



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

This report is an account of the joint Picture This – Story Making project facilitated and managed by Beyond Words and Kent Libraries, Registration and Archives between November 2015 and April 2016.

### Report Contents: The project report consists of 24 pages plus tables and appendices

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## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report **SPECIAL THANKS**

**We would like to thank**

**Arts Council England and Kent County Council**

**for their generous funding**

**The kind support from the**

**Service Development Librarian Diversity and Social Inclusion,**

**Customer Services Development Librarian and the**

**Support Officer for budget monitoring**

**Time2Give volunteers who supported the workshops and**

**Kent Skillnet for supporting the project and providing such a wonderful lunch for the  
launch day event**

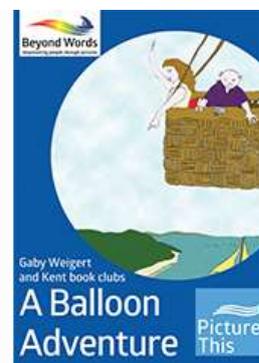
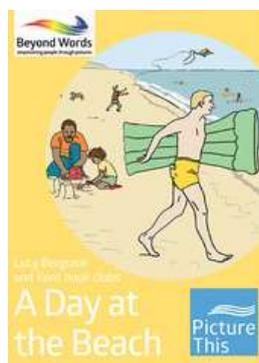
**The Beyond Words publishing team**

**for helping us to produce such beautiful books**

**A Day At The Beach**

**A Night In Space**

**A Balloon Adventure**





## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

205 people were involved in the  
Picture This – Story Sharing project

156 self-advocates with learning disabilities  
46 supporters at  
9 Kent library book clubs over  
6 months with  
3 artists and  
The Beyond Words publishing team with  
Kent Libraries & Archives staff  
Together made  
**Three Original Picture Story Book**

[Play Video](#)  
[Play Photo Gallery](#)



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### Executive summary

The Picture This – Story Sharing project created three original picture stories made for and by people with learning disabilities (self-advocates) and ran for six months from November 2015 to April 2016 across nine Beyond Words book clubs which are regularly held in Kent libraries. The project was developed from an initial idea to make a single story with just one of Kent library's Beyond Words book clubs.

Elizabeth Taylor, Kent Libraries Service Development Librarian, approached Beyond Words with the idea to make a story with book club members at Maidstone library. We immediately saw the potential to build this into a larger arts project incorporating drama as a story devising technique to make three original stories by and for book club members. The Picture This project quickly took shape and the final plan was extended across nine Kent libraries and has involved a total of two hundred and ninety four people. With the help and enthusiasm of supporters, carers, library staff and book club members we made three picture books based entirely on the original stories created by the self-advocates involved during drama sessions.

The Picture This delivery team of facilitator, artists and publishing assistant made fifteen visits to the nine Kent book clubs holding story devising workshops and picture trialling sessions, with self-advocates reading, commenting and improving the stories as they evolved. The artists have drawn and redrawn a large number of pictures in response to the trialling comments and feedback from the sixty two self-advocates who made the original stories, and a further ninety four self-advocate readers from the wider community in Kent.

The project divided into four distinct phases, the first involved selecting the artists, liaising with book clubs and scheduling the programme. A selection panel including self-advocates, senior art lectures at the City Literary Institute (City Lit) in London, Beyond Words founder and lead author Baroness Sheila Hollins arrived at the final choice of three artists, from seventeen initial artists' submissions.

Delivering the core project in phase two involved facilitating drama workshops for devising and developing the story. The third phase involved testing, trialling, editing and redrafting the picture stories. This iterative process based on multiple visits to book clubs gathering comments and feedback from those who will ultimately be reading them, ensured authenticity and honoured the original story ideas that came directly from the book club members themselves. Once the story was finished, the fourth phase of finalising the book layout, colour and print quality involved both the publishing and marketing teams.



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The project was celebrated at the launch of the books in Canterbury in April 2016 along with many of those who helped to create them. The project ran very smoothly with only the occasional late train and a few rainy days to contend with. From the very start of this project, our intention was always to place the imaginative and creative ideas of self-advocates who participated at the heart of the story making.

The first set of story making workshops had the creative flow often found in drama improvisation workshops. There were sometimes multiple voices from a wide range of people in the room including support staff. Maintaining this whole group creativity developed a sense of collective endeavour. As a facilitating team we continually reflected on where the voices in the narrative were coming from and whose ideas were being included. It was important to prioritise and be led by the ideas that came from self-advocates themselves. In order to keep to our stated aim of making the stories authentically theirs we consciously focused on collecting an almost verbatim story line directly from the ideas created by the book club members.

The legacy of this project is to provide three new original picture stories for book clubs across the country and a proven model for creating participant led stories that can involve local artists and drama practitioners. The Picture This ethos and process have developed a successful and engaging method of making communal stories based on collaborative participatory arts processes. Our hope is that the Picture This books will make people smile and laugh out loud, as they have done during the entire process of making them. The positive gains associated with laughter are well documented and reading these books in groups and having fun together is something that we hope everyone can enjoy.



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### **Project**

Kent libraries in partnership with Beyond Words worked with adults with learning disabilities (self-advocates) to develop a short series of three innovative picture books. The story lines were made through a series of high quality, professionally led drama workshops where self-advocates engaged in a story making process with the ideas coming directly from the groups. Using drama to improvise scenarios, devising and developing a story for the artists to capture in original illustrations, created three stories made by the participants for other book clubs and the wider public to read.

### **Project Management**

The Beyond Words training manager acted as project manager and delivered a full day Book Club training for 18 participants including Kent library staff, Time2Give volunteers and self-advocate volunteers from Kent book clubs as part of Kent library staff CPD. The manager also organised and carried out the recruitment of 3 artists through a rigorous selection process involving the City Literary Institute (City Lit) in London and a selection panel including Beyond Words staff and self-advocates. The project manager organised artists' workloads, schedules, travel arrangements and their participation in the workshops as well as timetabling, organising and facilitating the workshops themselves. Liaising with Beyond Words publishing team, the manager acted as the central coordinator for all aspects of the project.

### **Book Clubs**

Beyond Words book clubs are held in libraries for people with learning disabilities (self-advocates) and are attended regularly once a month, fortnightly or weekly dependant on local arrangements. The clubs read Beyond Words books at each meeting and often discuss the topics and subjects raised by the stories.

### **Workshops**

The Beyond Words training manager facilitated the drama element of the workshops to initiate ideas which helped to evolve plot lines and the development of characters in the stories. We used a range of drama activities; transforming large pieces of coloured cloth into a variety of costumes and objects from a hot air balloon or the sunrise over a sea wall to a camp fire, astronaut's uniforms and the surface of a distant planet. We practised emotional expressions and movement around the room to spark ideas about where we might be and what might be happening in our stories. We used percussion and movement for those participants with a wider range of need, some of whom were non-verbal and in wheelchairs.



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### **Artists**

Taking part in the project required a time commitment from each artist of 5 separate days for on-site workshops across Kent between October 2015 and February 2016. At initial visit the artists made notes, took photos and made sketches of the story as it was being devised. The artists engaged with this process as observers and sometimes as participants to capture the essential elements of each story idea. The artists then drew and redrew the 15 pictures, of the story multiple times as the project progressed. Each redrawn version of the story was trialled with participants on the project and with a wider group of readers from local day centres (table 1). Each workshop of about one hour, required the artists and drama facilitator to work quickly but with sensitivity to maintain focus on the story-making and the collaborative process in a responsive way. The training manager, publishing assistant and artists planned successive workshops in response to how each group engage with the process.

### **Artwork**

Each artist worked in collaboration with the Beyond Words Training Manager to facilitate the making of a Beyond Words style picture book. Self-advocates who take part in the workshops directly informed the content of the stories and the individual pictures as part of a creative process in collaboration with the Artists and the Training Manager.

### **Story-Making**

Our editorial and trialling process required a continued monitoring of pictures for clarity of storytelling and consistency in quality and continuity across the book. For this reason, we asked artists to send updated or redrawn pictures to us regularly on agreed deadline dates. The pictures were trialled with book clubs who had been involved in devising the story and with a wider readership of 94 people beyond the project participant group.

### **Publishing**

The Beyond Words publishing team worked closely with all three artists and the project manager, attended all 15 on site sessions in Kent. Providing editorial guidance throughout the development process and overseeing the picture trialling, the publishing assistant led on liaising with artists and providing ongoing advisory and practical support. The publishing team developed the supporting pages in the back of each book, providing expertise in layout and content. The successful and efficient production of the three books, finished on time and on budget, was largely due to the skill of the Beyond Words publishing team.



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

Beyond Words published the books, keeping ownership of the intellectual property. This enables Beyond Words to continue our charitable work and ensure that books are regularly reprinted and that the artistic integrity of the books is guaranteed. Kent libraries received 450 digital Print On Demand copies and each artist received a full set of three books, plus an addition 5 copies of their own book.

### Training

We facilitated a full day Book Club training for Kent librarians, volunteers and potential book club members at Maidstone library. The training looked at a little of Beyond Words history, how to start-up and run regular book clubs. How to read the books one to one, in groups and new reading techniques specific to Beyond Words book groups. There was a long discussion about how to support groups in reading thought-provoking topics and what to do if safeguarding or disclosure issue arise. We discussed how Books Beyond Words can help overcome barriers to communication.



### Sustainability

The published series of 3 books will be offered to a wider readership, the Picture This story-making methodology will stand as a model of good practice for inclusion in a collaborative and participatory arts activity.

This model encourages engagement with local drama arts practitioners, artist story-illustrators and volunteer carers as well as library staff and other professionals from across local communities. The training helped to develop skills across the staff team and volunteer groups in Kent. These skills can be passed on to others wanting to develop book clubs.



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### Notable Outcomes

The general sense of well-being that was reported from taking part in this communal, collaborative arts activity may stem from the sense of belonging and of recognition when we were creating something together. As a co-creative activity that valued both, individual and group contribution, this project seems to have increased the confidence of participants (snapshot case study 1) and offered a new dimension to the book club meetings. There are other book clubs who have heard about this project in the south east of England, who were not part of this project, but who have begun to make up their own stories in different ways.



Within the co-creative relationships in the collective endeavour of our project, a range of communicative skills including: recognising symbolic and literal meaning, estimating and imagining contexts, conceptualising ideas, negotiating and complying to a whole group view of the narrative supported the groups' collective desire to make a good story and to succeed.



Exploring ideas and contributing to a narrative within an existing frame of a story can promote feelings of ownership and an investment of individual creativity that is both exciting and enjoyable. Recognising feelings through this artistic co-creative process and exploring different layers of the story may have encouraged participants to explore emotional language: happy, sad, angry and surprised within the context of a narrative. The validation and acceptance of individual ideas through collaboration builds confidence.



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The co-creative exploration, mutual understanding and mutual acceptance required to create a shared narrative, within the frame offered by the improvised story lines, built and strengthened relationships. They may have promoted the positive feelings associated with teamwork.

People needed to travel to different libraries and to the celebration event so the project encouraged and supported more independent travelling. Julie picked up Mandy and they travelled by bus together to the celebration event in Canterbury and others had to travel to Tonbridge for drama session.

The book clubs have a series of 3 books which they can be very proud of and have already said they want to promote them to other book clubs in the area. This has started a discussion about how different book clubs could meet and read the new stories together.



Artists  
sharing  
pictures at  
the end of  
story making  
sessions





## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### **Phase 1: Project Preparation and Schedules** **Selecting the artists, coordinating and scheduling the programme**

#### **The artist selection process**

The selection process involved Artists attending a free workshop on 16th September 2016 at City Lit, Holborn in London, which offered an overview of how a Beyond Words Artist works and some of the skills required to take part in the project.

Following the workshop, within 4 weeks, Artists were asked to submit three pictures to a specific brief and a selection panel including people with learning disabilities, City Lit course leaders and Beyond Words Series Editor Baroness Sheila Hollins, selected the three Artists to work on the project. These Artists demonstrated an understanding of our process and the type of pictures that work for the people who read our books. Artists were not required to attend the workshop on 16th September to be eligible to submit pictures for selection and the submission process was opened out to other students and City Lit staff.

Artists could submit work against a detailed criteria available on the Beyond Words website. The artist's submissions underwent a three stage selection process. First with City Lit course tutors making a long list of 10 Artists from the original 17 submissions. Then our secondary panel of Beyond Words staff and self-advocates voted on their top three artists from this list of 10. Finally, the selection panel made up of three self-advocates, the Beyond Words Series Editor Baroness Sheila Hollins and the publishing team chose the three artists we were finally to work with.

#### **Coordinating and scheduling the programme.**

The 9 Beyond Words book clubs located in Kent Libraries were divided into 3 groupings, referred to as “clusters”, of 3 book clubs each. Clusters were determined by the days of the week each book club meets so that the Beyond Words facilitator, publishing assistant and artists could visit each of the book clubs without timetable clashes across the project over a 4-month period. Which artist was allocated to each cluster was determined purely on timetable availability.

Before the project each book club received an accessible pre-project leaflet about our visits and a photo permission form (appendix 1). We asked book club members before the project started to think about some stories we might like to make, here are some of the many ideas they came up with: *Having a baby, looking for work, going to college, going to a football match and things go wrong, going to a festival/concert/ party/fancy dress, going camping, going clubbing, blind date, learning to dance, going into space, going shopping, going swimming, missing the bus, getting the train, going on holiday.*



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### Timetables and workflow

The 3 clusters had separate workflow charts (table 2) and there was one additional meeting added to the original timetables in each case. The reason for the additional meetings was to enable members of book clubs, who couldn't attend the first story-making sessions, to participate fully in the initial creative story-making phase of the project.

The clusters were grouped as follows:

**Cluster 1** Deal, Dover and Folkestone

**Cluster 2** Dartford, Maidstone and Sittingbourne

**Cluster 3** Edenbridge, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells





## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### Phase 2: Story-making

#### Drama workshops for devising and developing the story

##### Drama workshops

Each cluster met together at a central venue to devise their own story using an inclusive drama process to improvise ideas and develop a narrative. Each story devising session began with an explanation of the project using the pre-project leaflet (appendix 1). The groups stood or sat in a circle and slowly began to engage with the devising process. We began moving with a drama warm up exercise using simple outline drawings of emotional expressions on round faces and colourful cloths. We had initially intended to use balloons as a way of warming up passing the balloon around. The facilitator asked if everyone was happy to use balloons and there were people at each of the first two meetings that had a significant dislike and even fear of balloons so we decided not to use them on the project at all. Instead we used the improvisation game ‘this is not a cloth’ where people imagine a cloth to be a variety of different things; a snake, a dress, a shower, a trumpet etc.

The groups engaged with the cloth improvisation warm up easily imagining it to be elements of the story and it quickly became apparent that the story-making could grow out of this accessible and fun activity. In each group we discussed some of the story ideas that had previously been mentioned and we chose one theme for each cluster. Each cluster arrived at their story theme in a slightly different way.

One of the Tonbridge groups required high levels of support and have significant communication difficulties. We used a range percussion instruments including shakers and small drums with this group.

Cluster 1 main story idea came from the improvisations. This story ‘A Day At The Beach’ started with one cloth as the sea and another being held taut as a sea wall, then a third yellow cloth scrunched up appeared from behind the wall as a sunrise. Frequently asking the groups “*I wonder what happens next ...?*” as each idea came to an end, allowed people to contribute ideas randomly and freely. Accepting ideas that moved the stories on and democratically negotiating which ideas to use when more than one suggestion was made, helped to quickly structure a spontaneous story line.



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Cluster 2 also chose their main story idea from the improvisations. Their story about a hot air balloon had evolved from using cloths held between two people triggering ideas of kites flying and a hot air balloon in the sky. Their story was finally called ‘A Balloon Adventure’

Cluster 3 chose their main idea before we started the improvisations and were clear they wanted to make a story about space. The improvisations then started with a rocket flying into space and landing on a planet. The story then grew using percussion to dance around an imagined camp fire made of cloths. We used the cloths as sashes for the Space Heroes and the colours chosen are reflected in the pictures drawn by the artist.

This story ‘A Night In Space’ followed the adventures of 3 space heroes in search of a friend who had gone ahead of them. They also met a monster and needed to find stars to use as energy to take back to their planet. During the trialling process it became clear we needed a device to make the story a little less abstract. The idea to frame the whole adventure in a dream was suggested and further trialling proved that this made the story much more readable with a logic that people could relate to.

Cluster 3 at Tonbridge and Edenbridge groups used percussion instruments to help enhance the drama of the story as an accessible form of engagement for those with higher levels of need. In fact musical instruments became a key part of the story ‘A Night In Space’.

For all three clusters, going back over the stories a few times in each session from the start and recapping the key moments, acted as a framework within which to introduce characters and develop the plot each time we retold the story. Each group improvised ideas, worked quickly within a new narrative and moved back and forth in the story timeline as the story developed. When the ideas stopped coming we intentionally waited for someone to contribute another idea, to steadily develop a narrative that was led by the book club members and not by the facilitating team. The narrative progressed directly out of these ideas and stayed true to the way they were presented in both content and detail. For example the age, gender and occupation of the characters was set by the groups. The time of day and other contextual details were recorded and are truthfully reflected in the stories.



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### **Phase 3 Trialling** **Editing and redrafting the story**

Trialling took the form of a systematic process of reading and reporting by collecting verbatim responses from readers, as well as informed reflection from support staff, who know the readers well, about how the stories were being received and their levels of engagement. We collected trialling responses from a total of 156 readers plus their supporters.

During this trialling phase we discovered that the majority of our readers like to see a story that is clear, logical and that has some reference points they can relate to from their own life experience or from things they know about and have some knowledge of. The stories produced by both cluster 1 'A Day At The Beach' and cluster 2 'A Balloon Adventure' had many elements people could recognise a logical story arch. The story that cluster 3 had made 'A Night In Space', although highly imaginative and made for some striking drama during the story-making workshops, lacked logical story development and had a number of abstract ideas that those trialling the pictures found difficult to relate to.

As an editorial team we had to make some choices about which parts of the cluster 3 story would make the narrative most readable, while remaining true to the groups initial story-making ideas. The suggestion of framing the story as a dream had instant appeal as dreaming is something we all do and the unpredictable nature of dreams helped to give context to the action in the story that was of a more abstract nature.

The editorial team had many such meetings discussing the feedback from all 3 stories from the 94 wider readers who were trialling the pictures across Kent as well as the suggestions from the 62 people already on the project.

The overwhelming response was very positive and the suggestions about narrative consistency, understanding and how engaging the story was helped the artists to make many alterations to the pictures. Some of the alterations were simple repositioning of characters in a picture or redrawing elements that were unclear. Sometimes however, changes were more significant with entire pictures being discarded or redrawn. The subsequent second round of trialling reports came back with fewer alterations needed (table3).



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### **Phase 4 Publishing**

#### **Printing, celebration and launch of the books**

Each artist was given a clear work schedule with deadlines to submit black and white trialling pictures, colour rough trialling pictures and final artwork. The publishing team checked all the pictures for layout, colour and correct alignment before preparing final art works to be sent to be printed. The artists had been given staggered deadlines to finish the artwork so the publishing team could manage their time around other publishing commitments.

Time constraints towards the end of the project meant the publishing team decided to request only one proof hard copy of the first book to be sent to print. This gave them a good idea of the print quality and how the colour pallet and layout would work and used this information when correcting and sending the other two books to print. The printers did provide digital proofs of the other two books which, along with the hard copy proof of the first book, was sufficient to make decisions for the finished print art work.

The publishing team also prepared most of the content and layout for the supporting pages in the back of each book with; an explanation of the project, a bullet point story line, some photos of the workshops and acknowledgements of the people who helped to make the stories.

The celebration and launch of the books was held at Westgate Hall Canterbury on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 with more than 120 people attending. George Fiawoo from Music for Change led a drumming and dancing workshop for the entire hall. The book club members got a first look at the finished books they helped to create and the people involved in trialling saw how their ideas had helped improve the pictures. James Pearson the Service Improvement Manager at Kent Libraries recommended the books during a speech, suggesting all the libraries across Kent keep them as part of the library stock. During the extended lunch break we ate some delicious food supplied by Kent Skillnet and there was; a drama workshop, pop-up book club to read through all three books and colouring of the black and white Picture This book pictures.

Councillor Mark Hill from Kent County Council addressed the audience stressing the value of the project for the county.



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### The Picture This Delivery Team

Artists	Publishing & Marketing	Project Management
<p><b>Beth Aulton</b> whose illustration work combines ink, paint and often collage with digital media. Beth enjoyed the creative freedom of the Picture This project.</p>	<p><b>Hannah Pimble</b> is the Beyond Words publishing assistant and worked closely with the team to ensure the editorial and publishing quality of the books, Hannah attended all 15 site visits.</p>	<p><b>Stas' Smagala</b> Beyond Words training manager and project lead for Picture This – Story Sharing project and facilitated the initial drama activities to devise each story line.</p>
<p><b>Lucy Bergonzi</b> who has worked as a muralist, as a community artist, as a set designer and scenic artist in the theatre, and as a studio artist.</p>	<p><b>Becky Skipwith</b> is the Beyond Words publishing editor and had oversight of the printing and publishing process.</p>	<p><b>Elizabeth Taylor</b> is the Service Development Librarian for Diversity and Social Inclusion at Kent Libraries &amp; Archives who had the initial idea to make stories with members of Beyond Words book clubs.</p>
<p><b>Gaby Weigert</b> started illustrating for Beyond Words at the end of 2015 for the debut Picture This project after completing an illustrators course at City Lit London.</p>	<p><b>Peter Taylor</b> is the Beyond Words marketing manager, Pete helped to support the artists with digital processing and Photoshop and helped to promote the project and the books.</p>	<p><b>Sue Carmichael</b> is the Beyond Words book club coordinator for Kent and supported the groups at visit and workshops helping to coordinate the project across Kent.</p>



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### Celebration and book launch event

The 3 books were officially launched at a celebration event in Westgate Hall Canterbury.

When the first group from Edenbridge arrived, who had been involved in making *A Night In Space*, they were overjoyed at seeing their book finished and Christine, a no-verbal member of the group who had contributed to the main character, was very excited to see her name in the back and the picture of the character she had helped to invent.

120 people with learning disabilities and their supporters attended the event. Councillor Mark Hill from Kent County Council addressed the audience stressing the value of the project for the county and spoke very highly of the books and of the process of making them. James Pearson the Service Improvement Manager at Kent Libraries also spoke recommending the books be taken up by all the libraries across Kent. Both Councillor Hill and James Pearson expressed a desire to explore funding possibilities for similar projects in the future, citing the need for libraries to extend their community engagement programmes. Picture this as a process, was seen by both Mark and James as an excellent model for inclusive creative arts practice.



Baroness Sheila Hollins, Beyond Words founder, editor and lead author of the Books Beyond Words series made a key note address. Sheila had been involved in the process from the start, helping select the artists, commenting during the trialling process and overseeing the overall publication of the Picture This imprint.



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The celebration was a joyful event with African drumming and storytelling. Some participants took part in a drama workshop and other joined a pop-up book reading group of all 3 of the Picture This books. There were black and white line drawings of the pictures from the stories available for those interested in colouring. There is a free download of black and white pictures open to the general public on our website for those interested in the increasingly popular pastime of adult colouring.



After lunch we held a panel discussion with; self-advocates Cas and Ray from the Folkestone book club, the three artists Beth Aulton, Gaby Weigert and Lucy Bergonzi, Kent Beyond Words book club coordinator Sue Carmichael and Liz Taylor Service Development Librarian for Diversity and Social Inclusion at Kent libraries. The 35 discussion included questions from the floor and a discussion about the project and the importance of including people in the creative process of making stories.

Baroness Hollins cut the official Picture This launch cake and all participants with learning disabilities received free copies of the books. The 62 people involved in making the stories were given a canvas bag with all 3 books in and those 94 people who helped with the wider trialling could choose one of the books as they left.

### **Baroness Sheila Hollins ceremonial cutting of the Picture This cake**



We ensured that people who could not attend the launch would each receive their free books. Kent libraries retained the remaining books to distribute to libraries across Kent.

The launch event was a great success and some of those attending were asking when we will make another book, staff commented that the book club members had been more engaged and excited about this project than they had ever seen them.



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### Summary

The Picture This project is widely seen as a great success and the vast majority of those involved have embraced the idea of making stories for and by people with learning disabilities with genuine enthusiasm. The anecdotal evidence is very positive and a great many people involved said they enjoyed taking part. The three books that were produced have generated a lot of interest locally and across Beyond Words' traditional readership.

The stated intention to use the original story ideas from the book club members, to make light-hearted books to read for pleasure, was adhered to very closely across the project. This at times made the editorial process challenging, partly due to the intensive trialling and tight publishing window, but also the number of people with learning disabilities consulted, which totalled 94 when all trialling groups are included, generated a very large amount of feedback material to be processed and acted upon.

There may have been a temptation at some points in the trialling to make editorial decisions on behalf of the people for whom the books were being produced. This would have made some of the trialling processes faster and perhaps reduced some of the workload, but it would not have been a true reflection of what people genuinely thought. Neither would it have been the authentic voice of the people for whom the books are intended.

The original story making process ran very smoothly with the drama sessions proving to be a highly popular and effective stimulus for story making and generating ideas from participants, as reflected in the comments below:

From Tonbridge library book club volunteer facilitators:

*They all seem to enjoy the artwork and at the session following the review of the artist's pictures some of the group asked if we could do the acting and storytelling with those pictures or other similar pictures again. They all confirmed they had enjoyed both sessions.*

*Last week Jo [supporter] again discussed the book with them. The majority of them still recall the sessions and the story. This is not always the case with Books Beyond Words so possibly having the opportunity (and the room) to act them out was helpful.*

*[From case study 3] A's confidence has been reinforced and to some extent his enthusiasm is contagious and other members of the group engage better. As volunteers, we feel sure the acting and involvement in the production of the book increases their self-esteem.*

*Sending out pre-project information explaining the project for everyone involved helped.*

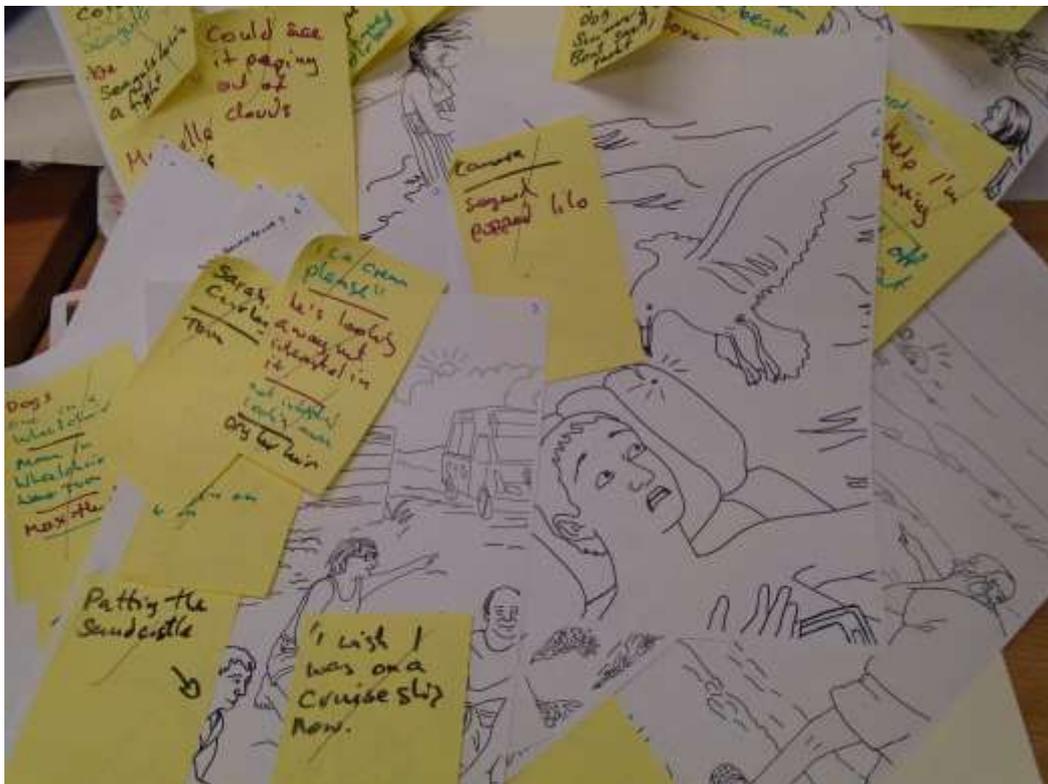
*Terry & Jo*



## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

The Beyond Words publishing team:

The Picture This project was something very new for Beyond Words. We have been evolving our methodology over 25 years and the Picture This development process was a fantastic opportunity for us to try a different creative approach and to work with new artists. We always involve people with learning disabilities at every stage of book production, however in the Picture This process the book club members had a much greater level of creative input in the story making. The drama workshops were accessible and uniquely inclusive because they gave all of the book club members the opportunity to share their ideas without having to use words; people with very little or no speech were empowered to meaningfully contribute to the creation and the development of the stories. Future book development could draw on the Picture This approach to enhance the creative process. The overall project has been hugely rewarding for everyone involved and the quality of the three books produced is a testament to Beyond Words' commitment to co-production.





## Picture This – Story Sharing Project Report

### Recommendations

#### PHASE 1: Project Preparation & Schedules

The preparation for the project, agreeing participant and delivery team availability ran very smoothly. Organising the 9 book clubs into clusters of three helped with scheduling. Each artist was allocated to a cluster and most of the timetable was agreed before delivery started. There were no significant adjustments needed to this plan.

As part of the artist selection processes, being very clear from the outset around expectations of time commitment, travel arrangements and the types of IT skills involved is helpful.

#### PHASE 2: Story Making

The cluster 1 story 'A Day At The Beach' and the cluster 2 story 'A Balloon Adventure', were easy stories to follow and were understood by most people and only needed adjustments to the clarity of the illustrations. The cluster 3 story 'A Night In Space' was originally devised with a large group of 22 participants with wide range of abilities. This generated a story line with a number of different characters and with parallel story lines. The fact that it was set in space seemed to make the content of the action far more fantastic than in the other stories which were set in more conventional places.

This fantasy element of the story made for very good drama at the moment of improvising ideas, and made perfect sense as a performed story for those who had been involved in making it. However, once the ideas had been translated from live action into two dimensional illustrations and read by people who had not been part of the story making, there were difficulties in understanding and following the plot.

Consequently, there were many more trialling sessions needed for this story to arrive at a solution that would make reading more straightforward and easier to follow. Trialling revealed that the multiple characters were confusing so we concentrated on one story line with a clear lead character. Maintaining a logical progression in the narrative was also important and the environment of the story needed to be justified "*why are they in space?*"

An idea was put forward to make the whole adventure the main character's dream of her flying off into space. This proved to be very successful and the logic of being in space became perfectly acceptable as anything can happen in a dream. Any future story making



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sessions of this sought would benefit from deciding beforehand to limit the story to one strand and to double check for logic and how it transfers onto the page from a live improvisation to a pictorial representation of the narrative.

### **PHASE 3: Trialling**

The main recommendation for future trialling of the type described here would be to ensure there is sufficient time and staff capacity to process a large amount of feedback and comments.

The trialling was very successful and very labour intensive, with many documents both electronic and hand written being passed to the publishing team. Once all the trialling comments had been received at each draft stage of drawing; black and white roughs, colour roughs and final roughs, the team collated all the feedback. The artists were presented with a list of action points to make the alteration required for the pictures and the story to be made clearer. Sometimes this involved complete redrawing of some pictures, or re ordering the sequence of events and moving characters and objects around in the frame. All the actions points were made as a result of this very wide feedback process and in direct response to the trialling comments.

### **PHASE 4: Publishing & Core Project Team**

Making sure the artists have sufficient drawing time between each redraft of the pictures is crucial. There were a few times in the drawing phases that artists needed additional days to complete the alterations required. Fortunately, we had planned in a little extra capacity and most of the time the deadlines were met punctually and even early on one or two occasions.

Having a strong and efficient team with a range of skills to deliver workshops, liaise with artists and oversee publishing and editing is important. Clear definition of roles and responsibilities among the team reduces the possibilities of duplicating work. Giving everyone ample notice of timetables, schedules and plans specific to their own area of responsibility, avoids overloading people with information that is not relevant to them.



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### Tables

**Table 1: Picture This project wider trialling groups**

A total of 94 additional self-advocate readers contributed comments and feedback to inform picture redrafts and changes for story clarity and readability.

#### **Seaside Story**

- Chatty Bunch Ashford
- Ashford Community Day Services
- Beyond Words Book Group Swanley  
(members are students from Milestone Academy)
- Skillnet Group
- Deal Fishing Group
- Margate Ready2Read Group

#### **Balloon Story**

- Everyday English Group Sittingbourne
- Topaz Community Maidstone
- North Kent Independent Advocacy Service
- Beyond Words Book Group Cliftonville

#### **Space Story**

- Everyday English Group Sittingbourne
- Skillnet Catering Group
- Independent Living Skill Group Tunbridge Wells



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**Table 2: Artists Workflow Chart - Example**

Communication			
<p>Stas’ Smagala, the Beyond Words training manager will be the central point of contact for Lucy and the book clubs. <a href="mailto:stassmagala@booksbeyondwords.co.uk">stassmagala@booksbeyondwords.co.uk</a> 020 8725 2783</p>			
ITEM	Personnel	Book Club Cluster	Note
1	BC Session 1 Stas’ Hannah Lucy	<b>Book clubs A, B &amp; C</b> Venue TBC <i>(as many as can attend from all 3 BC)</i>	<b>Additional visit to some Book Clubs may be required TBC</b>
2	Lucy ONLY	Lucy 1 Draw in own time	<p>Lucy, Stas’ and Hannah will work with three Book Clubs in Kent which are in a cluster in this table labelled A, B &amp; C. The precise location of the cluster will be agreed nearer the beginning of the project. The book that is produced will be the culmination of a creative process with input from all three book clubs.</p> <p>Lucy input highlighted in GREEN is at a Book Club meeting in a library.</p> <p>Lucy input highlighted in YELLOW is when Lucy is working independently in their own time.</p>
3	BC Session 2 Stas’ Hannah Lucy	<b>Book Club A</b> workshop with Book Club	
4	Lucy ONLY	Lucy 1 Draw in own time	
5	BC Session 3 Stas’ Hannah only  (NO LUCY)	<b>Book club B</b> workshop with Book Club	
6	Lucy ONLY	Lucy 1 Draw in own time	
7	BC Session 4 Stas’ Hannah Lucy	<b>Book club C</b> workshop with Book Club	
8	Lucy ONLY	Lucy 1 Draw in own time	
9	BW Print	<b>Story is printed</b>	

Please get in touch if you would like any further details about the project.



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<b>Table 3: Participant Data</b>							
Participants included those with mild to moderate learning disabilities (MLD) and some with severe learning disabilities (SLD). The majority fell into the MLD group and there were 6 with SLD.							
<b>C1 Picture This – Story Sharing Project STORY MAKING PARTICIPANT DATA</b>							
Book Club		Female	Male	Over 18	Total LD	Supporters	Total
Deal		1	3	Y	4	1	5
Dover		1	2	Y	3	1	4
Folkestone		7	7	Y	14	1	15
<b>Cluster Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>C2 Picture This – Story Sharing Project STORY MAKING PARTICIPANT DATA</b>							
Book Club		Female	Male	Over 18	Total LD	Supporters	Total
Dartford		4	2	Y	6	4	10
Maidstone		3	3	Y	6	3	9
Sittingbourne		2	4	Y	6	2	8
<b>Cluster Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>C3 Picture This – Story Sharing Project STORY MAKING PARTICIPANT DATA</b>							
Book Club		Female	Male	Over 18	Total LD	Supporters	Total
Edenbridge		4	0	Y	4	2	6
Tonbridge		8	6	Y	14	4	18
Tunbridge Wells		2	3	Y	5	1	6
<b>Cluster Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>STORY MAKING</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	32	30		62	19	81
<b>C1 Picture This – Story Sharing Project STORY TRIALLING PARTICIPANT DATA</b>							
<b>Cluster Total</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>44</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>C2 Picture This – Story Sharing Project STORY TRIALLING PARTICIPANT DATA</b>							
<b>Cluster Total</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>C3 Picture This – Story Sharing Project STORY TRIALLING PARTICIPANT DATA</b>							
<b>Cluster Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Trialling Total</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>53</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>ARTIST-ILLUSTRATORS</b>							<b>3</b>
							<b>205</b>



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### Three Participant Snapshots – Case Studies

For safeguarding reasons participants remain anonymous as this is a public document

**The three people selected here for case study were chosen because they were assumed to be, either quieter people among their groups or who may not engage as much as others due to additional impairment or needs.**

#### Snapshot 1

C is a quiet woman with Down's syndrome her supporter said that she does not speak often in the usual book reading sessions. During the warm up at the drama sessions she seemed a little reluctant and looked to her supporter for reassurance often. As the session progressed she began to join in with the actions of eating ice cream and being on a beach. The story unfolded from the group's ideas and people improvising the action of the story in a square marked out on the floor. At one point in the story a man in the sea becomes distressed and a lifeguard is needed. Without hesitation C ran to her chair, put her red fleece around her shoulders as a costume and came to the rescue of the man drowning in the sea. Her action prompted spontaneous applause and from that moment she was fully engaged in the drama and in the story making and no longer looked to her supporter for reassurance. C worked independently for the remainder of the session and said she enjoyed the workshop very much.

Here is a comment made by her supporter.

*C took part in the acting much more than I thought she would. Actually they all did. I didn't think they would make up such a good story. Actually they all joined in for the whole time which I wasn't expecting.*

This session was shorter than the others and C joining in with such enthusiasm seemed to give others confidence and the story developed very quickly.



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### Snapshot 2

B is nonverbal middle aged man with Down’s syndrome and his communication is very limited. He didn’t join in much of the warm up and needed to be physically guided around the space during the story devising drama session. After a little while he began to copy other people’s movements and mirror actions such raising his arms. Once we began to use the coloured cloths to make different imaginary objects, his engagement seem to increase quite noticeably. Mid way through the session, during some small group activities, I noticed that B was moving around the space independently without being guided by his supporter. He joins in with movements in the small groups, copying what others were doing. The extent to which B connected his movements to a story is difficult to ascertain, but it was clear that he had the confidence to approach other people, which is unusual for him to do independently.

Here are some of the comments made by his supporter.

*I have observed that he took an active part in the story telling which encouraged his interaction with others. I believe these stories can help to develop his imagination and communication skills. B was observant to what others were doing and copied the actions of flying the kite this also encouraged verbal sounds such whistling like the wind. I wish for B to attend more of these groups to encourage the development of social interaction and storytelling.*

The interaction with others that his supporter noticed was quite unusual for him, he never speaks so making sounds of whistling like the wind meant he was communicating in an appropriate way to the context of the action – a kite flying on a windy day.



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### Snapshot 3

A is a visual impaired middle aged man with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

Before we began the story devising drama session, some people expressed concerns that his visual impairment might impact on his confidence to join in, restrict his movement and even cause him to bump into things. In fact he was involved right from the start and was acting out the roles and developing the story very confidently. Contributing ideas at every stage of the story development.

Here are some of the comments made by his supporters.

*He has been with the group for about six months. Although he is partially sighted and has to make a lot of effort to see pictures, he always wants to participate. At the first creative session [of the Picture This project] he engaged immediately and was the first to join in the acting. He was absolutely delighted to get the opportunity to play a dog and his attitude encouraged other members to take part. They all seemed to enjoy the active involvement and use of all the different props.*

*At the second session where the artwork was produced it was clear that most of them had good recall of what had happened. They were delighted with the pictures and many of them could remember the story they had created. One group member, who doesn't often intervene, reminded us that Power Rangers had been involved. A relived his role as a dog with much enthusiasm. They all seem to enjoy the artwork and at the session following the review of the artist's pictures some of the group asked if we could do the acting and storytelling with those pictures or other similar pictures again. They all confirmed they had enjoyed both sessions.*

*Last week Jo [supporter] again discussed the book with them. The majority of them still recall the sessions and the story. This is not always the case with Books Beyond Words so possibly having the opportunity (and the room) to act them out was helpful. A's confidence has been reinforced and to some extent his enthusiasm is contagious and other members of the group engage better. As volunteers, we feel sure the acting and involvement in the production of the book increases their self-esteem.*

*We have no doubt that when the book comes out they will be extremely proud.*



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Observing how participants C, B and A engaged with the drama from the very start it was clear that they were very happy expressing himself physically, the initial concerns of support staff that they would find the acting too challenging or negotiating the space difficult were unfounded. In fact, because they were offered an opportunity to express their ideas physically, they found ways of responding to the story ideas without needing to speak.

Participant A responded to sounds and the movement of people around him. I observed him exploring the space with the outside of his forearms making contact with people so he knew where they were. There was one moment in the story devising session, when a large number of the group were dancing in a circle, moving quite briskly, and A joined in without any difficulty.

Participant B responded to the stimulus of the cloths and movement by copying the actions of those around him and interacting more than he usually does. There were people at the session from a different book club that he had never met before but this did not seem to matter.

Participant C's enthusiastic, sudden and total engagement in the action of the story seemed to inspire the others in the group and set the tone for the session.



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### Comments from some of those involved

#### SUPPORTERS

I felt that the project got off to a very good start. It was lively and stimulating. It was such a joy to see so many members joining in and getting so much out of it particularly the quieter member and David who has limited vision but bags of personality.

As you know Denise and I run the group for the more disabled and sadly two (of seven) were away and one always has to leave after about 15 mins, but Joel was very involved

Janet

Sensory reading group supporter, Tonbridge library

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I felt that the group really enjoyed it and they really got into the roles. It appeared that they followed the story very well and it was explained excellently as the story went on. I loved it when Grace used the “Apple Phone” [carton of apple juice] she acted it out perfectly.

Clare, support worker

Peppercorns book club, Dartford

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The Riverside Readers in Tonbridge enjoyed Books Beyond Words and discussion about the topics. They were enthusiastic about helping to create a new book [on the Picture This project]. Part of the attraction may have been that it was a topic that had nothing to do with their everyday lives.

Support worker

Riverside Readers book club, Tonbridge