, recreational Storysharing workshops can be effective for the young people and staff involved? We felt that the answer to this was YES, because

- *There's a huge amount of potential,*
- *We can reach a mixed group of people and staff.*
- *We were able to reach people who are not very proactive and wouldn't otherwise engage.*
- *We could promote the product.*
- *It works as a taster to the activity and is on an equal footing with an 'intro' training session but is experiential and flexible.*

*What has gone well in this programme?*

On reflection, the opportunity to work closely with schools in a number of settings, and the privilege of regularly attending classes to work with pupils and staff has been enormous.

There is a privilege in bringing in an intervention that makes change. It is powerful when in the right hands. Where schools have had the leadership and vision to embed the process as part of a joined up approach to communication, change does happen. When staff are encouraged to adopt the technique, results are clear: *"You can, for example, use it for observing a lesson then talking about the*

*lesson - it fits into everything and that is what I like about it- it's simple, its portable, and its adaptive, whatever you need it to be it can be that and that's why it works."*

It's interesting that where senior management are on board, the technique will be adopted. This is hopeful when schools have purchased the training and are investing in their staff team and improvement plans.

*A deputy head in Bristol says 'I'm thinking; you get used to pupils don't you, you end up going along with them and you get to that point where you think "yeah, yeah I know what you want" and you fall into that routine of "oh yeah I know what that behavior means, and I know what this means" and actually I can see some of our staff and some of the pupils they work with and you can see how those patterns of behaviour emerge, and how the adults respond to the pupils as if they know them by second nature. Then I think well, actually is that member of staff; although it looks lovely and they have a great relationship, it looks like they have a really nice caring relationship, has it just become like a co-dependent thing? Is that member of staff actually giving that pupil an opportunity to develop and grow? Because they are now at the point of making assumptions that they know what that student wants, and actually if they did change their communication style and used a different skill and did it so they were in that 'lifting up' kind of way it would change things.'*

The head teacher in Bath recognises the difference we have made: *I just wanted to share that N's story sharing in her annual review today was epic! Sinead (teacher) did an amazing job supporting her and N was engaged, motivated and had a real voice in her meeting.*

*I am really proud of everything you all continue to achieve at Threeways with storysharing.  
- Storysharing is growing in annual reviews and classes all the time - amazing news :)*

Over three years we've seen some pupils gain confidence and change their communication styles completely because of Storysharing. This filters through: a teacher reports: *Speech has improved in the primary age pupils- this has been reported by parents who have noticed improvements at home. There is a pride in sharing with classmates, in the ownership of the story.*

His colleague agrees: *last year 3 key pupils went home and told stories to their families and families then reported it back to the school. They were impressed with the language and use of words.*

Training teachers can be inspiring too. Most are very open to suggestions, change, and especially the one to one mentoring / assessment process of Licensed Practitioner and Tutor training.

*'Now – I'm doing it every morning. My staff are helping - it's teamwork – they are a helpful team. I think I'll use Storysharing for the rest of my teaching career!'*

The end-of-project celebration brought the programme to a conclusion on a high note, with much warmth and enthusiasm.

This was an opportunity for people from partner schools, and others with interest, to share practice and applications – of which there was a good range.

Discussion groups reflected on what had gone well. There was a lot of agreement about *'finding the true voice of pupils', 'shared experiences, 'a sense of community': also an emphasis on 'improved mental health,' and 'working on and developing emotions.'*

Delegates were in agreement that Storysharing *'can support all modalities of communication'* and that a recommendation would be to *'create a set of protocols for everybody to use in annual reviews, to allow the child's voice to be heard.'*

There was an agreement that time for personal narrative was time well spent, and that everyone has a right to *'make sense of life'* in this way. *'Civilised communication.'*

Why was it proving popular? It allows you to

*'Express your life.'*

*'It brings out the emotions of your life.'*

*'It helps with valuing a person.'*

*'Through Storysharing, we are reliving special moments, and making connections.'*

- *How the project fitted with the rest of Openstorytellers activity*

Storysharing has been a key part of the growth and profile of the charity since Openstorytellers was founded. We acknowledge continued funding and confidence in the product that PHF have shown.

Storysharing has been developed over the years in residential settings, schools and community groups. During this project, in 2016, we did do some training days for our group members, who have moderate learning disabilities. We recognised that it had benefits for their self-advocacy and interactive skills.

There was still a sense that Storysharing was not at the centre of the organisation – it still felt rather separate, something useful for teachers and therapists but not at the core of the daily work of the charity.

The opportunity to change this presented itself when we discussed possible actions following the departure of Adam Varney.

We were able to recruit Kay Williams as a new Storysharing trainee. Her aim was to gain Licensed practitioner status; she was put through this training by Leah and Lara. Meanwhile, the team worked together with Kay to devise a peer mentor training programme for Clemma – a new departure. Kay and Clemma designed and recruited for a weekly Storysharing circle to be run at the Openstorytellers premises. This ran until May 2018 and brought people together, some of whom would have spent the whole day alone otherwise.

Adults were joined by students, who were driven out from Threeways School in Bath. This intergenerational element was not always easy to manage (school staff were concerned about 'adult stories' though in fact there was never a cause for concern) but raised interesting points about the need for mixing socially as transition approaches.

The circle was very lively, and popular too; some feedback from the group:

*'I like the company, the stories, it is part of my routine.'*

*'I like coming because it's fun and I am meeting new people.'*

*'I feel more alive after telling a story and sharing a memory of my life.'*

*'It was brilliant. I really enjoyed Storysharing. I will miss coming'*

[See appendix 7. Report on the Storysharing Circle](#)



- *Key relationships: ended and emerging*

#### *Community sessions*

Some anticipated relationships did not blossom: especially in the 'community sector' where, despite our confidence that Storysharing can be 'fun' and useful, and carefully planned sessions, leaders were often at a loss to place it as an activity.

Sue Paxton of the Pod group for young people with SEN states '*I guess my main thoughts after watching both videos is that the programme really improves skills for those that take part, lots of repetition and being in school no doubt enable this.....As you've already picked up, they're not in school with us and it will need to be more interactive.*' The planned sessions didn't happen, and later we offered free training to the Pod staff: the response was '*in all honesty the school holidays probably would make this difficult, it is great to have the opportunity to offer this to them though.*' Nobody from the Pod attended.

We do know that community group work can be valuable, not least from feedback where the relationship has been productive, for example at Elizabeth House in Salisbury, where the workshops were well received: staff said '*– I was skeptical at first, but it's been amazing, absolutely amazing. Really good day*' and '*– a very nice surprise didn't expect so much and so good. I think we have learnt something. We will try it out ourselves.*'

#### *The Bridge School*

The distance issue, and the school cancelling or changing dates, often at the last minute, reflecting the nature of a large school setting, impacted on our relationship with the Bridge School. Travel from Somerset is expensive and project time limited.

Not all staff at the Bridge completed their Licensed Practitioner training, despite our best efforts to support them. (4 out of 6 completed). This has been a useful learning experience and helped us to consider logistics.

The distance issue worked both ways: Ed Ashcroft found it was difficult to attend steering group meetings in person. '*On reflection having me in my role as head of a v complicated school was perhaps ambitious.*'

Other relationships that emerged were positive.

#### *Frogwell School*

We were approached by the SEN resource centre at Frogwell school in Chippenham. They purchased a subsidised intervention with Licensed Practitioner training for 6 staff, who all passed. This was a very positive relationship and the SENCO reports back that it has made a difference to the school.

#### *Awareness sessions*

In year three we offered free Awareness sessions of one hour. This created links with two new schools in the area: Critchill (Frome); Rowdeford (Wilts). We also ran the session in-house for the charity, to staff and trustees. This introduction now serves as the lead for training interventions in new settings.

Locally, there was some patching-in to do after the loss of the CEO. The project leader has been building links and attending events. Despite these links, Somerset has been the most challenging area

for us to build the work. This is in contrast to Wiltshire, which appears to have a more vibrant and open culture with more opportunities.

#### *Somerset parent carers participation network*

We've had networking meetings with this network and attended a 'Carers voice' event; networking and link building locally.

#### *Somerset County Council - SEN.SE ([www.sen-se.org.uk](http://www.sen-se.org.uk))*

We met with Julie Walker, who leads on the partnership between specialist provision and SEN schools in the county. We raised the point that our work has been enthusiastically received in Wiltshire and BaNES, but not in our 'home county'. At present, Julie is considering our offers and we're awaiting a response.

#### *The Somerset Participation Network*

We held a meeting with the SPN, who host the 'Unstoppables' participation group ([www.facebook.com/sendparticipationteam](https://www.facebook.com/sendparticipationteam)). They were enthusiastic about Storysharing in annual reviews, EHCPs, and for advocacy. We have been invited to the Somerset Participation Board Network meeting.

#### *Barnados*

Through our links with Liz James, manager, Barnados, who was on the steering group, we were invited to deliver the keynote speech at the Barnados Locality Conference in 2017. 'How to use Personal Narrative for Positive Change.'

#### *Wiltshire Parent Carer Council*

The WPCC have been very supportive over the programme. Strategic director Stuart Hall has been an active member of our steering group and we have had had a stall at the WPCC SEN and Disability Information Service (SENDIS) for two years running. This enables networking and discussions to a range of people from parents to potential purchasers of training.

#### *Connections / Carrswood day services (BaNES)*

In 2016, BaNES services for adult with learning disabilities have purchased a combined Storysharing / Storytelling product that involved some staff training to Licensed Practitioner level. They sent staff and service users to the Storysharing circle in 2018. Currently they are expressing an interest in Licensed Tutor training, and in hosting inter-generational groups in BaNES.

#### *Nationally:*

##### *ASLTIP*

Lara and Nicola Grove presented at the annual conference for the Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice 2018. This resulted in some expressions of interest for Licensed Practitioner training, and as a consequence Lara and Nicola will be running a dedicated training day for SLT's at the Bridge School this coming autumn.

#### *Equals Curriculum – Peter Imray*

Equals is a nationally recognised provider of schemes of work in SEN settings: the charity's mission is 'to promote, share and reflect best practice in learning and teaching through collaborative working with practitioners and professionals at a national, regional and local level.'

We have submitted plans to work within their framework. Peter is **assembling a current list of trainers and the courses they offer; he intends that 'Storysharing will figure prominently in this.'**

- *Meeting the charity's business plan objectives*

In the first interim report, we noted that the new director '*has now developed an entirely revised budget and plan for the charity's core business activities that centralises trading activities to underpin core overheads*' but '*we have also shed all of the externally commissioned services and have reassigned these activities to core employees.*'

### **EMMA : BUSINESS PLAN PLEASE : retrospective and forward – how does Storysharing fit?**

- *Changes in wider policy contexts that are relevant*

Changes that are relevant to the development and marketing of Storysharing include

- Academisation and the subsequent move away from national curriculum to more flexible curricula. The interventions were originally planned to plug perceived gaps in the national curriculum. Oracy, and speaking and listening, are obviously still pertinent issues, but schools are now free to choose from a wide array of curricular approaches – this means we are not able to make broad statements about the perceived gaps.
- The Social Care Act and EHCPs. The issue of pupils' voice is more pertinent now than ever, as young people aged 13 and up have a statutory right to have their views respected. Schools need to have the toolkits to support these young people in having an authentic voice.
- In 2015 the Rochford Review made recommendations for a complete change in how SEN pupils are assessed – advocating a move away from P levels towards 'engagement scales'. We have been working with frontline school staff to create assessment toolkits based on, and extending, these engagement scales. It is essential that teachers see Storysharing as current and congruent with the assessment scales they are using. (This is a Licensed Tutor level issue and ties in with successful embedding across a school setting)
- Funding within education has appeared to be very restricted: time and again we hear how hard it is for schools to invest in purchased training and interventions. This is in part due to academisation and the stress put on budgets; we believe it is also a national issue that goes beyond social care and education.
- GDPR: the general data protection regulations change in 2018 has placed a lot of stress on small organisations. We have had to overhaul databases, a time-heavy exercise, at a point when we need to exploit our contacts to market Storysharing. This may have set us back a little time-wise.

We have recognised that social care and education landscapes change but the underlying need for better communication, improved speaking and listening and person-centered advocacy remains. Because of this Storysharing does have a role to play.

## **Finance. EMMA**

*The charity's financial health, present and projected*

### **Learning.**

*Relationships with schools*

A finding from our previous project was that Storysharing needs senior management support to become embedded – Three Ways School being the prime example here.

Working with schools, especially over distance, is not always straightforward. Staff are pushed for time and do not have the capacity to develop the technique; even staff nominated for training struggle to create evidence bases, films, portfolios – especially at Licensed Tutor level.

We need to ensure we have very clear contracts between the charity and future purchasers, as cancelled visits cost the charity money, and unfinished portfolios do not lead to certification within agreed timelines.

*Selling storysharing.*

We know that our strategies work for a range of people in a range of settings – but the benefits are challenging to summarise, to present clearly, to condense.

We're amassing a solid foundation of academic articles and research, which helps to underpin and evaluates - but doesn't directly sell to non-academic settings, or conversely those that are specialised.

We have to ask ourselves, why is this? It could be that 'Storysharing' as a concept is easy to learn and do, but not specific enough - the outputs may be too broad - too 'soft'?

Teachers are keen to point out that it is a transferable technique. Evaluator Dr Bunning finds *'there was a strong emphasis on the changes observed in the 'teaching style' of those involved in the intervention. The teachers recognised the deliberate move away from traditional methods of questioning and the need to tailor teaching style.'*

We learned that it is a hard market, schools are short of cash, and there is competition: Intensive Interaction, independent curricula such as Equals, the Thrive Approach, that may already be in place. Schools lack financial capacity to invest in outside interventions that address single areas – though we know communication skills should underpin the whole curriculum, this has not been easy to use as a selling point. We do have an evidence base, but it is difficult to capture the approach in a nutshell.

- *What would we do differently in the future? Recommendations to other organisations*

It's difficult to untangle the issues associated with losing a CEO and the repurposing of funds with what could have been planned differently from the start.

*Communications manager.*

Originally, when scoping out the programme, we discussed working with a communications manager. It transpired that there wasn't budget for this, but a large number of tasks did fit this role.

We'd recommend any other organisation starting to scope out a marketing strategy to consider this.

For the work to thrive in the future, the charity needs to place someone in a dual-purpose role to cover communications, marketing, social media, and keeping abreast of current educational and social care policies.

*Joined-up work between delivery team and central office staff.*

Year three has helped us to bring the work 'in house' but the off-site, schools-based nature of Storysharing has not made it easy for our busy core team to understand the character or impact of the work (which is always best appreciated when modelled or trialled). We advocate for a specific mode of interaction and communication in our approach: it seems crucial that all Openstorytellers staff use this method, particularly in public productions and showcases.

We would certainly have benefitted from a more cohesive promotional strategy from the start. It has taken a while to hone the product and settle on the key marketing points. In a way this reflects the nature of the charity: this is the first significant 'product' we have marketed and will set the tone for future initiatives.

### **Dissemination.**

The work has been disseminated through publications and presentations.

Our Storysharing website will be live in early autumn 2018. [www.storysharing.org.uk](http://www.storysharing.org.uk)

*Publications include*

- Bunning, Grove, Harwood: Storysharing for Inclusion, PMLD link winter 2017
- Ellender and Bunning, Let me Tell you a Story, RCSLT Bulletin, summer 2018
- Bunning et al, Teachers and Students with severe learning difficulties working together to co-construct personal narratives using Storysharing: Nasen, Support for Learning, vol 33, no. 1, 2018.
- Grove, N. (2016) Stories, words and knowing. In B. Gaventa & E. De Jongh (Eds) *Knowing, Being Known and the Mystery of God*. Amsterdam: VU University Press. pp. 39-51.
- Grove, N. et al. (2015) Literature and stories in the lives of pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties. In P. Lacey, H. Lawson, P. Jones (Eds) *The Routledge Companion to Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties*. Taylor and Francis.

*Presentations / conferences*

- ASLTIP: Association of Speech and language Therapists in Independent practice national conference, Lara Ellender and Nicola Grove, 2018.
- PAMIS: Promoting a More inclusive Society, Dundee, 2017, Karen Bunning and Adam Varney
- Barnados Locality Conference, How to Use Narrative for Personal Change, Jane Harwood, 2017.
- Storysharing Celebration, Three Ways School, and May 2018: Keynote from Jo Stoaling, Head Teacher, Three Ways School.
- IASSID Congress, Athens, July 2018: Diversity and Belonging, Karen Bunning – demonstration and presentation: Inclusion and Belonging; Arts and representation. [See appendix 8, abstracts.](#)

There is also our promotional film: available on this link

<https://youtu.be/B8V5iBeGGjs>

## **The Future.**

As we close the programme, there are several training enquiries coming in. We expect the new website to consolidate this and generate more interest: we've foregrounded this with a closed Facebook group.

Discussions are being held locally about intergenerational 'bridge' sessions for those in transition - between post-16 school groups and adult services.

Our license agreements with trainees will necessitate bi-annual meetings to consolidate our community of practice.

All this, plus active partnerships, means that the work has a life of its own.

Now is the time to discover if it is a commercial model that can also bring income in to the charity. There is a possibility that to expand, experiment, and grow further, we may need to source extra funding. It is more likely that Storysharing will form a part of new projects rather than being a stand-alone focus.

Storysharing has been popular :

Three Ways Facebook post:

*LISTEN TO MY STORY! It has been brilliant to expand our Storysharing across the school this year. We have been working hard in various classes to equip our young people with a technique to share with their peers and adults significant things that happen to them. Exciting, happy, sad, devastating, horrible, funny things are shared and heard through using Storysharing by pupils of all abilities.*

*SENCO at Warmley Park : Our expectation is that the majority of our students will use Storysharing in some form of the other. We are encouraging the staff to use the technique in as many ways as possible. I have currently identified six of our students who struggle to express choice and opinions to work on with Storysharing. Other staff are doing individual work within their classes.*

*It would be safe to say that around a third of our students will have done some Storysharing at some point and the figure may be higher. The number would be around 40 students. My criteria for success is to see Storysharing taking place in Annual Reviews and to date we have not achieved this. I am hopeful though that from September onwards I will be seeing Storysharing in reviews.*

*Frogwell SENCO: Thanks so much for bringing Storysharing into our school. I have had nothing but positive feedback from all involved and you must be extremely proud of what you do. Yes, we are in the early stages of using these techniques officially but already I can see a difference in our young people and how you have helped us in opening up their world. I know 100% that we will all continue to use and develop what we do and share the good practice with others. I would love send you some videos a little further down the line of Storysharing in practice so I can show off our children and the staff further!*

## **Conclusions.**

This programme presented us with an opportunity to widen the reach of our new and innovative speaking and listening approach in SEN schools and the community.

This approach, having been refined and researched in our previous programme, was proven to improve communication environments, increase pupil voice, and have applications across a wide range of speaking and listening support needs.

*We said that at the end of this grant 'we will have a product honed to meet the needs of organisations supporting children and young people with communications difficulties (both in and outside of the education setting). We will have a marketing campaign underway to attract purchasers. We will have a database of prospects to whom we will promote the Storysharing programme with endorsements from 5 schools.'*

The anticipated outcome would be the ability to deliver a product that would continue to generate income for the charity. This has been thrown into perspective by the journey of the organisation over these three years. At the end of our programme, we have a very realistic flavour of how crucial this earned income is.

At our end of project celebration, we asked delegates for a definition of Storysharing in a few words. One of our long-term supporters suggested 'The civilised art of gossip.'

This may seem insignificant, but we know that 'no story lives unless someone wants to listen' (J. K. Rowling, July 2011)

As Dr Bunning states in her 2018 article, 'the Storysharing process appeared to reveal not only something of the children's communication skills and confidence, but also something of their sense of agency.... the teachers were quite clear about how the children were able to express their own identities.'

Storysharing does use every-day 'gossip' as a bridge to richer inter-personal understanding. Dr Bunning: 'Seen as a 'way of working things out', the intervention was perceived to offer alternative ways of addressing difficult topics, facilitating open discussions and encouraging students to seek information from each other. ... There was recognition that novel stories could also address fairly complex concepts associated with particular emotions, including loss and bereavement, jealousy and abuse.'

The training programmes have positive benefits. A Licensed Tutor sums up: 'Everyone's much more fine-tuned and aware of tools that we can use to assist these children to socialise and communicate and express themselves.'

At the time of writing we are receiving multiple enquiries for advanced training. We are ready to run with trained leaders, completed training packs, costings and marketing materials in place. The prospect is that Storysharing will have 'a life of it's own' and that we can continue to reach many more young people into the future.

Ends

Jane Harwood  
Project leader  
June 2018

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

SEN / D : Special educational needs / disabilities

BaNES : Bath and North East Somerset

PHF : Paul Hamlyn Foundation

PAMIS : promoting a more inclusive society

SLT : speech and language therapist

ASLTIP : association of speech and language therapists in independent service

IASSID : international society for the study intellectual disabilities

ASD : autistic spectrum disorder

WPCC :Wiltshire parent carer council