

WITH MY EYES DRAMA THERAPY FROM GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

What is The Project?

With My Eyes is a unique course of dramatherapy workshops for Surrey teenagers with mental-health needs and their parents, run by Guildford Shakespeare Company and professional dramatherapists.

With My Eyes is aimed at young people who have been excluded from school, or at risk of exclusion, due to mental health difficulties. Intervention is expensive, but is negligible when compared to a lifetime of service support. 1 in 3 adult mental health conditions relate directly to adverse childhood experiences and women who experience childhood adversity are 66% more likely to suffer from a premature death.

The purpose of *With My Eyes* is to break the cycle of mental health issues and provide an opportunity for emotions and feelings to be expressed and explored through drama and creative arts. The teenagers and their parents will be supported in developing a mutual understanding, based on shared experiences, in a consistent and safe environment.

"It was good to hear from other parents experiencing similar difficulties, as it can be quite a lonely journey. It provides a supported youth development space for these young people, who may lack the usual opportunities to work with peers."

Participant 2019

How Does The Project Work?

The programme consists of an initial assessment, group sessions, theatre trips and a final celebration.

Participants have shared that the sessions were the only opportunity in their busy lives to stop, reflect, be themselves and connect with others in similar situations. By sharing their personal experiences and exploring Shakespeare's work, the groups recognised the connection between the personal and the collective. This led to a sense of not being isolated and a validation of personal experience.

Benefits for participants, include:

- Increased confidence and self-esteem.
- Peer support and reassurance.
- Improved communication between parent and child.
- Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Better resilience and coping skills.

Group session begin with parents and teenagers working together, to create a common language. The parents and teenagers then move into separate rooms, with a dramatherapist and GSC facilitator working with both. In this manner, each generation gains tailored sessions that utilises the combined skillsets of the therapists and facilitators, while building a new support network and social circle.

The assessment session allows the therapists to create a relationship with the families before the course begins. This will allow us to establish each family's specific needs and improve our planning of the course content. This will also reduce participant anxiety in advance of the first session.

Trips to our professional shows are a great bonding experience for the groups. Participants might not normally go out to the theatre, due to the anxiety of interacting with strangers. The GSC environment is safe for participants and the visits further integrate the participants into the GSC company, establish common-ground and generate conversation for exploration in the sessions.

The final celebration session provides provide closure and begins the after-care programme. It takes place several months after the initial course has finished, before all participants watch our professional Autumn show, their third theatre trip as part of the programme.



In this session, participants chose objects that best represented themselves

"It's a good chance to see people. I don't tend to socialise."

Participant 2019

Which Families Are Eligible?

We will consider any families with children that are excluded from school, are close to exclusion, or have a history of mental health difficulties. Families will be referred to GSC from CAMHS in Surrey, school Inclusion Officers, or local organisations and charities with a similar remit.

NB: WITH MY EYES IS COMPLETELY FREE TO ATTEND.

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.

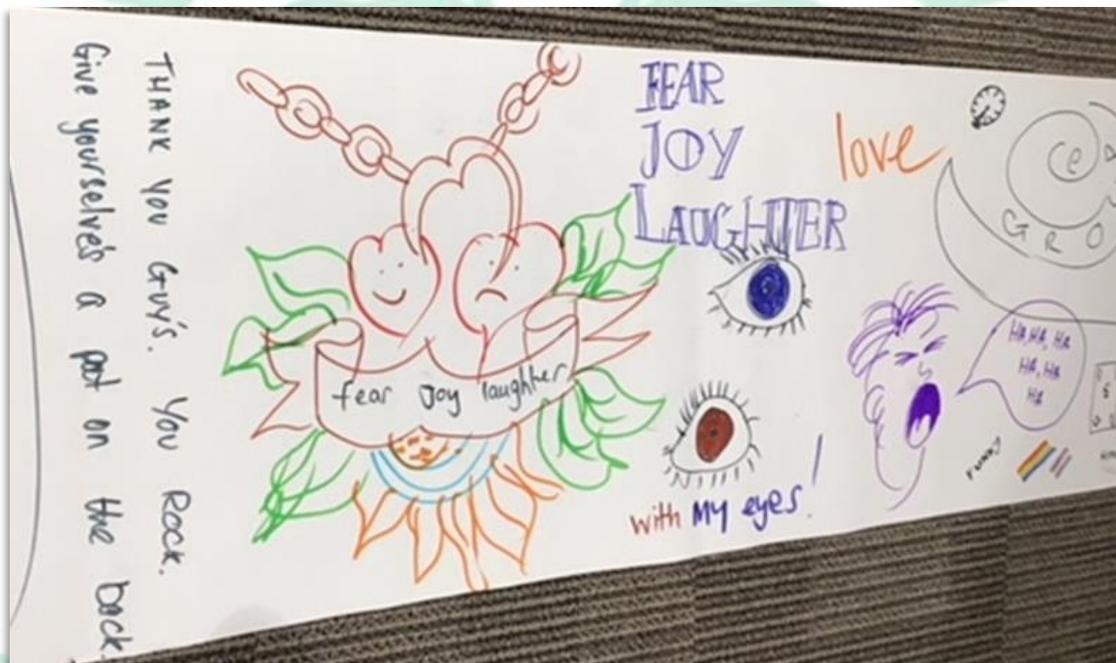
"My child really benefitted from her experience as she progressed, from finding it initially challenging to become very enthusiastic and looking forward to it, as did I."

Participant 2019

How Is The Project 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.



Participants expressed their feelings on paper during the sessions

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.

Each year, we raise over £60,000 for our outreach work, which includes several free or heavily subsidised programmes for Surrey's most disadvantaged residents. Projects include: Drama sessions within a residential care-home; year-long residencies at Guildford Grove Primary School. Weyfield Primary Academy 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.

“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. 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 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

Want To Find Out More?

For more information, please visit our website

www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk

With My Eyes has been made possible through generous funding from:

[The High Sheriff Youth Awards](#)

[The National Lottery Community Fund](#)

Please visit their website for more details.

Thank you for reading.