

WITH MY EYES

DRAMA THERAPY FROM GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

What is The Project?

With My Eyes will provide a free course of drama-therapy workshops for ten Surrey children and their parents. Sessions will begin with an initial 2-hour assessment and twelve 90-minute group sessions, culminating in a final group-sharing, allowing both generations to connect through drama.

Our inspiration for this project came from a girl we met through our Saturday Drama Club. She was struggling with mental health and has been signed off school. She has since been on extended work-experience with us and received a scholarship to join our Young Company. As a result, her self-confidence, stability and mood have improved dramatically. She has recently restarted college and her entire family have seen the benefits. Her mother has really appreciated the sharing of responsibility and the chance to talk about the family's situation. Even her eight-year-old sister noticed the improvement.

“My big sister has been so smiley since she has been with GSC (I don't know what GSC means, but she says it all the time). So thank you for making her happy, because she is normally really sad all the time.”

With My Eyes has been made possible through generous funding from [The High Sheriff Youth Awards](#) and [The Big Lottery Fund](#). Please visit their website for more details.

How Does The Project Work?

With My Eyes will be led by two pairs of facilitators, comprising of a member of GSC staff and a drama-therapist. Each pair will work in separate rooms – one pair working with the children, while the other works with the parents – providing each group with a new social support network. Pairing each facilitator with a drama-therapist will allow the more reluctant members of the group to explore the sessions with the aid of a professional actor, while maintaining a safe environment.

The final group-sharing will be an informal performance, which could involve an element of forum theatre, allowing audience members to take the place of one of the actors, change a situation and create a better outcome. Two additional actors from GSC's trusted company will attend the sessions in the build-up to this final performance, allowing additional opportunities for the participants to explore scenarios which could apply to their everyday lives.

In Autumn, all participants will be invited to attend a free performance of GSC's Autumn show. This will provide a chance for all members to celebrate their achievements and consolidate their new friendships.

Which children are eligible?

We will consider any children that have been excluded from school, are close to exclusion, or have a history of mental health difficulties. **NB: *With My Eyes* is completely free to attend.**

What does the Project Provide?

With My Eyes runs over the course of 12 weeks in Guildford.

Provisional dates: Thursday 25 April – Thursday 18 July (Half Term 30th May; no class)

The Project Will Provide:

- **Twelve free drama sessions for ten children and their parents.**
- **One free assessment session for all participants.**
- **Professional facilitation by GSC staff and qualified drama-therapists.**
- **Additional visits by professional actors.**
- **An informal sharing of work between children and parents.**
- **A final celebration at GSC's Autumn show, with complimentary tickets.**

Does Drama Therapy Work?

Drama-therapy can be a highly effective treatment, as it allows its participants to share their traumas and issues in a creative and safe environment. It can also be accessed by children and adults with equal success and doesn't require any prior experience of drama.

Drama-therapy can have long-lasting benefits on the children and their parents, as well as their relationship with each other. The participants may gain a greater sense of trust in themselves and others, increased social skills, better awareness of their body and a new sense of creative freedom.

According to a report by The Arts Health Report on arts-based therapy:

- **82% of participants gain increased self-confidence.**
- **59% of participants find new friends during their sessions.**
- **72% of participants develop language, creative or social skills.**

A report by Re-Imagine (Lemos & Crane) also showed that participants in art therapy gain:

- **Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.**
- **Better coping skills.**
- **Independence to pursue own interests.**
- **Bonding social capital.**
- **Raised self-esteem.**
- **Promotion of mental capital.**
- **Reduced symptoms of depression.**

Shakespeare's work involves a large range of characters in a variety of challenging situations that can be used as the basis for self-exploration. Using our extensive knowledge of his work we will suggest scenes and characters that will allow the participants to explore fictional scenarios which parallel their own.

How Will The Project Be Planned?

Through early conversation with the drama-therapists and the initial assessment sessions, we will establish clear and achievable goals within each session. Throughout the project the therapists, facilitators and GSC staff will be in regular contact to assess progress and re-evaluate these goals.

GSC will be in constant communication with the therapists, facilitators and participants throughout the project to monitor how everything is going and if we need to offer additional support. Participants will be tracked throughout the project and their feedback will be evaluated, through on-going conversations and an online questionnaire at the end of the course. A final evaluation session will be scheduled between the drama-therapists and GSC staff.

Who are GSC?

Established in 2006, Guildford Shakespeare Company has grown into one of Surrey's best-loved and largest producing theatre companies. Its aim is to re-invigorate the act of theatre-going, break down barriers and prove that everyone can access and enjoy the works of Shakespeare.

GSC's Education Department engages with over 4,000 people annually. We are always looking to find new ways of engaging with those who wouldn't normally be able to access our work. In Autumn 2018, we launched [Brave New World](#), a programme of pilot programmes to assist disadvantaged schools, reduce social isolation and improve mental health in the community.

"In the past few years, we have been fortunate enough to partner with the Guildford Shakespeare Company. All pupils were chosen because they are dealing with particularly challenging situations at home and therefore understandably struggle with many aspects of school. Since participating, all have developed in a multitude of ways. They are more articulate, more emotionally resilient, more confident and, most importantly, they are happier. We have tried several different interventions with children in similar situations in the past, but the staff are in agreement that the GSC project has had the most tangible impact."

Mei Lim, Headteacher at Weyfield Primary School

We raised over £60,000 for our work in 2018-19, including several free or heavily subsidised programmes for Surrey's most disadvantaged residents. Projects include: Drama-therapy sessions within a residential care-home; year-long residencies at Guildford Grove Primary School and King's College Guildford; free drama-club placements for Weyfield Primary Schools students and two tours to the most disadvantaged primary and secondary schools across Surrey.

For more information, please visit our website – www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk.

Thank you for reading.