

Creative Writing in Schools

Final Report – February 2019

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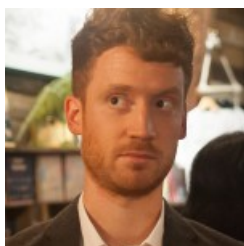
LKMco works across the education, youth and policy sectors. We help organisations develop and evaluate projects for young people and carry out academic and policy research and campaigning about the issues that experience tells us matter.

Find out more at www.lkmco.org, or get in touch at info@lkmco.org.

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Contents

Contents	3
Executive Summary: Creative Writing in Schools	5
Summary of key findings.....	5
1. Introduction	8
1.1 The creative writing organisations	8
1.2 The Creative Writing in Schools evaluation	8
2. Methodology and data collection	10
2.1 Key themes and outcomes.....	10
2.2 Surveys	11
2.3 Intensive studies	12
3. Pupils and their characteristics	14
3.1 The characteristics of pupils involved in CWiS programmes and projects.....	14
3.2 How were pupils selected to take part in CWiS activities?	15
4. How do young people, teachers and writers feel about creative writing?	16
4.1 What do young people think makes a good writer?	16
4.2 How do young people feel about creative writing?	18
4.3 How do pupils view different types of writing practitioners?.....	19
4.4 What shapes how pupils view themselves as writers?	21
4.5 How do teachers feel about creative writing?	23
4.6 How do writers feel about creative writing?	25
5. How engaged are young people and their teachers in creative writing?	30
5.1 Engagement among young people	30
5.2 Engagement among teachers	32
5.3 Where do people do their creative writing?	33
6. Of what networks are teachers and writers a part?	35
6.1 Are teachers and writers in writing networks?	35
6.2 What limits teachers' and writers' abilities to work in creative writing networks?.....	36
7. How financially sustainable is the delivery of creative writing?	38
7.1 What does it mean for creative writing to be 'financially sustainable'?	38
7.2 What factors support financial sustainability in creative writing?.....	39
7.3 What factors inhibit financial sustainability?	43
7.4 What trade-offs are involved in working towards financial sustainability?	47
7.5 What are the implications for writers and writing organisations?	50
8. How confident do teachers and writers feel teaching creative writing?	51
8.1 Teachers' confidence	51
8.2 Writers' confidence.....	52
9. What is the impact of First Story's CPD on teachers and their colleagues?	53
9.1 How did First Story's CPD shape teachers' and school librarians' practice?	54
9.2 How did First Story's CPD shape perceptions of creative writing among school-based practitioners?	56
9.3 How does CPD shape wider school engagement with creative writing?	57
9.4 Factors limiting how CPD shapes wider school engagement with creative writing.....	58

10. How valuable did young people find different types of activities?	60
10.1 First Story	60
10.2 Paper Nations.....	62
10.3 In what ways has the Writer-in-Residence Programme impacted upon pupils in Years 7 and 8? 64	
11. How do teachers and writers teach creative writing?	75
11.1 What strategies do teachers use when teaching creative writing?	75
11.2 What strategies do writers use when teaching creative writing?.....	76
12. What were teachers' and writers' motivations for being involved in CWiS, and what impact did CWiS programmes and activities have?.....	77
12.1 Why did teachers want to be involved in CWiS programmes and activities?	77
12.2 What impact do teachers feel CWiS programmes and activities have had?.....	78
12.3 Why did writers want to be involved?	80
12.4 What impact did writers feel CWiS programmes and activities have had?	81
13. National Writing Day	83
13.1 What were pupils' expectations for National Writing Day, and how did the day compare with these expectations?	83
13.2 What were teachers' expectations for National Writing Day, and how did the day itself compare with these expectations?	86
13.3 What were partners' expectations for National Writing Day, and how did the day compare with these expectations?	88
14. Conclusions and implications.....	93
14.1 Conclusion	93
14.2 Implications	94
Appendices	97
1. Overview of all survey responses.....	97
2. Pupil characteristics by programme.....	98

Executive Summary: Creative Writing in Schools

Arts Council England committed in 2015 to funding a £1.2m, three-year programme called Creative Writing in Schools ('CWIS'). The programme was developed in response to concerns around a perceived lack of high-quality creative writing opportunities for pupils within the curriculum, and the potential impact that this might have on children and young people's cultural education in the short-term, and creativity in the long term. The programme targeted areas of high deprivation and low arts engagement identified by Arts Council England, and involved activities focused primarily on pupils between eight and 14 years of age.

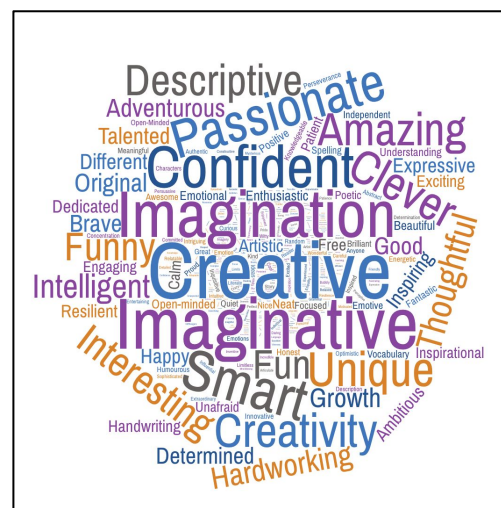
The programme was put out to tender, and funding was awarded to two organisations: **First Story** and Bath Spa University's **Paper Nations**. Nearly 3,000 children and young people, teachers and writers in over 120 schools across England participated in CWIS activities, during the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. Approximately a third of the young people involved were eligible for Pupil Premium funding.¹

Paper Nations and First Story appointed the education and youth think-and-action tank, **LKMco**, as an independent evaluator, and LKMco initially conducted a literature review designed to explore how schools engage with creative writing, and the key barriers to this.² The literature review informed this evaluation's design, including its key outcome measures and research tools.

As a result, CWIS activities by First Story and Paper Nations were evaluated in terms of their impact on:

- The **sustainability** of creative writing in schools;
- **Engagement** among pupils, teachers and writers with creative writing;
- **Best practice** in the teaching of creative writing;
- Building **networks** that support creative writing in schools, and;
- The **value** children, young people and their teachers place on creative writing.

CWIS programmes and activities have provided case studies of good practice and resources, and the evaluation highlights broader guiding principles, to improve and increase access to creative writing in schools in future.



'Write three words that describe a good writer':
young people's responses to CWIS survey question
(n=895).

Summary of key findings

- 1) **Young people and teachers valued writing for the pleasure it gave**, rather than for its benefits in terms of improving technical accuracy (although these were also noted). This contributed to young people feeling overwhelmingly positive about creative writing, as our case study about Paper Nations' Writing Ambassadors programme indicates.

"It's not about being right or wrong, it's just about picking up a pen and enjoying the experience and engaging with the experience."

Paper Nations Writing Champion

¹ These figures are based upon demographic data about pupils supplied by teachers in CWIS surveys.

² Eleanor Bernardes and Loic Menzies (2016) *Creative Writing in Schools: Literature Review*, available from: <https://www.lkmco.org/can-develop-creative-writing-schools/>

In future, this evaluation recommends that creative writing programmes for children should mirror Paper Nations' and First Story's focus on idea formulation and exploration, over technical accuracy.

2) Young people writing less often than their peers at the beginning of CWiS wrote more often by the end of their involvement.

In future schools should proactively select pupils with little prior involvement or interest in creative writing for future activities and programmes (alongside pupils with higher levels of prior interest and engagement).

3) Creative writing networks played a vital role in bringing writers and schools together, and helping writers share knowledge, resources and opportunities. Cost and time are the biggest barriers to creative writing partnerships. So too is a lack of coordination among writers, which can mean some are not sure what their financial value is. This results in writers working for nothing, or too cheaply, putting downward pressure on many writers' wages.

"No one knows how much a writer is worth, you know. They really don't. They don't know whether it's worth £10 an hour or £100 an hour, and wildly differing payments are made."

Representative from a writing organisation

Networks can help tackle these burdens by offering schools and writers support, resources and brokerage. They can help writers share employment and funding opportunities, and clarify what writers should charge.

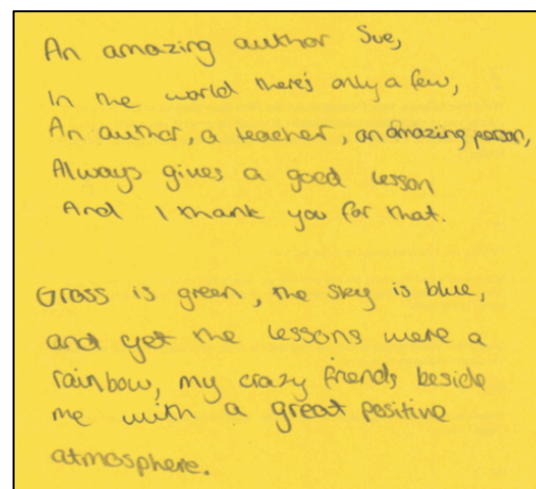
In future, this evaluation recommends that creative writing networks and organisations should learn from First Story and Paper Nations' good practice in supporting clear expectations (including around pay) between writers and schools, and sharing of teaching resources to reduce the time required to plan activities. Networks and organisations should discourage writers from working too cheaply or for free, and raise awareness among writers about the existing networks that can offer professional support.

4) CWiS programmes and activities helped many pupils feel more confident as writers, and in life. They found working with professional writers particularly valuable:

"[The writer] doesn't stop us from doing anything.... She'll let us try it, even if she knows it won't work out that well. ... Then she'll let us learn from our mistakes and do it [ourselves] but also be there to support us."

Young person during a focus group

Teachers also highlighted the way creative writing boosted pupils' confidence, both as writers, and in schools, as our case study of First Story's Writer-in-Residence programme shows:



Poem about the Writer-in-Residence workshops, written by a secondary school pupil



Drawing of a writer by a primary school pupil.

“The group have come on leaps and bounds with their creative writing and have found a fantastic outlet for their emotions and ideas.”

Teacher involved in First Story

In future, this evaluation recommends that programmes and activities supporting creative writing in schools should build on the elements of CWiS programmes and activities that young people and practitioners identified as most valuable, including: opportunities to work with professional writers; a focus on ideas generation and exploration, and; the careful scaffolding of written tasks.

- 5) Many teachers’ enjoyment of creative writing increased during CWiS**, and teachers said that activities had increased their confidence as writers (although, generally, it was teachers who felt initially confident teaching creative writing that reported feeling more confident by the end of a programme or activity). Teachers and writers also felt their repertoire of ideas for teaching creative writing grew, and some went on to share ideas and practice with colleagues:

“[Paper Nations] has opened up networks of influence, and models of practice, which I/we can use. It has taught me lots of exciting activities and made new opportunities.”

Writer involved in Paper Nations

Organisations supporting creative writers and creative writing in schools should make engaging with and supporting less confident teachers and writers a priority for future work, and enable young people and teachers to participate in the creative writing side-by-side where possible, focusing on writing for the sake of it over and above technical accuracy.

1. Introduction

1.1 The creative writing organisations

1.1.1 First Story

First Story is a creative writing charity that brings professional writers into secondary schools serving low-income communities to work with teachers and students to foster creativity and communication skills. By helping students find their voices through intensive, fun programmes, First Story raises aspirations and gives students the skills and confidence to achieve them.

FIRST STORY

First Story registered as a charity in 2008, and has since served over 4,500 students through their residencies in schools.

1.1.2 Paper Nations

Funded by Arts Council England, Paper Nations is a strategic hub investigating the value of regular, high quality writing support for young people. Its mission is to champion, connect and create resources that help young people to engage in the art of writing all year round.



Paper Nations champions writing for all. Funded by Arts Council England, Paper Nations' 2016 to 2018 programme involves five key partnership projects between Bath Spa University, Bath Festivals, the National Association of Writers in Education, Poetry Can, StoryHive and a thriving community of local schools and arts organisations. At the heart of the Paper Nations programme is a desire to help all young people explore and appreciate the art of writing. Paper Nations' focus is on approaches to the art of writing that are inclusive, playful and exploratory. Paper Nations seeks to achieve this through a process of creative investigation, resulting in the creation of resources to help sustain, expand and celebrate the culture of support for writing.

1.2 The Creative Writing in Schools evaluation

The Arts Council's £1.2 million Creative Writing in Schools ('CWIS') programme (2015-18) was awarded to First Story and Bath Spa University's Paper Nations, to inspire children and young people to write creatively and for pleasure. This was in response to concerns about a lack of high quality creative writing opportunities in schools, and the impact this could have on children and young people's creativity and cultural education. The programme was targeted to areas of high deprivation and low arts engagement, in the North and South West of England, and towards children and young people aged 8 to 14 years of age.

First Story and Paper Nations developed their own separate activities as part of CWIS, with a shared aim of increasing access to and engagement with creative writing in primary and secondary schools, and among young people, teachers and writers outside schools.

The CWIS evaluation is based on a mixed methods approach that provides breadth through longitudinal survey data, and depth through detailed qualitative 'intensive studies'. The evaluation sought to help Paper Nations and First Story hone their delivery and impact, and identify wider lessons to enhance access to quality creative writing.

Since 2016 LKMco has worked with First Story, Paper Nations and Arts Council England to:

- Identify key evaluation outcomes (outlined in section 2, below);

- Design a range of evaluation approaches (see below in section 2) in order to provide iterative feedback about the delivery and impact of each organisation's CWiS activities, identifying good practice, and offering recommendations on how these activities can be developed, and;
- Hone the evaluation on an ongoing basis, so that it remains responsive to the organisations' needs.

The following diagram summarises the approach we took to the CWiS evaluation, as a research partner. Following the structure of an 'action learning set', LKMco fed emerging findings back to First Story and Paper Nations who, in turn, identified their priorities for further evaluation.



In September 2017 LKMco collated interim evaluation findings, based on data from the 2016/17 academic year.³ To produce this final evaluation report, we have combined data from all evaluation activities across 2016/17 and 2017/18.

³ Will Millard and Loic Menzies (2017) *Creative Writing in Schools: Final Report – September 2017*.

2. Methodology and data collection

2.1 Key themes and outcomes

We began the project with a literature review, which explored factors that support and inhibit creative writing in schools.⁴ Based on this literature review, and based on discussions with Paper Nations, First Story, and Arts Council England, the following set of themes and outcomes were chosen to underpin the design of the CWIS evaluation:

Overall outcome/theme	Specific outcome
Sustainability	1. Schools and teachers want to continue writing post-project.
	2. Schools' and teachers' motivations for involvement change.
	3. Teachers, schools and writers have the capacity and ability to continue.
	4. It is economically viable to continue delivery.
	5. Knowledge is mobilised.
Engagement (of pupils, teachers, writers)	6. Participation in creative writing increases.
	7. Teachers and pupils enjoy creative writing more.
	8. A range of participants engage in creative writing.
Best practice in creative writing	9. Teachers write authentically by, for example, writing in front of pupils rather than using pre-prepared texts.
	10. Use of good creative writing pedagogy among teachers and writers increases.
New and extended networks	11. Existing networks are expanded and new networks are created.
	12. Barriers to partnerships between schools and external partners are reduced.
Valuing creative writing	13. Values and approaches are shared by all involved.
	14. People value creative writing more.

These programme-wide outcomes were explored predominantly through a series of longitudinal surveys, described in section 2.2, below.

However, in addition to exploring these 'cross-cutting' outcomes, we conducted a series of 'intensive studies' (described in section 2.3, below) to evaluate specific areas of Paper Nations and First Story's work. Using qualitative research tools, these intensive studies were 'deep dives', which enabled us to explore the outcomes listed above and focus on specific areas of First Story and Paper Nations' work.

⁴ Eleanor Bernardes and Loic Menzies (2016) *Creative Writing in Schools: Literature Review*, available from: <https://www.lkmco.org/can-develop-creative-writing-schools/>

2.2 Surveys

We used a range of different surveys to gather data on the programme-wide outcomes listed in section 2.1. Many pupils, teachers, and writers completed baseline and endpoint surveys although, where appropriate, participants completed standalone perceived impact surveys about their experience of a programme that year, or of a one-off session.

2.2.1 Overview of survey data gathered

In total, pupils, teachers and writers in over 120 schools across England took part in the evaluation and submitted survey data.⁶ A full breakdown of these responses is given in the appendices. Throughout this evaluation, we predominantly refer to ‘matched’ survey data; baseline and endpoint surveys completed by the same person, within the same year (as opposed to all the survey responses collected at baseline and endpoint, which may not be matched). However, where we refer to other sources of survey data we make this clear.

From these responses, we collated the following matched surveys samples:

Which group of people?	How many matched sets of survey responses?	From how many schools? ⁵	From which years?	About which organisation?
Young people	424	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 207 sets are from 2016/17. 217 sets are from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 234 sets are about First Story. 190 sets are about Paper Nations.
Teachers	29	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 sets are from 2016/17. 14 sets are from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 sets are about First Story. 9 sets are about Paper Nations.
Writers	37	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 sets are from 2016/17. 16 sets are from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32 are about First Story. 5 are about Paper Nations.

2.2.2 Overview of survey analysis

We analysed the survey data in Excel, in the following stages:

1. Data cleansing, removing duplicate, blank, or test responses;
2. Matching responses in baseline and endpoint surveys, using respondents’ names, schools and/or dates or birth as necessary, and;
3. Examining trends in the data both within that academic year, and over the course of the evaluation.

Generally, we report findings from the baseline and endpoint, and perceived impact surveys, separately. This is because the surveys contained differently worded questions and answers. Where possible, though, we combine the findings from different sources.

⁵ This is the number of schools given by respondents. The true number is higher, as some respondents did not list the schools in which they work.

⁶ Specifically, young people in 101 schools, teachers in 83 schools, and writers working with 122 schools submitted survey data. The actual number of schools involved in a CWiS programme or project will be higher, as some schools involved did not submit survey data.

2.3 Intensive studies

Over the course of the evaluation, LKMco conducted five ‘intensive studies’.⁷ These focused on specific aspects of Paper Nations’ and First Story’s delivery, or an important issue facing that organisation. Here, we provide a brief overview of the intensive studies undertaken throughout the CWiS evaluation.

2.3.1 Intensive studies in 2018

Paper Nations: Success factors for achieving financial sustainability in creative writing

This intensive study explored how writers and organisations coordinating creative activities with young people feel about financial sustainability, and what factors help and hinder the financial sustainability of creative writing activities. As part of this, we explored the trade-offs involved in achieving financial sustainability, in terms of what this means for the sorts of activities writers undertake, and access to creative writing among young people.

LKMco conducted interviews with ten writers and writing organisations in September and October 2018. Paper Nations identified the interviewees.

First Story: The impact of the Writer-in-Residence programme on children in years 7 and 8

First Story places professional writers in schools serving low-income communities through its Writer-in-Residence programme to foster creativity and communication skills. Over the course of a term or year, pupils work towards publishing their writing in an anthology. Whereas writers typically work with pupils in Key Stage 4, First Story wanted to investigate the benefits of its work with pupils in years 7 and 8.

This intensive study therefore explored the impact of the Writer-in-Residence workshops on these younger secondary pupils, and how workshop delivery shapes this impact. LKMco conducted case studies in four schools selected by First Story. Each case study involved an interview with the school’s lead teacher, an interview with the Writer-in-Residence, and a focus group with around six pupils in years 7 and 8. To stimulate discussion in their focus groups, pupils were asked to first write a poem about their experiences in the workshops.

2.3.2 Intensive Projects in 2017

Paper Nations: Exploring writer identities and motivations

Paper Nations wanted to deepen its understanding of how different writers and young people within its network view themselves as writers, and the importance of creative writing. LKMco interviewed nine writers about their motivations, and factors that shape their identities. LKMco also ran pupil focus groups in three primary schools, exploring young people’s views towards writers and writing. During their focus groups, pupils drew writers, and used these drawings to stimulate subsequent discussion.

LKMco randomly selected schools (and therefore writers) from a list provided by Paper Nations.

First Story: Understanding the impact of continuing professional development

First Story wanted to evaluate how the different continuing professional development (CPD) models it offers shape teachers’ and school librarians’ views and practices, as well as any ripple effects CPD has throughout schools.

LKMco conducted interviews with ten school teachers and school librarians who have been involved in different aspects of First Story’s CPD, which includes attendance at the pupils’ Writer-in-Residence

⁷ These are referred to as ‘mini-projects’ in the September 2017 interim report.



sessions, and at standalone events at their schools and Trusts. Interviewees were randomly selected from a list supplied by First Story.

First Story: Understanding the delivery and impact of National Writing Day

A key focus of First Story's work in 2016/7 was National Writing Day, which took place on 21st June 2017. Working with a range of partners including schools and other writing organisations, National Writing Day celebrated creative writing, and sought to raise its profile across the UK. This intensive study explored participants' (including teachers and pupils) and partners' (including collaborating organisations) expectations for National Writing Day, how the day itself compared with these expectations, and how event delivery shaped impact.

LKMco interviewed five of First Story's organisational partners. We also interviewed teachers and ran focus groups with pupils in three schools. First Story identified the partners and schools for interviews.

2.3.3 Analysis of interview and focus group data

LKMco researchers carried out the interviews and focus groups conducted as part of the intensive studies, using a semi-structured approach based on questions and tasks agreed with Paper Nations and First Story. All interviewees and focus group participants gave informed consent before taking part.

Each interview and focus group relating to a particular intensive study was transcribed and analysed as a set. Transcripts were tagged with specific themes that were tailored to each intensive study in order to reflect the research questions for that project. 'Cross-cutting' tags, relating to programme-wide outcomes, were applied where there was evidence in an interview that there had been a change in one of these fourteen outcome areas. The cross-cutting outcomes were not the primary focus of the Intensive Projects, and the different projects did not explore these outcomes evenly.

Each tagged transcript was then analysed a second time, with sub-themes identified in order to provide a detailed, but highly structured, commentary on each of the outcomes in the framework.

In total, over 1,575,000 words of transcribed interview data were reviewed.

In this evaluation report, we draw together insights from across the programme-wide surveys and intensive studies to explore the impact of Paper Nations and First Story's work through CWiS.

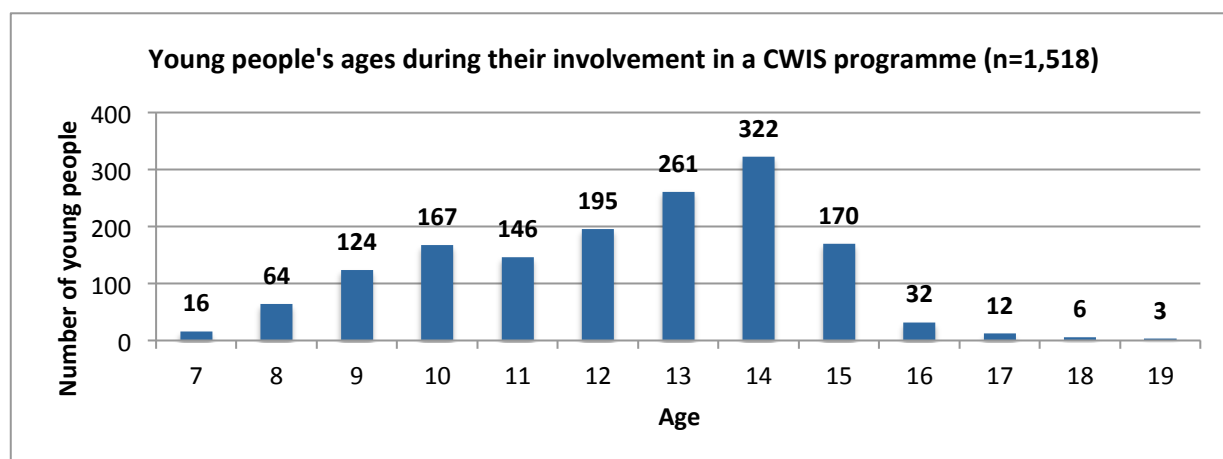


3. Pupils and their characteristics

A wide range of pupils has been involved in CWiS activities. Paper Nations has mainly worked with primary-age pupils, and First Story with secondary-age pupils. Around a third of these pupils (across both Paper Nations and First Story) receive pupil premium funding, and there is a relatively even split between boys and girls. Generally, teachers identified pupils to participate in a CWiS programme or activity, and then gave them the option about whether or not to take part.

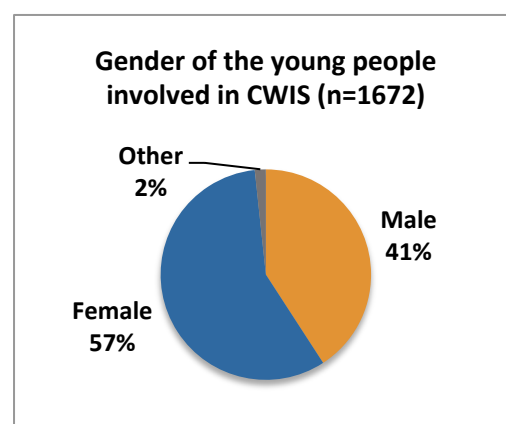
3.1 The characteristics of pupils involved in CWiS programmes and projects

Paper Nations worked predominantly with primary-age pupils, and First Story with secondary schools, which is reflected in the distribution of pupils' ages:⁸



In total, teachers' survey responses indicate that nearly 3,000 children and young people participated in a CWiS activity, across the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. These figures are approximations and do not represent the actual total number of participants, as not all schools completed surveys.

A little over half of participants (who responded to our surveys) were female.



⁸ While collating age and gender information, duplicate pupil names were removed, as were birthdays on the date 01/01, which was how some unknown birthdates were entered into the surveys. Pupils' responses across all survey types were collated, to obtain the most complete data possible.

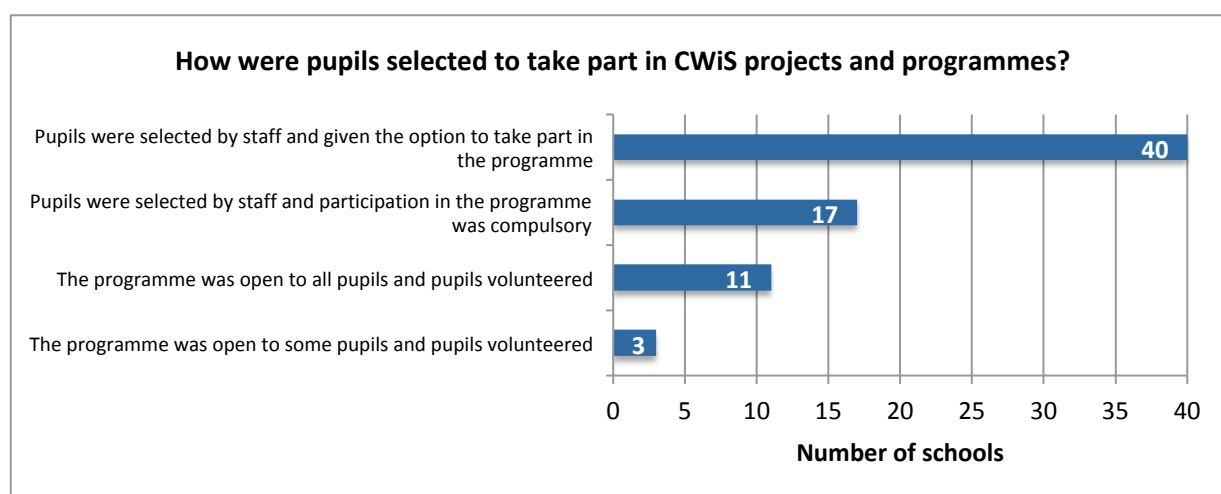
Teachers were asked to supply demographic information about the pupils involved in CWiS programmes and projects. The table, below, provides a breakdown of pupils' characteristics, and shows that a third of the pupils involved in CWiS activities receive pupil premium funding:⁹

Total number of students involved in the CWiS project / programme at this school	2,814
How many of those students speak English as an additional language (EAL)?	342 (12%)
How many of those students receive pupil premium funding?	918 (33%)
How many of those students have a recorded special educational need or disability (SEND)?	256 (9%)
How many of those students are recorded as being gifted and talented (G+T)?	270 (10%)
How many of those students are working below the expected level of progress in literacy?	451 (16%)

A breakdown of pupils' characteristics by programme is given in the appendices.

3.2 How were pupils selected to take part in CWiS activities?

Teachers indicated that pupils were mostly selected by staff and given the option to participate in CWiS activities:



3.3 Conclusions and implications

A wide range of pupils has been involved in CWiS programmes and activities through First Story and Paper Nations. To continue to build on this success, organisations involved in engaging young people in creative writing should proactively recruit pupils from poorer backgrounds and/or with lower levels of prior interest and engagement in creative writing into the programmes and activities.

⁹ The fullest data for each school was retained. No more than one entry per school per academic year was used.

Young people's perceptions of creative writing are overwhelmingly positive, as are their perceptions of creative writers. Young people particularly focus on the creative characteristics of writers and writing, over and above the technical skills involved. This was the case before their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, and remained the same throughout.

Baseline wordle (n=890):

[illegible]

¹⁰ Wordles create images that take into account the frequency of words, meaning the larger a word in the image, the more frequently young people used it.



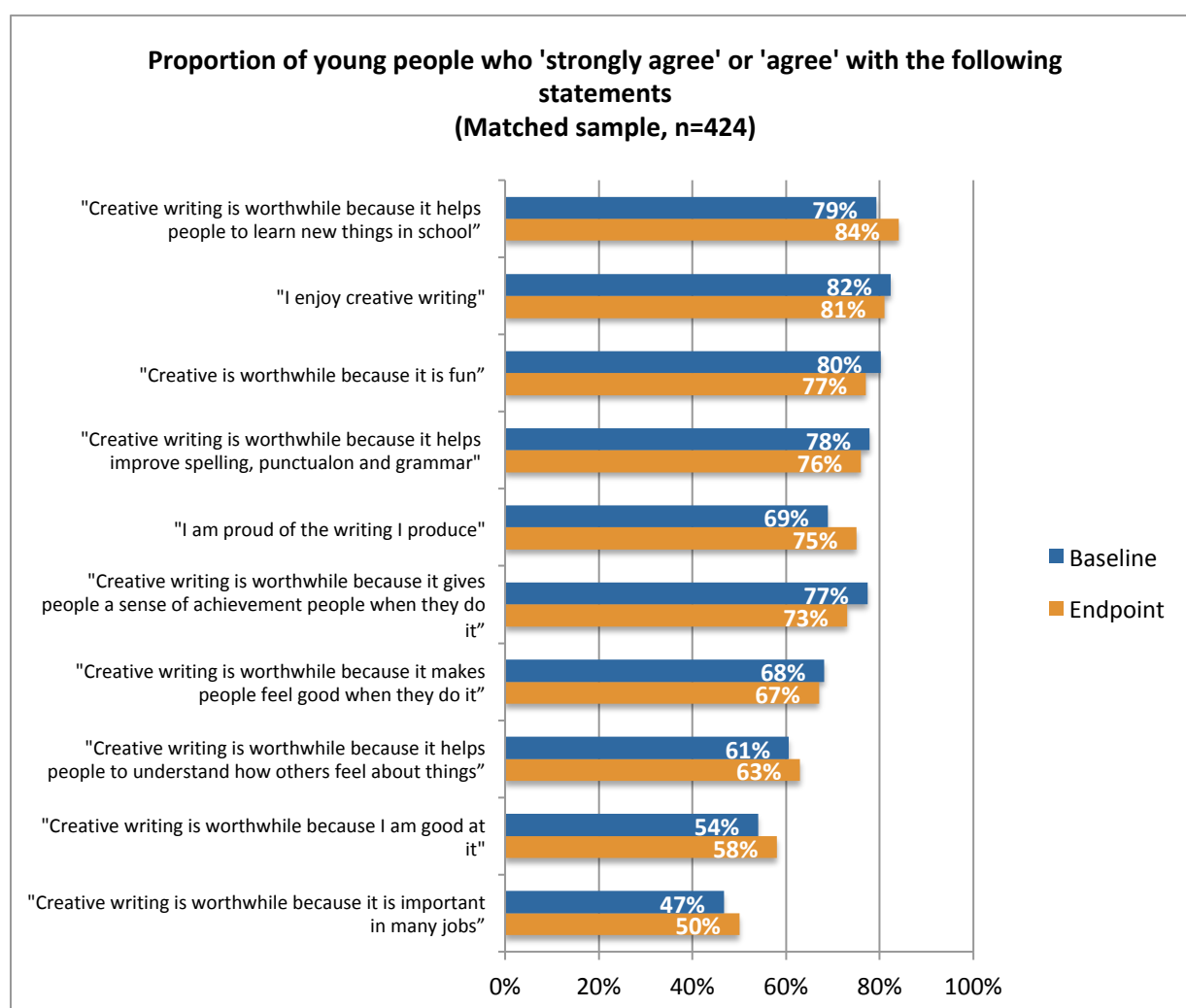
Broadly the words fall into two categories, describing writers themselves, and the process of creative writing. The words were overwhelmingly positive in both the baseline and endpoint entries, suggesting young people's already-positive impressions of writers and of writing were maintained during their involvement in activities. The words 'creative' and 'imaginative' were the most commonly used words at both baseline and endpoint:

Word	Frequency in baseline surveys and perceived impact surveys (n=890)	Word	Frequency in endpoint surveys and perceived impact surveys (n=895)
Creative	429 (48%)	Creative	474 (53%)
Imaginative	245 (28%)	Imaginative	239 (27%)
Interesting	61 (7%)	Imagination	81 (9%)
Smart	61 (7%)	Confident	46 (5%)
Imagination	55 (6%)	Smart	45 (5%)
Descriptive	53 (6%)	Passionate	44 (5%)
Intelligent	45 (5%)	Unique	38 (4%)
Clever	44 (5%)	Creativity	37 (4%)
Confident	43 (5%)	Clever	37 (4%)
Funny	41 (5%)	Amazing	36 (4%)
Passionate	39 (4%)	Descriptive	34 (4%)
Unique	37 (4%)	Interesting	32 (4%)
Good	36 (4%)	Funny	31 (3%)
Creativity	29 (3%)	Fun	31 (3%)
Thoughtful	25 (3%)	Intelligent	30 (3%)
Amazing	24 (3%)	Thoughtful	30 (3%)
Resilient	23 (3%)	Hardworking	27 (3%)
Fun	21 (3%)	Growth	21 (2%)
Patient	19 (2%)	Adventurous	20 (2%)
Inspiring	18 (2%)	Original	20 (2%)

4.2 How do young people feel about creative writing?

Young people primarily feel creative writing is worthwhile because they believe it helps them learn new things in school. They also find it fun and enjoyable, and their pride in their writing increased during their involvement in CWiS. However, young people draw less of a connection between the relevance of creative writing and future jobs.

Young people feel creative writing is worthwhile because it helps them learn new things in school, and because it is enjoyable and fun.¹¹ During their involvement in CWiS programmes, young people said their pride in their writing increased, with three quarters saying this in their endpoint surveys. Young people's opinions changed most with regards to their self-reported pride in their writing, and their sense that they are good at it.



Young people taking part in 'one-off' programmes were more likely than those taking part in longer programmes to agree 'much more' in their perceived impact survey responses that creative writing makes people feel good and gives them a sense of achievement. This could suggest that involvement in a programme, in the short term, produces a 'buzz' among participants for creative writing. However, it may also reflect *when* participants were surveyed.

¹¹ There was a slight decrease in the proportion of young people saying they found creative writing fun and enjoyable, although these changes were negligible, and around four fifths of pupils reported that they found creative writing enjoyable or fun at baseline and endpoint (a trend reflected in the perceived impact survey responses (n=478)).

4.3 How do pupils view different types of writing practitioners?

Young people have very positive views of writers as intellectual and (sometimes) eccentric. Young people believe writers can earn a lot of money, and see them as distinct from other adults in their lives including teachers.

Pupils at the three schools we visited to conduct focus groups for the Paper Nations' Writer Identities intensive study worked on their creative writing with:

- **Writing Explorers**, who develop and lead the writing workshop programme and work with the pupils on an ongoing basis. This role is equivalent to that of the arts advisor (Arts Award) or 'Peripatetic Writing Tutor'.
- **Writing Champions**, who go into schools for one to two sessions to create a 'buzz' around writing. They usually work with the Writing Explorer to develop and design the programme.
- **Regular class teachers**.

We first asked pupils to draw their idea of a writer (which the pictures in this section reflect), before then talking about their views of creative writers in general, and about specific differences between writers they work with. Asked to share how they perceive creative writers, the most prominent

themes were:



Drawing of a writer by a primary school pupil.

- **Writers enjoy what they do.** This came through prominently whether the pupils discussed creative writers in the abstract,¹² or the writers they knew in real life. One pupil said:

"I think they enjoy writing because when they talk about it they're not just all like sad about it, they like smile whilst they talk about it."

Young person during a focus group

For pupils, one reason writers like writing is because they do it regularly. One group suggested teachers find creative writing harder – and less enjoyable – because they do not practice it as often.

- **Writers are good people.** Children used a range of highly positive words to describe writers during the focus groups, such as "amazing", "beautiful", "sunny", and "friendly". While it is not possible to tell whether these same pupils felt this positively before their involvement in Paper Nations, the wordle results presented above suggest that in general young people already held writers in high regard.
- **Writers are intelligent and eccentric.** The young people in our focus groups said they saw writers as imaginative and intelligent, with several pupils describing writers' imaginations as "mind blowing". However, the children also associated this creativity and intelligence with a particular sort of eccentricity. In one focus group, many children used words such as "unique" and "weird" to describe writers, with one pupil suggesting:

¹² We asked pupils to draw pictures of creative writers, and then talk about these drawings. The drawings were not of people they knew, but combined characteristics they associated with creative writers.

“Crazy people have better ideas. ...Because if you’re serious you don’t really have good ideas because you don’t have as many creative ideas, and you more have more serious ideas.”

Young person during a focus group

This aligns with some young people’s responses about writers in First Story’s Writer-in-Residence programme, where they said writers’ quirkiness was part of what made working with them enjoyable. These findings are outlined in section 7.

- **Writers are rich.** Children in one focus group believed money is a motivation for writers to publish work. One pupil said writing could turn people into “billionaires”.
- **Teachers and writers are distinct from one another.** Pupils see writers who come in from outside their school, and their teachers, as different ‘sorts’ of adult. They see writers as experienced creative practitioners; teachers, on the other hand, may be skilled writers but also have “a lot of other lessons to teach us.” Consequently, some young people felt that teachers may not believe creative writing is as important as writers.

4.4 What shapes how pupils view themselves as writers?

Writers working with schools as part of Paper Nations said they shape how young people see themselves as writers by focusing on the process of writing creatively, including encouraging pupils' self-expression, helping pupils overcome their fears of writing, and responding to pupils' needs and interests. They also think producing tangible outcomes is important, although this needs to be balanced with a focus on the writing process.

During the Writer Identities intensive study, writers spoke about four key ways in which they shape how pupils see themselves as writers. These were:

1. **Encouraging pupils' self-expression.** Nearly all the writers talked about the value of encouraging young people to write 'authentically', that is, encouraging them to focus on developing their authorial voice without getting bogged down in the technicalities of spelling, grammar and punctuation:

"It's not about being right or wrong, it's just about picking up a pen and enjoying the experience and engaging with the experience. That's what I'm aiming for."

Writing Champion

This process can be supported by starting small and building up, "picking the scab of the idea for long enough [until] it becomes something new." Brainstorming ideas in groups can help with this, as can finding something positive to say about pupils' work and encouraging them to continue developing drafts:

"I'd say things like, 'Oh my God, that is such an amazing thing, you just said,' and they'd look at me in amazement, as if, 'What?' I said, 'Yes. It really was, yes. Write it down. Let's get that'. "

Writing Champion

2. **Helping pupils overcome their fears.** Writers talked about their role in helping pupils overcome their trepidation. Acknowledging that creative writing can be intimidating can help with this, with one writer saying "as much as writing is powerful and fun and enjoyable, it can also be quite... a distressing process." Writers said that helping pupils read the styles of writing they will then mimic can help demystify the writing process and break it into parts. Equally, it is important for schools to 'keep up momentum' as pupils enter secondary education; writers said that sometimes pupils' confidence can take a knock during this transition:

"I think those first few years of high school where you're suddenly put into this great machine are incredibly important to keep that level of writing going because otherwise I think kids and young people suffer this huge blow to their confidence about writing, what it is, and that's really problematic."

Writing Explorer

3. **Producing tangible outcomes.** Four writers talked about the value of producing a tangible outcome, as this can provide an incentive to engage in sessions and produce an object they can feel proud of. This might be something more formalised, such as an anthology, or simply writing up a 'neat' version.
4. **Responding to contexts, needs, and interests.** Tapping into young people's interests can help writers connect with pupils, and link the sessions to pupils' experiences. Related to this, writers

discussed the importance of running carefully structured workshops that scaffold tasks appropriately for young people.

We also asked pupils how writers have influenced how they see themselves and the process of writing. Pupils' responses centred around writers being enthusiastic (as communicated by writers' passion, sense of humour, body language and facial expressions). They also talked about writers helping them overcome their fears by:

1. **Breaking tasks into smaller chunks.** For example, one pupil was relieved when a visiting writer said a story could be "as long as you want or as short as you want". Another's confidence had grown since the writer helped the group produce more ideas together.
2. **Seeing teachers grapple with the challenges of creative writing in the workshops or in regular lessons.** One group said that, "if they (teachers) can do it, then you feel that you can do it as well." This perhaps highlights a benefit in teachers sharing the challenges of creative writing with their pupils.

The ideas presented here align closely with key messages that emerge from our intensive study of the Writer-in-Residence workshops, outlined in section 7.

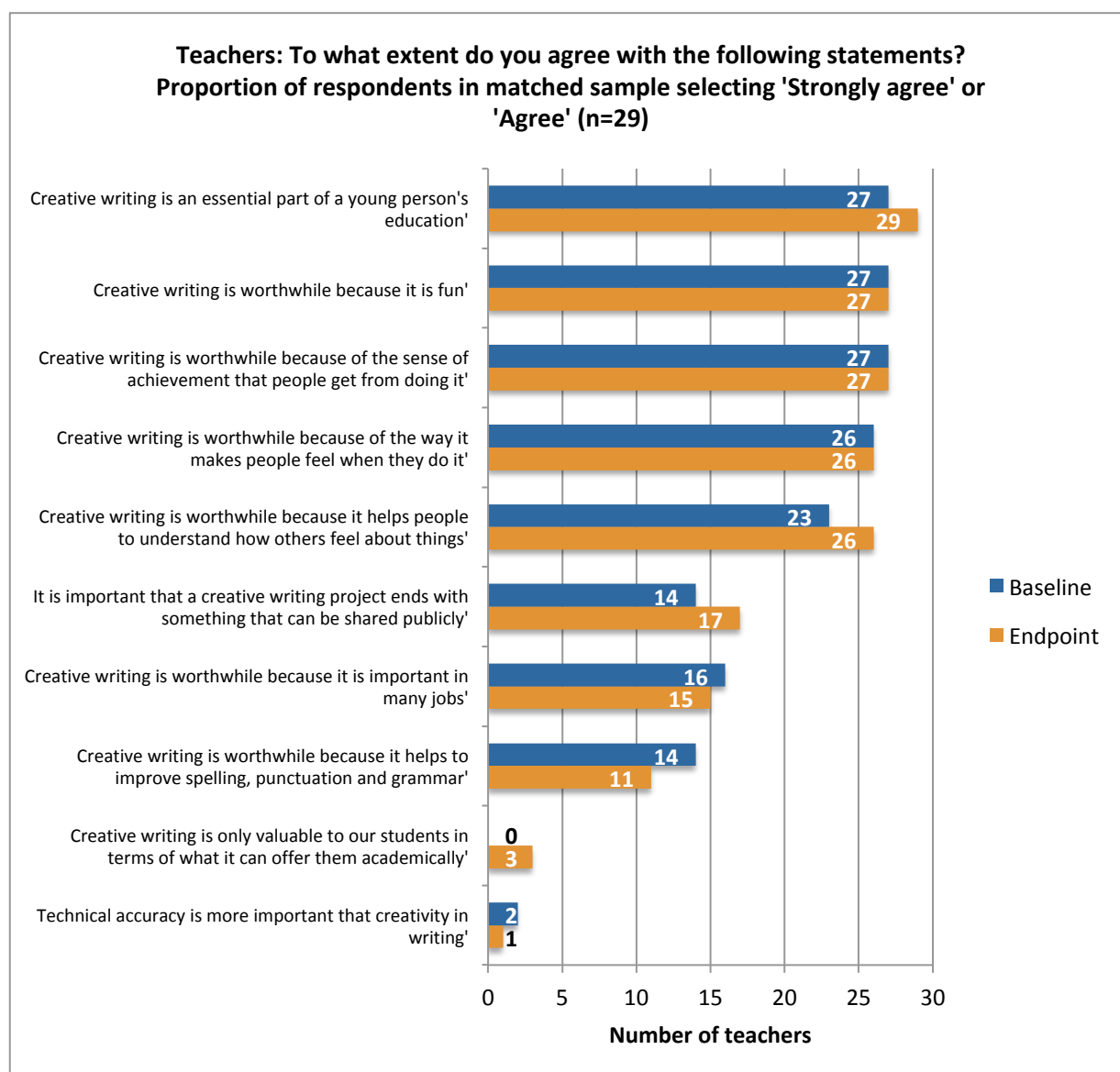


Drawing of a writer by a primary school pupil.

4.5 How do teachers feel about creative writing?

Teachers feel creative writing plays an intrinsically important role in young people's education, and they emphasise its benefits in terms of how it makes people feel when they do it. Teachers are much less likely to talk about the mechanics of writing being important.

All teachers for whom we have matched survey data agreed by the end of their involvement that creative writing is an essential part of young people's education. Although changes between baseline and endpoint responses were small in the context of the sample size, teachers were more likely to agree that creative writing has intrinsic benefits rather than instrumental benefits. This pattern became marginally more pronounced by the end of the programme, with a lower number emphasising the role of technical accuracy, creative writing's role in employment, and its impact on spelling, punctuation and grammar.



It is possible that the activities' focus on creativity and ideas generation (as described in sections 9 and 10, for example) contributed to these findings. It could also be that the teachers participating in these programmes were already positively pre-disposed towards creative writing.

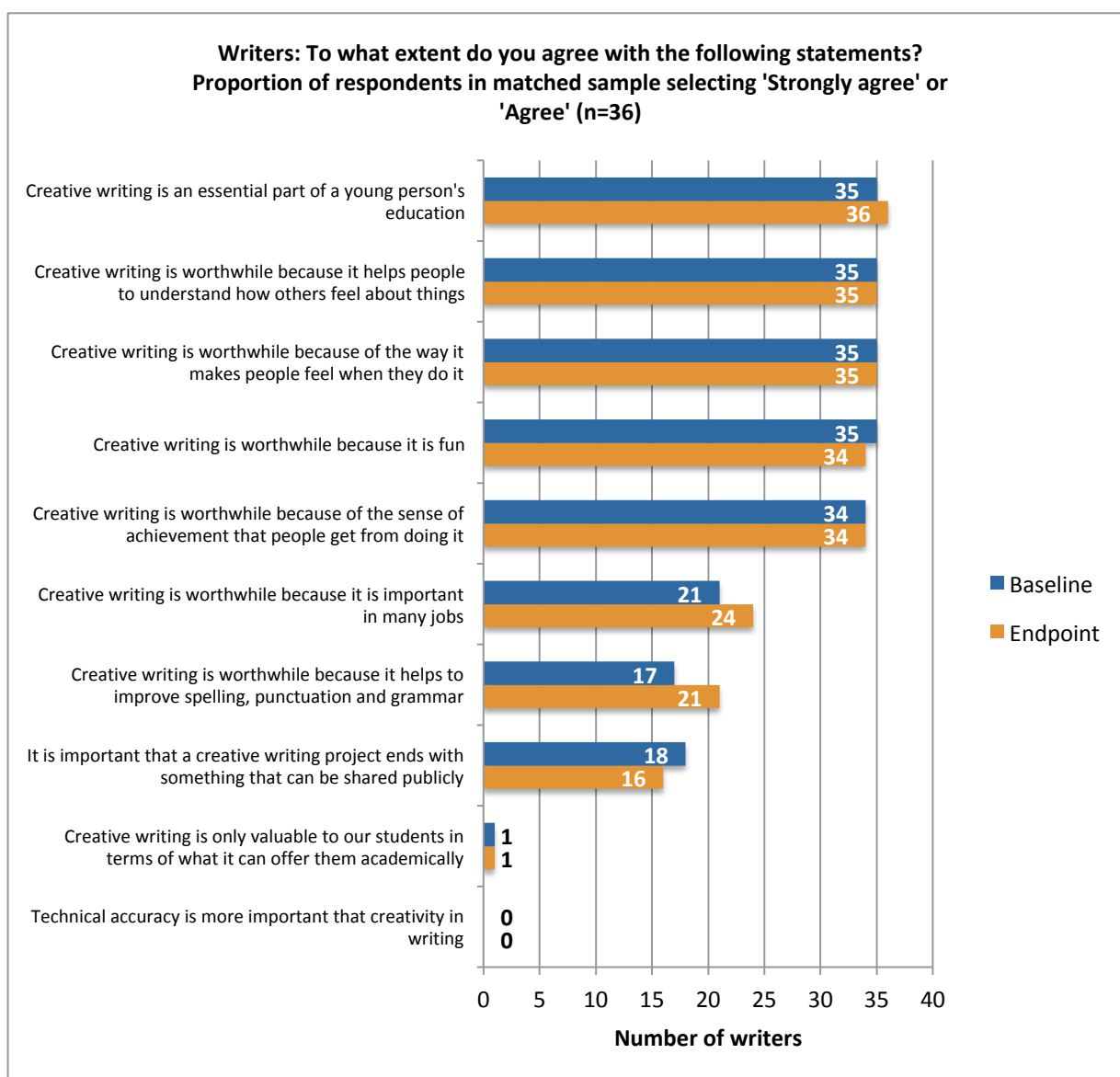
As with pupils, teachers' responses to the perceived impact surveys show that teachers' attitudes towards creative writing were more likely to change having participated in a one-off programme than a longer programme. Specifically, compared to those involved in full programmes (n=24), a higher proportion of teachers involved in a one-off programme (n=11) agreed or strongly agreed that creative writing is important because of the sense of achievement people get from doing it, and its role in helping people understand how others feel about things. As with young people's responses, this may indicate that a one-off activity can create a short-term change. However, it is also possible that teachers involved in one-off programmes are – in comparison with their colleagues who get involved in longer term programmes – initially less invested in the potential impact of creative writing.



4.6 How do writers feel about creative writing?

Like teachers, writers are more likely to talk about the benefits of creative writing in terms of its ability to make people feel good, rather than its instrumental benefits such as improving spelling or access to jobs. Writers write for a range of reasons, but often to satisfy an inner drive and to connect with others. Generating income is a perpetual challenge.

Writers stress the intrinsic value of creative writing, seeing it as an essential part of young people's education. They stress how fun it can be, while also serving an important emotional function: helping young people to feel good, and to empathise with others. Overall, how writers feel about creative writing did not change substantially over the course of their involvement with a CWiS programme or project.



However, this may also reflect a characteristic of the evaluation's design, which measured attitudes towards creative writing as opposed to attitudes towards working with young people. Sections 10 and 12 suggest CWiS positively influenced how teachers and writers feel about working with young people on creative writing, over and above how they view creative writing per se.

4.6.1 What do different types of writing practitioners working with Paper Nations think it is to be a writer, and what shapes this identity?

As part of Paper Nations' Writer Identities intensive study, we asked writers what 'being a writer' means, and the factors that shape this identity. We asked writers to talk about their work in general, and not exclusively about the work they do with schools and young people.

Writers told us:

- **It is difficult to define what being a writer is.** Being a creative writer is a combination of many different things. One writer told us a "whole constellation of factors" that affects their sense of being a writer. The term 'writing' itself has also taken on a broader meaning in recent years, as one Writing Explorer explained:

"I think that all kinds of writing can be creative writing and that doesn't... just mean poetry, it can be blogging and all these other kinds of platforms these days."

Writing Explorer

- **Writers have an 'inner calling'.** All categories of writer working with Paper Nations – Writing Ambassadors, Writing Champions, and Writing Explorers – talked about their inner drive to write, with one Writing Explorer saying writing is "very addictive."
- **Writing and confidence are interrelated.** One of the most widely discussed factors affecting how writers view themselves and the process of creative writing was confidence, with all the writers we interviewed talking about this. Confidence is a necessary condition for them producing quality work, but also something that results from finishing a piece of writing. It varies at different stages of the writing process and at different points in a project, and can often be lowest just after starting a new piece of writing, when the magnitude of the task ahead seems most daunting:

"Not that I can't write, it's knowing that those 60,000, 70,000, 80,000 words lie ahead of me breaks me out. I break out in a cold sweat every time, at the beginning of the experience."

Writing Champion

Confidence also suffers when writers hit a 'dry spot', and either cannot find the words they want, or cannot think of original ideas. They also worry deeply about the quality of what they have written. This challenge never seems to go away, and writers talked about how winning awards can lead them to feel like imposters, or feel as though they will not sustain such quality.

Relatedly, confidence is very sensitive to external feedback, whether from other writers or from readers. This can be valuable, though, as it guards against complacency and increases the quality of a writer's work:

"You know, you can become deluded and you can lose perspective and, actually, you can be confident when you shouldn't be confident."

Writing Champion

- **Writing is about connecting with others.** One of the most commonly cited reasons for engaging in creative writing was the connection it creates with others. This was seen as both a motivation and a happy by-product. Writers said they felt driven to share their work with wider audiences because of a sense of having something valuable to share; because they think audiences might enjoy or benefit from it; or, because they seek validation:

“I’m driven by some internal force to do it and I can’t help myself and because I want to share stuff with other people, with a wider audience, and to validate myself to work with others.”

Writing Ambassador

Connecting with others also provides a means for writers to explore their own thoughts and feelings, as well as providing support and feedback. One Writing Ambassador said the programme had enabled her to share her experiences with other writers and that doing so with a small group made the process less “daunting”. Networks are also important for counteracting loneliness, and making writing financially sustainable, something we explore in greater detail in section 6.

- **Writing is about discipline and perseverance.** Writers explained that in the face of an irregular working routine, self-discipline and perseverance are extremely important. This applies not only to physically sitting down and forcing oneself to write, but also reflecting on one’s work and improving it, as one Writing Champion explained:

“They don’t settle for the first thing they do. They pick at it. You know, they’re interested in what other people are doing, but they’re more interested in how can they get something fresh or real out of their own pen and they don’t settle.”

Writing Champion

- **Writing is about enjoyment and self-expression.** Enjoyment, like confidence, is something that enables writers to sit down and work as well as being something that stems from the work itself. Almost universally, writers said they felt a real sense of achievement and pride when they have finished a piece of work, but that the journey there can be difficult:

“Most of the writers I know wouldn’t say that they really like the act of smashing those words down on the page. ...It’s a struggle. It’s very hard. I’m definitely one of those writers who love having written, but genuinely hate writing. ...Sometimes, it can just be a painful, painful endeavour, like pulling teeth.”

Writing Champion

One writer argued that “rewarding” is a better word than ‘enjoyable’ for describing writing.

Writing as part of a group, whether with other writers or with pupils, can spark interest in creative writing. One Writing Champion talked about the energy he takes from sessions in school:

“It was such a beautifully collaborative experience where everybody understood what we were trying to make. Yes, the bounce back and forth was really good and you’d get to find new levels of your own energy and that can be really, really great.”

Writing Champion

Closely related to writers’ enjoyment of creative writing is the ability it gives them to express themselves. A corollary of this is the impact writing can have on adults’ wellbeing, and several more experienced writers said they found writing therapeutic.

- **Making ends meet is difficult.** Finding enough work, and work that pays fairly, is challenging. We explore the issue of financial sustainability in detail in section 6, but the issue of funding also arose during this intensive study, with one interviewee saying “the money is problematic.” External funding offers a lifeline, but can be extremely competitive, with “an awful lot of people

trying to share a very small pot.” Writers also talked about the challenges of working with publishers, both in terms of losing artistic influence over their work, and in terms of securing fair pay. Again, this is something we return to in the discussion about financial sustainability in section 6.

- **Life gets in the way.** Earning a living, family life, and relationships all impose constraints on writers. Alongside making it difficult to find the time to write, life events can affect creativity when writers do sit down to write. One Writing Ambassador explained:

“When I was a student, obviously being in a creative headspace a lot of the time was fine, like I found it quite easy to be in that space, but since becoming a mummy and having all of that stuff floating around in the forefront, sort of trying drag into the creative mindset was quite a challenge.”

Writing Ambassador

4.6.2 What motivates writing practitioners to work with young people on creative writing?

We also talked to writers working with Paper Nations about what motivates them to work with young people and four key factors emerged.

- **Developing young people’s self-expression and wellbeing.** This was the most commonly cited reason for wanting to work with young people among Paper Nations’ Writing Champions, Explorers and Ambassadors. This can result from a feeling that creativity is “both under attack and undervalued” in schools, and that pupils may not otherwise have access to creative writing activities. Relatedly, a couple of writers felt creative writing is something only on offer to more affluent pupils, and work in schools to counteract this:

“[Pupils think] they have to be at least middle class and probably pretty well educated, have a huge vocabulary and that they need to use long sentences and flowery concepts and flowery words.”

Writing Explorer

Writers also said that creative writing brings with it a host of other beneficial skills for young people, including confidence, self-reflection, empathy and teamwork. One said:

“But on a wider scale it’s important for anything that requires communication, that requires being able to think clearly and being able to change things and to see a process and to be able to work independently, but also to be able to work as part of a collaborative situation. So yes, so many transferable skills really.”

Writing Champion

- **Connecting with others, and helping others connect.** Another common motivation for wanting to work with young people is to connect with other people. Writers said the activities developed their and young people’s empathy, as well as mutual regard for other people’s thoughts, feelings and work:

“Good creative writing in fiction helps us empathise. It helps us see the view from people who are... you know look at the same events or things that we might go through but from a completely different perspective.”

Writing Explorer

- **Seeking self-development.** Alongside wanting to work with young people and develop their skills and life chances, writers talked about the personal benefits they would gain from doing so. For some, working with young people feeds into a broader career path. As one Writing Explorer said:

“It's only in my early 30s now that I feel like I'm bringing all (aspects of my professional life) together into something that's going to turn into a career that I want. Part of that is absolutely about sharing working practice with young people.”

Writing Explorer

- **Generating income.** In some cases, the pressure to earn money incentivises writers to work with young people because it provides a source of income. Equally, the pressure to earn money can draw writers away from work with young people if other, better paid, opportunities are available elsewhere:

“If I've got lots of deadlines and lots of pressure from elsewhere, then I think sometimes there's a tendency to not be as motivated to want to work with young people in a creative way. It's not maybe a deliberate choice, but it's more an issue of other things that have to be [prioritised].”

Writing Ambassador

4.7 Conclusions and implications

Young people have overwhelmingly positive views of creative writers and the process of writing itself, and this could be leveraged to spark young people's interest in creative writing activities both inside and outside school.

One of the reasons young people enjoy participating in creative writing activities with writers is the space it gives them to develop and explore their own ideas, build their confidence and overcome their initial fears of writing. Activities encouraging children to engage in creative writing should mirror Paper Nations and First Story's approach in making idea formulation and exploration a focus, over and above technical accuracy, at least initially.

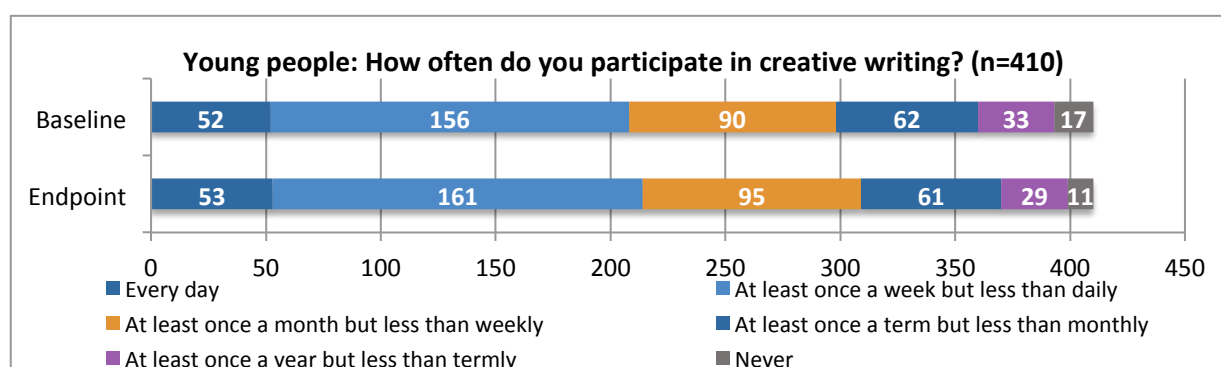
Writers enjoy working with young people because they want to pass on their love of writing, because they themselves value developing their teaching skills, and because the work can offer an important income stream. Organisations recruiting writers to work in schools or with young people outside schools should emphasise these benefits (while helping to ensure writers have the support, knowledge and confidence to access fair pay for their time and expertise).

5. How engaged are young people and their teachers in creative writing?

5.1 Engagement among young people

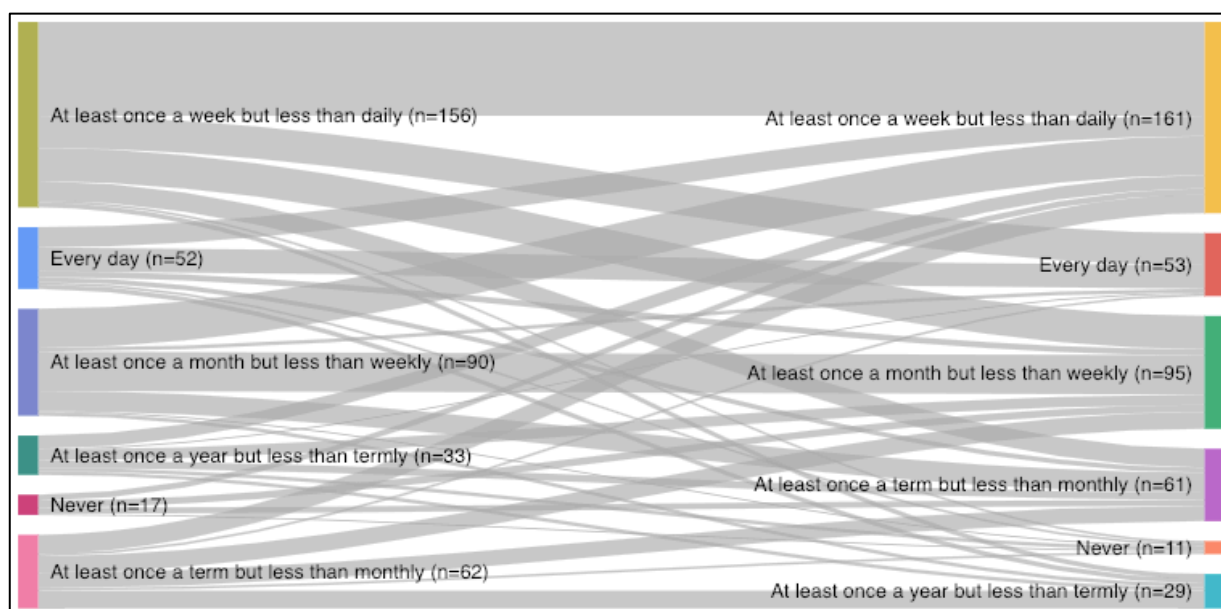
The young people writing least often at the start of their involvement in CWiS reported doing more by the end of their involvement. In general, though, the amount young people participate in creative writing has not changed much since their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity began.

Since their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, the amount young people said they write did not change by much. Matched survey responses show a marginally smaller proportion of young people reported writing rarely or never:



Importantly, the young people writing least frequently to begin with were most likely to report doing more writing by the end of their involvement. This finding may have been influenced by creative writing's inclusion in GCSE English exams from August 2017.

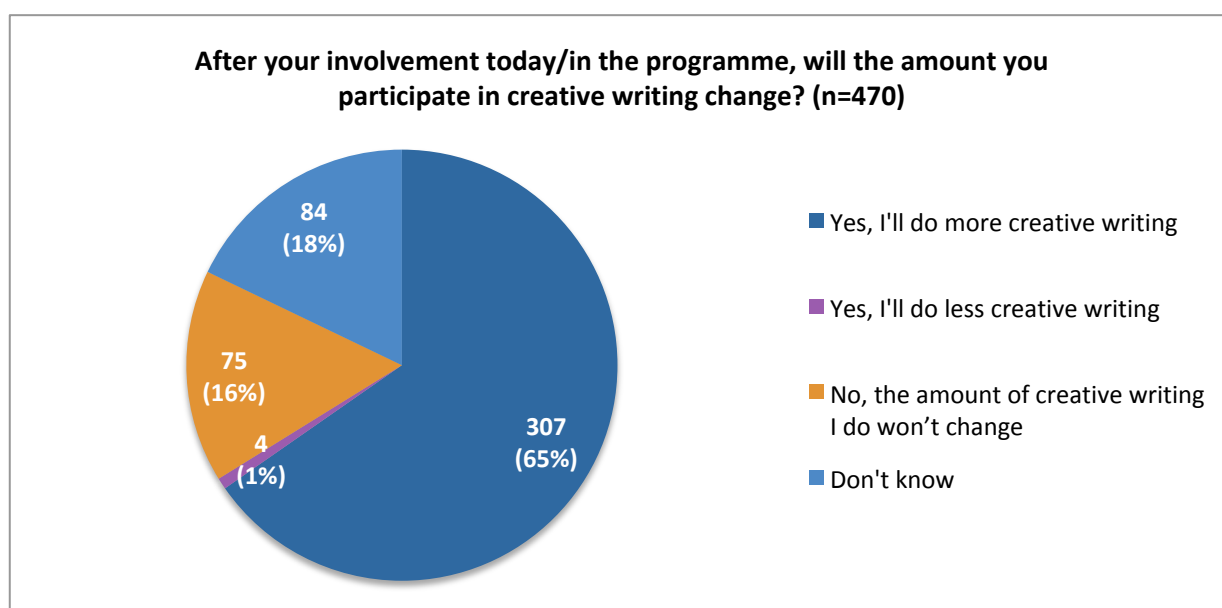
This Sankey diagram visualises how young people with particular baseline responses changed their response in the endpoint surveys (n=410).¹³



¹³ Of the 17 young people who said in their baseline surveys they 'never' participated in creative writing, only one reported this in their endpoint survey. Of the 33 young people who reported writing at least once a year but less than termly in their baseline surveys, 27 said in their endpoint responses they were writing more often. Of the 62 writing at least once a term but less than monthly in the baseline surveys, 32 said they were writing more frequently by the end of their involvement. 13 were the same, and 17 were writing less frequently.

Young people believed that they would participate in creative writing more frequently following their involvement in First Story or Paper Nations. This was similar, irrespective of the format and length of the activity or programme. However, while young people said in the perceived impact surveys they would write more often, the baseline and endpoint survey responses suggest this has not necessarily translated into changes in behaviour.

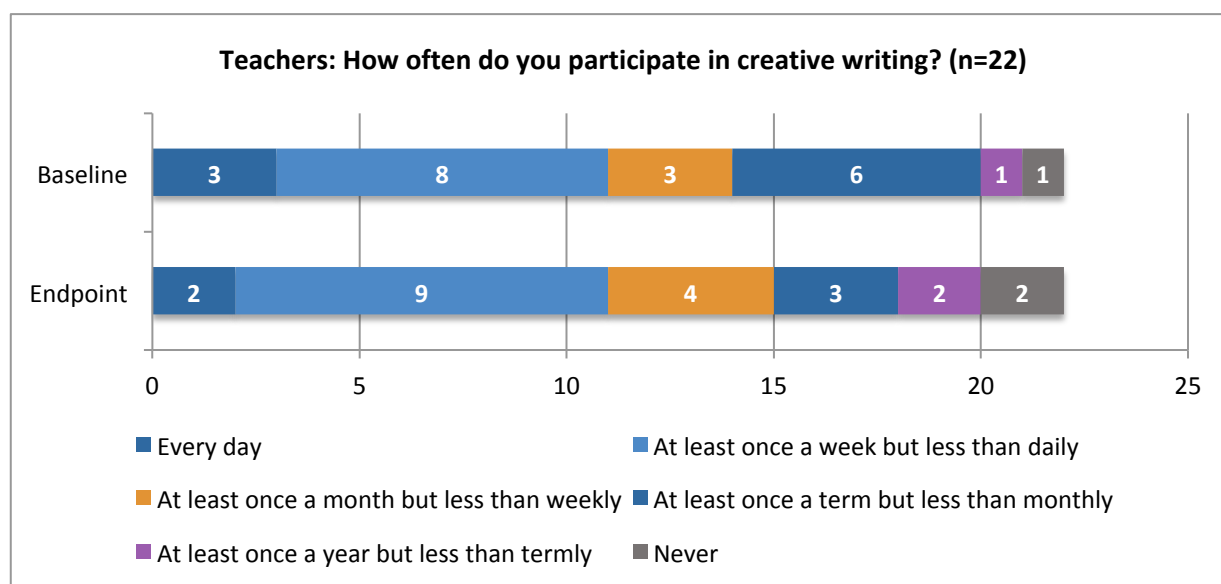
The following chart combines responses across one-off and programme-long perceived impact surveys:



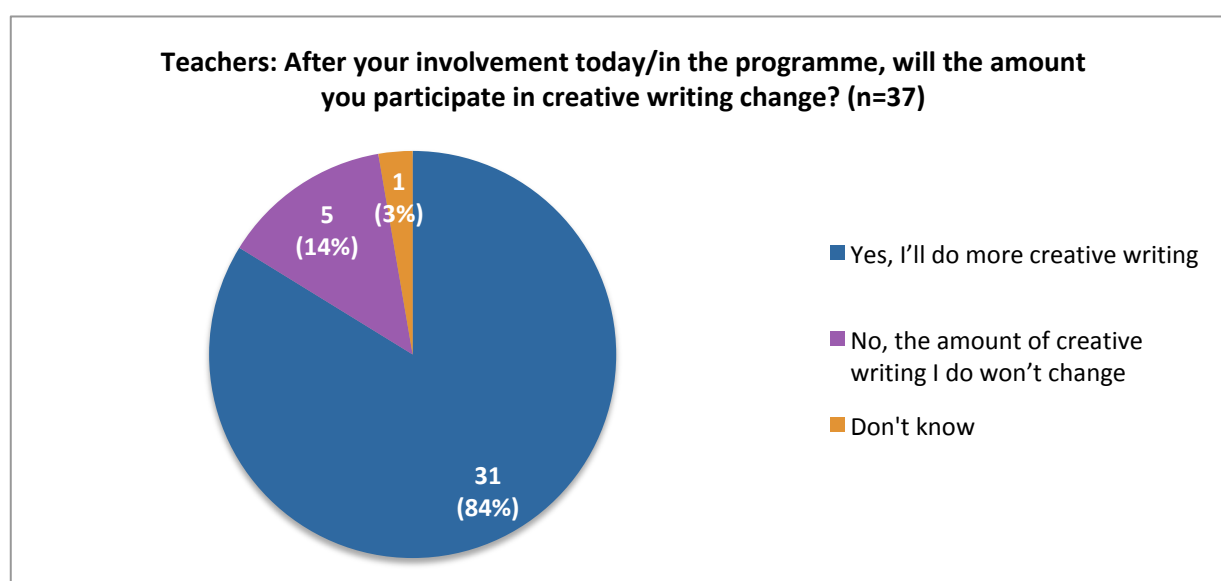
5.2 Engagement among teachers

Like young people, teachers' participation in creative writing remained similar over the course of their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity. While a sizeable majority of teachers said in perceived impact surveys that they would do more writing, the baseline and endpoint comparisons do not suggest this has translated into changes in behaviour.

Teachers' participation stayed largely similar during their involvement in a CWiS programme or project. The proportion writing more frequently – every day, or at once a week – stayed the same.



Asked whether their involvement in creative writing would change following their involvement in a CWiS programme, over three quarters of teachers said they would do more creative writing. These responses were similar for the one-off and programme perceived impact surveys. As with young people's responses, while teachers said in their perceived impact surveys they would write more (see below), their baseline and endpoint responses (above) suggest this has not happened. The following graph combines data from both 'one-off' and programme-long perceived impact surveys:

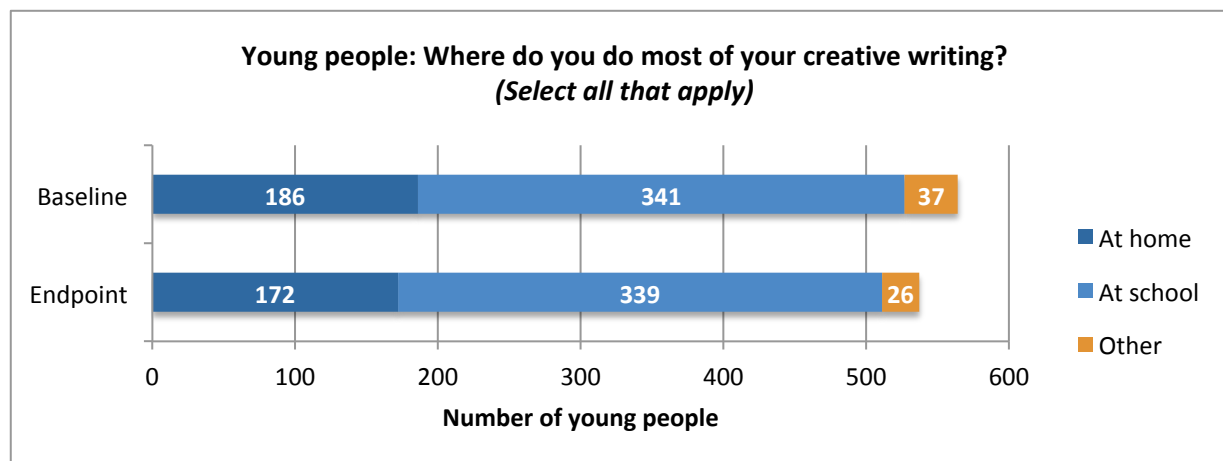


5.3 Where do people do their creative writing?

Young people and their teachers do most of their creative writing in school. While young people were most likely to say they would do additional writing at home following their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, teachers were more likely to say they would do additional writing in school.

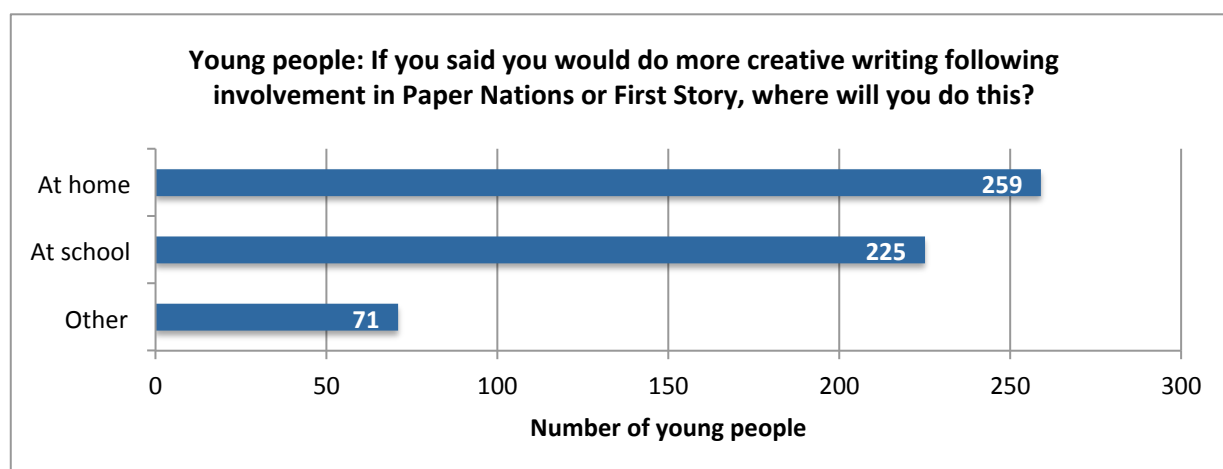
5.3.1 Young people

Young people do most of their creative writing in school, although a sizeable minority also write at home.



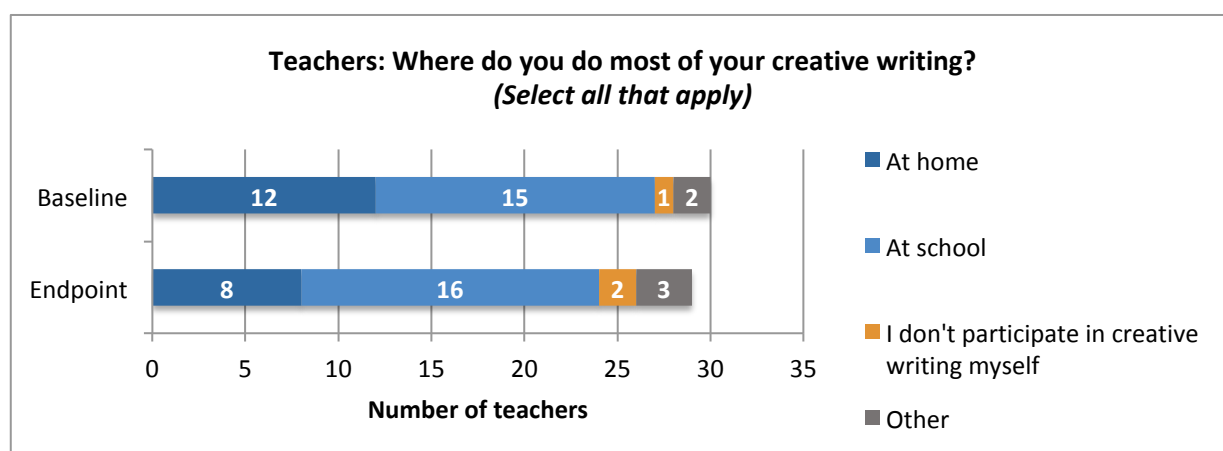
We asked young people who said they would do more writing after their involvement with Paper Nations or First Story where they would do this. The most common response was at home, perhaps indicating that involvement in a creative writing programme – whether a one-off, or longer-term programme – generates desire among young people to write more in their free time. In both sets of responses, young people who said ‘other’ commonly talked about writing:

- At a family member’s house;
- On holiday;
- In a library, or;
- Anywhere!

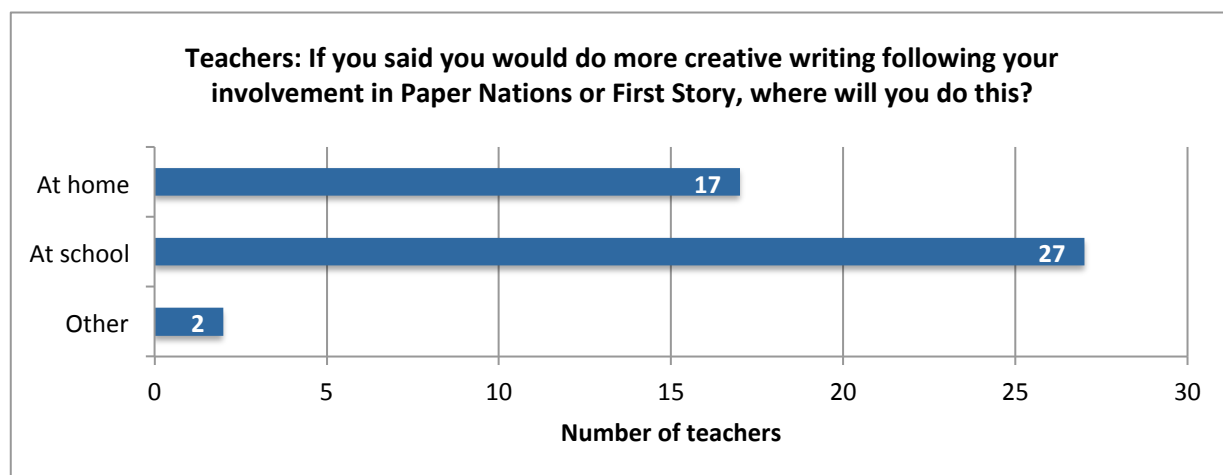


5.3.2 Teachers

Teachers do most of their writing at school, although a sizeable minority write creatively at home. Where teachers responded saying 'other', they spoke about writing in First Story's Writer-in-Residence sessions.



Teachers indicated that, following their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, they would do more creative writing, and that they would predominantly do this in school. However, over half of respondents said they would do this at home:



5.4 Conclusions and implications

The amount young people and teachers participate in creative writing did not change substantially following involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, although those who were writing less often said they are writing more frequently (or intended to do so) following their involvement. School remains the location in which most young people and teachers undertake most of their creative writing.

It is a challenge to ensure that young people (and teachers) who might be less inclined to take up creative writing in the first place have opportunities to try it. This could mean:

- Schools proactively selecting pupils with little prior involvement or interest in creative writing for future activities and programmes;
- Piquing teachers' interest in creative writing by involving them in pupils' activities.

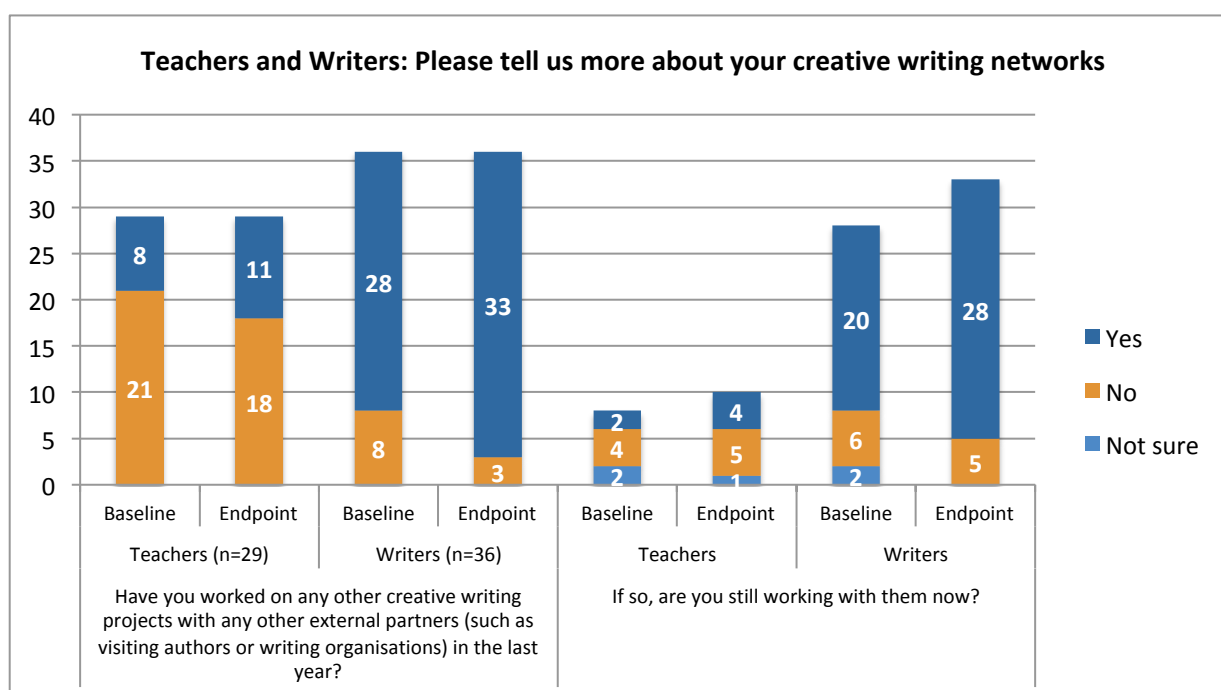
6. Of what networks are teachers and writers a part?

6.1 Are teachers and writers in writing networks?

Teachers are not generally part of creative writing networks and, when they are, these networks do not tend to last. Writers' networks are 'stickier' and this may be because writers' professional networks play an integral role in providing access to support and opportunities.

The majority of teachers involved in CWiS are not part of wider creative writing networks. The opposite is true for writers, over three quarters of whom are involved in other creative writing networks beyond their immediate work with First Story or Paper Nations.

Writers' networks also appear to be 'stickier', with a higher proportion of writers in comparison to teachers saying that they are still involved in these networks. Similar patterns were observed in teachers' and writers' responses to the perceived impact surveys, with a much higher proportion of writers saying they are still part of networks that formed before, or during their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity.



Many of teachers' networks are local or regional, as opposed to national, with teachers saying they are part of networks including:

- Local library services;
- Local literacy interventions, and;
- Local literacy and writing festivals.

Writers are also involved in local and regional literacy and writing networks, however many are also part of national and international networks, some of which have a focus that extends beyond creative writing. For example, writers said they are involved in:

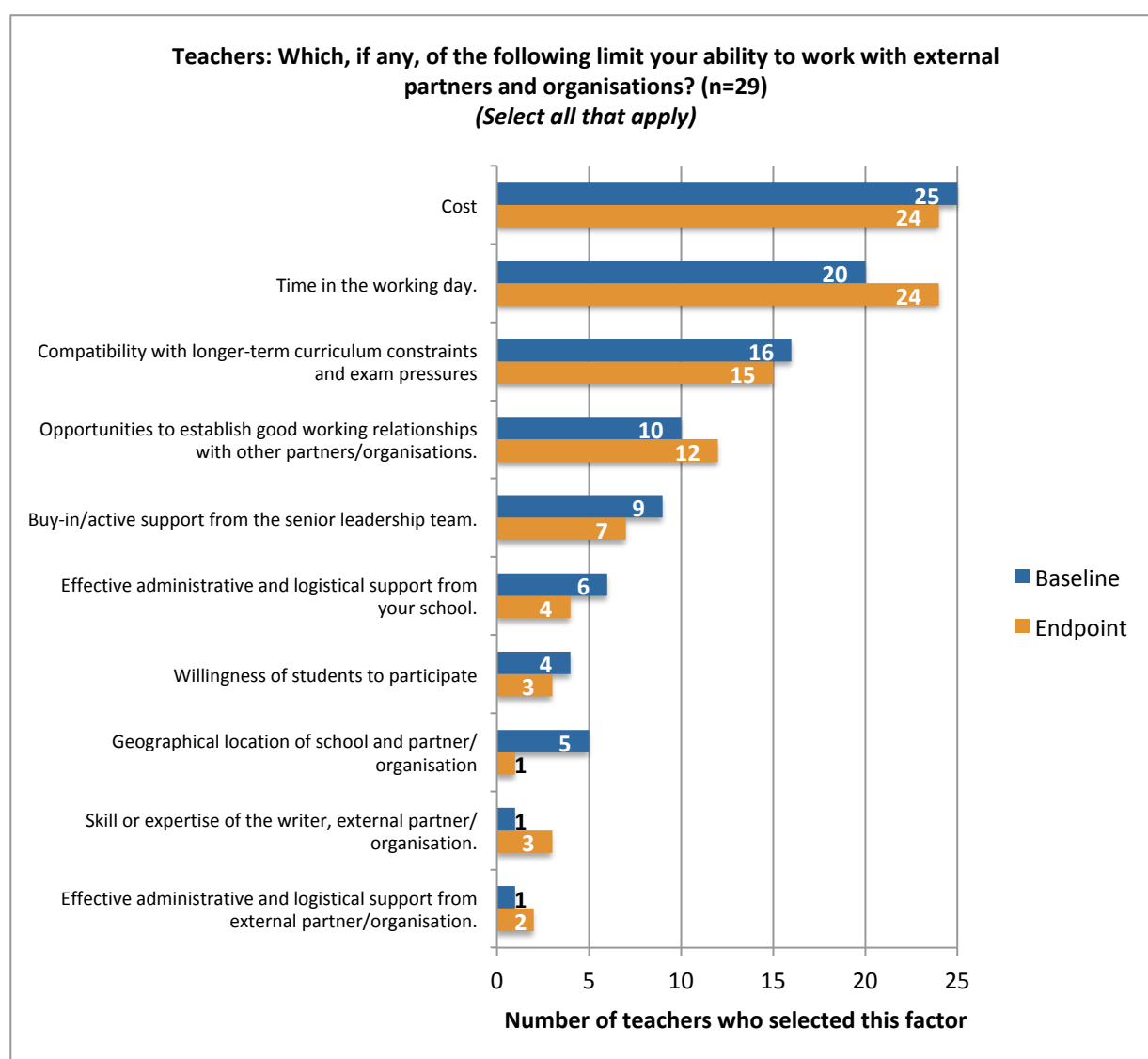
- Universities;
- Human Rights groups and campaigns;
- Youth organisations such as the Scouts;
- Cultural organisations including historical organisations and museums, and;
- Media outlets.

6.2 What limits teachers' and writers' abilities to work in creative writing networks?

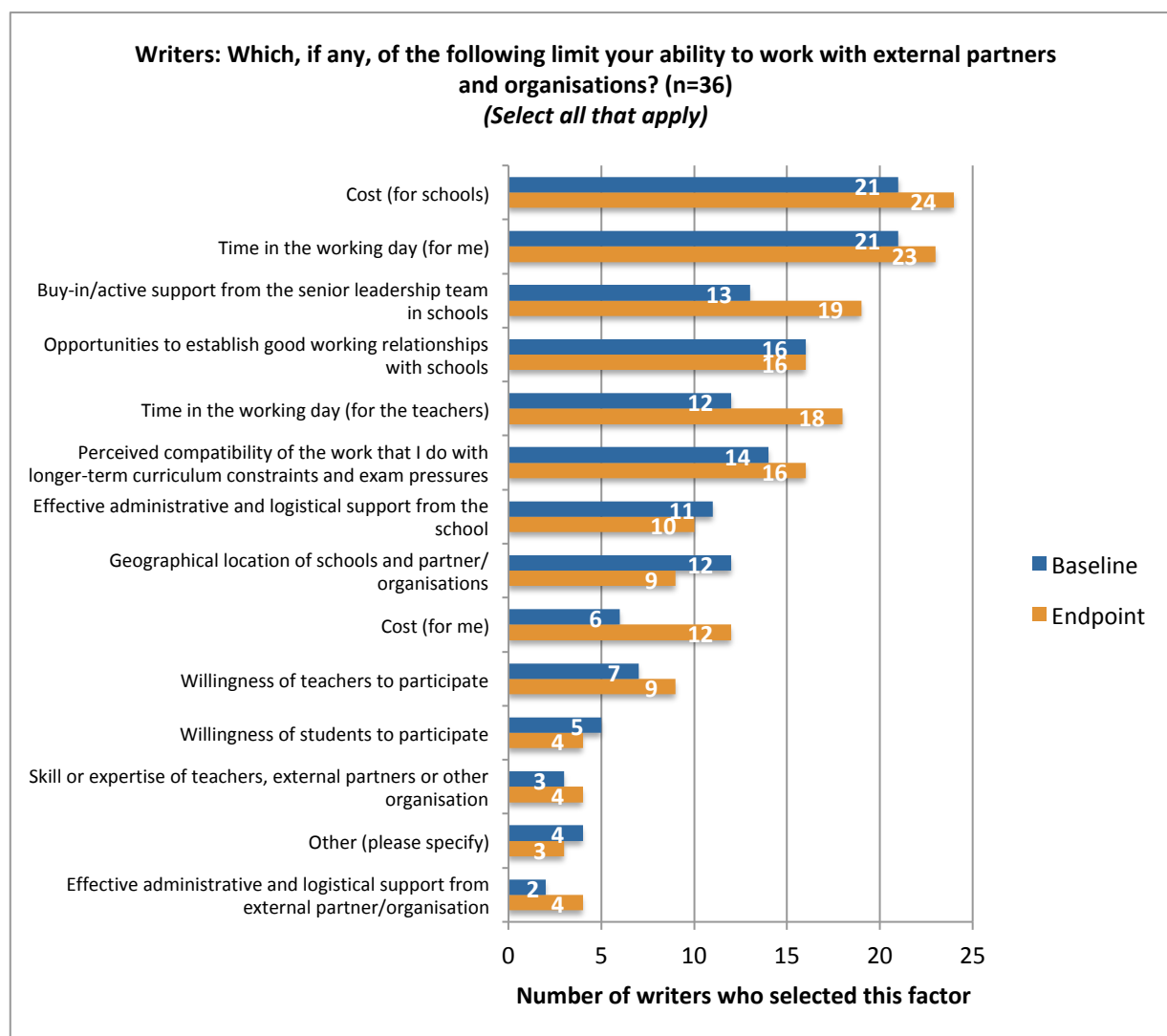
Cost and time are the biggest barriers to creative writing partnerships. Teachers and writers were more likely to flag time as a concern at the end of their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity. This may reflect the fact that their involvement introduced additional time pressures.

Cost was the most common barrier to teachers working with external partners and organisations on creative writing. It was cited by over 8 in 10 in the baseline and endpoint surveys. In endpoint surveys, a lower number of respondents cited schools' lack of administrative support, leadership buy-in, and geography as limiting factors. This could perhaps indicate that involvement with an external programme or network such as First Story or Paper Nations helps to tackle some of the cultural and administrative hurdles to schools offering creative writing.

A higher number of both teachers and writers flagged time in the working day as a barrier in their endpoint responses. This could perhaps reflect increased pressure on practitioners' time as a result of engaging in CWiS programmes and activities.



Writers' responses were consistent with teachers', insofar as the costs of creative writing for schools and time in the working day were both the most prominent barriers to working with schools and other organisations. Writers did not share teachers' view that school leaders were more supportive of creative writing, with an increase in the number flagging this as a barrier in their endpoint survey responses. This may reflect writers becoming more aware of how schools function and any hurdles that inhibit schools' engagement in creative writing. However, writers felt both teachers and pupils were more willing to participate, by the end of the CWiS programmes:



6.3 Conclusions and implications

CWiS programmes and activities introduced valuable opportunities for teachers and writers to engage in creative writing networks. Some of the key barriers to creative writing did not diminish during the CWiS programmes and activities, although this may in part be because – through their involvement – teachers' and writers' awareness of these barriers increased.

Organisations supporting creative writing partnerships and networks should focus in future work on:

- The brokerage of relationships between writers and schools, helping to reduce the burden on writers' and teachers' time by supporting clear expectations and communication between the parties.
- The sharing of writers' teaching resources to reduce the time they spend planning activities.

7. How financially sustainable is the delivery of creative writing?

We asked writers and representatives from writing organisations in Paper Nations' network how financially sustainable they find creative writing (both when working for themselves, and when working with young people). During this intensive study, we spoke to ten individuals with a wide range of experience in and with creative writing, including:

- Freelance writers, whose income in part comes from working with young people, both inside and outside schools;
- Writers working in other, related jobs such as teaching and tutoring, and;
- Employees of creative writing organisations that run or coordinate creative writing activities with young people and adults. These might include creative writing workshops, events, residencies, and training programmes.

7.1 What does it mean for creative writing to be 'financially sustainable'?

As part of an intensive study with Paper Nations, we explored how writers and organisations coordinating creative activities with young people feel about financial sustainability, and what factors help and hinder the financial sustainability of creative writing activities. Writers and writing organisations talk about 'financial sustainability' in terms of a predictable and reliable income, although they caveat this by setting frugal expectations about the sort of living they can make through creative writing. Some writers disagree that the term is useful or relevant.

Predictable, reliable income

Interviewees talked about financial sustainability in terms of access to a predictable, reliable income as they pursue creative writing activities. While generally, interviewees felt sustainability implied this income would be across the medium- or longer-term, many emphasised that shorter-term activities (such as one-off workshops) make an important contribution to their incomes. One freelance creative writing facilitator said that she would not expect her work to be sustainable in the longer-term:

"I wouldn't expect the help to be long term, if you see what I mean. I think that kind of goes with the territory I can't imagine how it could be long-term sustainable."

Freelance writer

Managing expectations

There was an acknowledgement amongst all interviewees that achieving financial sustainability in creative writing is not analogous to becoming financially wealthy. Rather, it is about generating enough income to sustain fulfilling activities, whether personal or collaborative:

"If you're looking at, 'have I got a 5-bedroom house and a fast car?', well, no. But I'm not interested in those things anyway because I would measure wealth on the quality of life and what it is that a person is able to do in their everyday life that brings them joy. And I think wealth comes from having time to be able to say, 'Okay, I'm going to spend a whole morning writing'."

Freelance writer

'Financial sustainability' is an unhelpful term

Several interviewees questioned the value of 'financial sustainability' as a term. Their main objection – explored in more detail, shortly – is that it misrepresents the purpose of creative writing. One interviewee – the Director of a creative writing training programme and network for young people – explained many creative writing projects would never achieve financial sustainability:

“The project work we do is partly to earn income but it will never make us financially sustainable. It’s just a complete red herring.”

Representative from a writing organisation

7.2 What factors support financial sustainability in creative writing?

Writers and writing organisations say that accessing funding from grant providers is crucially important, and that particular types of funding (which take into account the realities of the writing process) are especially important. Developing multiple different revenue streams can help make writing financially sustainable, reducing reliance on any one type of work. Writers say living frugally is important, as is joining professional networks that provide access to support and employment opportunities.

7.2.1 Accessing funding and generating a sustainable income

Types of funding

Funding can be difficult to obtain, a point we return to in section 7.3.1. However, writers find the following sorts of funding valuable:

- **Funding providers that are open-minded about the impact a particular piece of work or project might have.** This is especially important with creative writing, the value of which may not be easily measurable or visible for years. For example, one writer explained that:

“[Often writing does not] give an immediate return [nor] a direct return. The return is often societal and the return might take decades...to release itself, as it were. So if you judge the investment in creative writing and the arts as you do any other investment then you’re going to be sorely disappointed. But if you look at it in the bigger picture then actually the time you spend with writers can give an enormous value back.”

Representative from a writing organisation

- **Funding that does not require a writer to obtain match funding as part of their proposal, as the artistic process and output does not necessarily lend itself to this.** For example, one writer said that if “you’re wanting to finish a book of poetry, you’re not going to find anybody who’s going to match fund you to do that.”
- **Funding that does not require a writer to immediately engage with a specific audience** (at least during the early stages of the work). Again, the creative ‘endeavour’ can make it difficult to specify in advance the audiences that might benefit from a piece of work, making it – as one writer put it – “quite difficult to predict whether you’re going to engage with an audience until you’ve finished the work.”

Accessing multiple funding streams

Writers and organisations invariably require multiple strands of funding. This is because any one source of funding is likely to be insufficient to fund everything an individual or organisation wants to achieve. It also spreads the load so that, as one representative from a writing organisation explained, “if any one should fail, the group would hopefully not disappear, it could carry on.”

Asked about the availability of funding, our interviewees’ responses were mixed. For example, while “there are lots of opportunities out there” to secure funding both for individuals and organisations, these opportunities are not necessarily available to everyone, a point we return to shortly.

Sources of funding and income

Representatives from writing organisations explained that valuable sources of funding include:

- **Funding organisations such as the Arts Council;**

- **Individual donors**, with one interviewee explaining her organisation’s “dream situation” is “somebody who is interested in what we do [saying] ‘Here’s a cheque’”;
- **Schools**, which provide many writers with paid opportunities. However, as we explore shortly, the income available from schools is limited;
- **Partners, including venues**. This support may be in-kind, perhaps involving the donation of a space. This can be achieved on a quid pro quo basis, if a creative writing event will bring an audience to a venue, and;
- **Parents**, although this raises questions about equity of access for young people whose parents cannot afford to provide funding.

Whether or not programmes should charge participants (or their parents) was a contentious issue. Charging inevitably means that not everyone who might benefit from a creative writing service can access it, without some form of subsidy. Yet one interviewee explained that it is not possible to sustain creative writing services without charging for them (contrasting with another interviewee’s suggestion that the whole idea of financial sustainability is a flawed one). Furthermore, he said charging can be beneficial, as it ensures participants’ commitment:

“There is a thought that everything should be available at no cost and, while I appreciate that’s a nice sentiment, we know from experience that a small modest cost means people feel committed to what you’re doing. And that little bit of money actually, once you add it up with x hundreds of other people, becomes a reasonable sum of money which can help sustain what you do. If we didn’t charge for our groups, we would be running maybe six groups less than we are, 14 groups instead of 20, and that would be a great shame.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Later in section 7.4 we explore the implications of charging for creative writing activities on young people’s access to these activities.

An important source of income for freelance writers can be their partner’s income. One interviewee said “I have got friends who... have relationships where their partner is the main income earner and they rely on that.”

7.2.2 Living frugally

In addition to generating income, how writers live affects their ability to write. Factors that writers we interviewed discussed included:

- Renting rather than buying accommodation, and;
- Keeping tight budgets in both their personal and professional lives.

Writing is a “precarious career to follow”, and necessitates accepting a certain degree of risk and low pay:

“People who I know who work in the creative industries, whether that’s writing or more broadly, [are] not in it for the money. They live more frugally than they might do if they had...a higher paying job.”

Representative from a writing organisation

7.2.3 Joining writers’ networks

Interviewees all talked about the critical role that networks and collaboration play in supporting financial sustainability. This is because networks can allow writers to:

- **Gain efficiencies through sharing ideas, practices and resources** relating to creative writing and teaching;

- **Link with employment opportunities**, and;
- **Discuss the ‘business’ of writing**, including appropriate levels of pay, and “how to pitch and where to pitch”, as one freelance writer put it.

One interviewee said most of the conversations he observes taking place within a writing programme he coordinates “are about opportunities:”

“I think emerging writers are more likely to realise that fees are payable and you should talk to people about the appropriate level and so on.”

Representative from a writing organisation

One interviewee said that attending network meetings with teachers was valuable, in terms of helping to hone her practice, and forging links with potential clients.

7.2.4 Building a profile

To build their or their organisation’s profile and gain work, our interviewees said it is important to:

- **Attend writing and creative arts events**, which help writers forge new professional relationships;
- **Persevere**, and ‘plug away’ in the face of set-backs, and;
- **Seek out opportunities**, for example by approaching schools rather than waiting to be contacted. For example, two writers said they approached their children’s schools about running workshops, which led to work. One said:

“Most writers...are out and they’re hustling...they’re negotiating and they’re planning and they’re producing and they’re doing a whole range of other things in order to be able to do the writing that they want to do. ...[They are] more accepting that they can’t just sit and wait for it to happen. They need to go out there and talk to people about what they do.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Another important dimension to building profile is communicating with funders and the public. This was only discussed by a couple of interviewees however, suggesting it is not something that all writers are thinking about:

“We spend a lot of time communicating with the Arts Council and making sure they see the value of what we do. ...So I think if we can convince people that being able to write, tell stories and be articulate is valuable across a whole range of human endeavours, including engineering and health and pharmaceuticals and the automotive industry, then that would help.”

Representative from a writing organisation

7.2.5 Training and development

Writers explained that access to training and development supports higher quality work (both in terms of their own writing, and teaching), and consequently higher rates of ‘customer’ retention. The Director of a writers’ network said his organisation invests in training writers “in how to work with young people”:

“We expect them to stay with us for quite a few years, and they expect to do that as well. So that helps sustainability because we’ve got a very stable workforce. ...The people who are participating get exactly what they paid for every month regularly.”

Representative from a writing organisation

7.2.6 Working with schools

Working with schools can support the financial sustainability of creative writing by:

- **Providing writers with valuable professional experience.** As one writer put it, “it’s a privilege for me to go into schools and work with kids and work out what works”, and;
- **Responding to a genuine need.** One representative from a writing organisation explained that creative writing “just doesn’t exist in the curriculum any more really.” This can mean schools are more willing to work with writers, or that young people actively seek opportunities to join creative writing workshops.

‘Success factors’ for working with schools include:

- **Schools ‘having skin in the game’.** One representative from a writing organisation said that charging schools even a nominal fee for creative writing services (even if they are not covering the full cost) means schools are more likely to take a programme seriously.
- **Working with schools to access other sources of funding.** Many schools cannot afford to pay for creative writing, or prioritise other work. Therefore writers and organisations said they spend time helping schools cover these costs, either through providing bursaries or through applying for external funding (something the writer or organisation normally needs to coordinate).
- **Goodwill,** from writers, writing organisations, and teachers. This includes writers undertaking projects free of charge or at a loss, and teachers going ‘above and beyond’ to support creative writing activities in their free time. For reasons we explore in section 7.3.2, while goodwill means activities take place that otherwise would not, it also has downsides as it can put downward pressure on writers’ wages.

7.2.7 Diversifying projects

All interviewees spoke about the importance of diversifying their work. This can take different forms, including:

- **Undertaking other writing** including magazine articles and educational resources alongside personal writing projects;
- **Teaching and tutoring,** including working on a freelance, part-time or permanent basis in schools and universities, or with writing networks, and;
- **Working in a variety of creative art forms.** One freelance writer explained that, often as part of her writing workshops, she performs oral storytelling.

Diversifying projects can allow for cross-subsidy. For example, two writing organisations said they use popular courses to subsidise less popular (but equally important) work.

7.2.8 Efficiency

In order to secure financial sustainability, interviewees talked about the importance of achieving efficiency in their work, relating to:

- **Administration and processes,** including using technology (including websites) to streamline administrative processes such as bookings and payments;
- **Communication with clients,** which in practice can mean having a single point of contact within a school or institution, and;
- **The creative process,** which one writer said is relatively simple to achieve as, other than a laptop, “it’s not like you need to have special equipment.”

7.3 What factors inhibit financial sustainability?

Funding from grant providers is an important income stream for writers and writing organisations, but can be difficult to secure. Furthermore, a lack of coordination among writers means some writers are not sure what their 'value' is, and work for nothing or cheaply, putting downward pressure on many writers' wages. Societal attitudes to the importance of creative writing can reduce demand for writing programmes.

7.3.1 Difficulty generating sufficient income

Making enough money as a writer or as an organisation running creative writing projects is difficult. Everyone we interviewed said it is difficult to make writing (whether personal, or running programmes) financially viable. Some even said, overall, their work costs them money. Fundamentally, a lot of the work is "very unpredictable", and one writer said "it's nowhere near a proper income."

Applying for funding

Applying for funding was a common challenge described by interviewees. Key issues include:

- **Understanding what funding is available and from whom**, including from individual donors and grant providers. This is a particular challenge for writers newer to the profession, but is also something that larger and more established organisations struggle with.
- **Knowledge and confidence to apply for funding**. Again, this is particularly prevalent among less experienced writers, with one freelance writer saying "I haven't really had the confidence to apply for them (grants), because I don't know if I've got enough of a track record publication wise to make it."
- **The reliability of funding streams**;
- **Finding capacity to apply for funding**. This was something that representatives from creative writing organisations flagged in particular, with one saying her organisation has "to spend a lot of time and effort filling in endless bids:"

"We are always looking for funding, ...and we can spend a lot of our office resource, which should be spent really on delivering fantastic creative writing projects for children, [on] having to chase the money to pay for them."

Representative from a writing organisation

Another, related challenge is that the skills required to be a good writer, teacher or facilitator are different to those needed to write strong funding applications. One interviewee said:

"Delivering great workshops for children and young people or creating brilliant work [does not] necessarily correlate to filling in funding applications.... I think a lot of people who work in the arts struggle with the frustration of spending time writing funding applications when really what you want to do is be delivering the work."

Representative from a writing organisation

- **Demonstrating (and predicting) value and impact**. Interviewees from writing organisations problematised the idea of 'impact'. In particular, they said that the impact of creative writing is far-reaching but often diffuse and difficult to assess. They felt that this could make demonstrating the impact of their work difficult. They also worried about making spurious claims in funding applications (which in extreme cases can put organisations off applying for funding):

"If I were to promise ... that my work was going to take children and young people off the street, I could get funding, but with the best will in the world I can't promise that my

creative writing workshops are going to do that. ...I'm just not prepared to write an application form which is largely going to be fictional in order to persuade [funders]."

Representative from a writing organisation

A related concern was that the 'impact' some funders seek is financial sustainability. This creates a situation whereby newer or smaller organisations who are further from achieving financial sustainability are less likely to attract funding, in turn making them less likely to achieve sustainability.

- **Shrinking funding pots.** This is straining writers' and organisations' ability to deliver their services.
- **Geography.** Freelance writers in particular said that where they live can limit their access to particular sources of funding. One highlighted bursaries that are available to Welsh writers, but not to writers living in England.

Working with publishers

Freelance writers talked about the difficulties they experienced working with publishers, because advances and payments are unpredictable and often too low.

Offering projects to families

Offering projects to families presents opportunities and challenges for writers and writing organisations. Writers said that, frustratingly, the issue is not about demand. Rather it is about:

- Families' desire to commit to creative writing programmes over and above other opportunities (such as holidays or other within- or out-of-school clubs), and;
- Families' abilities to afford the projects (with some asking to pay for them in instalments).

Working with schools

Schools offer an important potential source of income for writers and writing organisations, although they can be challenging to work with for writers and writing organisations. Schools' shrinking budgets were a prominent concern for interviewees. Writers felt that schools were either less likely to finance creative writing programmes or more likely to prioritise other sorts of programme over and above creative writing. Writers were concerned that schools might prioritise other programmes partly due to a perceived need to prepare pupils for tests in line with a National Curriculum, which they felt does not value creative writing.

Other specific challenges about working with schools that interviewees said affect the financial sustainability of their work included:

- **Working in unsuitable environments, such as small or noisy school spaces.** This could, in turn affect the quality of pupils' experiences;
- **Funders being reluctant to fund work with schools;**
- **Demand from pupils,** who – even when keen on the idea of creative writing – may be siphoned off into other activities or choose other activities (such as football);
- **Schools setting the price parents pay.** One writing organisation found schools cap the amount parents are asked to pay for a writing programme.
- **Maintaining contacts.** Freelance writers and representatives from organisations explained that it is challenging to establish and sustain good working relationships with schools, especially amidst staffing changes.
- **Teachers' capacity.** Writers acknowledged that teachers are often overworked and under-resourced, making them – as one interviewee put it – “much less likely to go ‘Hey, I think we’re going to spend half term in the middle of nowhere in rural Devon, trying to inspire young children to write’.”

- **Demonstrating immediate or narrow impact.** While some writers said schools give them lots of freedom, others explained schools will only commission work where they believe there will be an immediate impact on pupils' academic outcomes. This curtails what the writer can focus on during the sessions, and reduces a workshop's wider impact.
- **Schools knowing who to contact.** Several writers said that even if schools want to commission work, they do not always know where to look for writers, leading to missed opportunities.

7.3.2 Lack of workforce coordination

A significant challenge facing the work, pay and financial sustainability of creative writers and organisations is a lack of coordination among the writing workforce. Several issues are at play here:

1. **Some writers are prepared to work either for free or a reduced fee. This puts downwards pressure on wages.** This may be because a writer feels that creative writing is valuable and they are therefore prepared to help a school at a reduced cost:

"I've just been asked to go in to do some creative writing training with a couple of schools [and] they can't afford it. So we're just going to have to go and do it, but there's no money in the process. We do it because we passionately believe in creative writing for kids."

Representative from a writing organisation

Writers may also do this to gain experience and contacts:

"I'd say the majority of [writers] are actually doing things off their own bat or just giving up their time because I think they're used to the mentality or the belief that people do things like this for free because it will lead to something positive."

Freelance writer

However, this can set a precedent for low wages or free work, which damages the longer-term earning prospects of writers:

"A lot of writers I talk to are unaware of their influence on the macro side.... They think only of their situation..., unaware of the fact that if they do a workshop for nothing, eventually that reduces the likelihood of somebody else getting paid in the future, because people get used to the idea that writers do stuff for nothing."

Representative from a writing organisation

2. **Not all writers are sure what their rates should be, and can feel uncomfortable negotiating with schools (and other potential clients).** One interviewee reported that he has "lots of conversations with writers about what should they charge to do [different activities], and we're starting from scratch in most cases." To compound this, people commissioning writers do not know how much to pay. An interviewee explained:

"No one knows how much a writer is worth, you know. They really don't. They don't know whether it's worth £10 an hour or £100 an hour, and wildly differing payments are made."

Representative from a writing organisation

Worryingly, the financial pressure writers face combined with a lack of knowledge about what it is reasonable to expect, contractually further weakens writers' negotiating positions:

"I met a writer recently who had just signed a contract with publishers. It had never crossed her mind to stop and look at that contract and see if it was an effective contract. She just

was so excited to have a contract, she just signed it. Now that wasn't her fault and the contract I'm sure is fine, but that's an illustration of the kind of vulnerability in which writers find themselves."

Representative from a writing organisation

3. **Not all writers have access to networks, support or advice.** One freelance writer said "I feel like I'm trying to find it all out for myself", while another said that there were no easily accessible writers' networks where she lives, which can make her feel like a "lone ranger". With more writers entering the marketplace, several interviewees felt sharing information about fees has become more difficult, even though this is crucial for writers and writing organisations to receive fair payment.
4. **Writers and organisations compete rather than collaborate.** Because money for creative writing is relatively scarce, competition can build for funding. Several interviewees observed that this has bred competition where there used to be collaboration, with individuals and organisations tending to "draw resources into themselves rather than spread resources out."

Interviewees said potential solutions to this could include:

- Unionisation of the writing workforce, and adherence to minimum wages, and;
- The establishment of agencies or brokerage services that could negotiate on writers' behalves.

7.3.3 Lack of efficiency

Writers and organisations find the following can be inefficient:

- **Planning activities and making resources,** which can be very time consuming. In essence, "there's a lot of preparation for not enough return", as one freelance writer put it. This takes time away from other activities (such as communicating with schools and other potential customers), and securing the repeat business that would make the investment of time in such planning more worthwhile.
- **Writing and redrafting.** Like planning educational activities, writing itself can be time consuming, and involve substantial redrafting and editing. One freelance writer explained this can make undertaking paid writing commissions inefficient.
- **Responding to customers' needs and circumstances.** Working with clients (and in particular schools) can involve last minute changes to plans, which scupper a writer or organisation's work. One representative from a writing organisation recalled:

"Cross-country club suddenly changed and half the kids wanted to go to that as well. That kind of thing you've got no control over, and the school don't come and say, 'Oh, this might impact on you.' Or if there's a school trip, I'm never told that some of my group might not be there because they're all out."

Representative from a writing organisation

7.3.4 Attitudes towards creative writing

A factor inhibiting the sustainability of creative writing is societal assumptions about its value, which in turn reduce demand for creative writing programmes and activities:

"I think there needs to be a change in mindset about the value of writing, not just in terms of writing novels and poetry but in terms of a society as a whole and the importance in writing for people who work in the engineering sector and so on."

Representative from a writing organisation

7.4 What trade-offs are involved in working towards financial sustainability?

Securing financial sustainability in creative writing involves trade-offs. Writers and organisations have to make decisions about how to balance finances against securing access for young people.

Working towards making creative writing financially sustainable involves trade-offs:

“Having to be financially sustainable means that it has an impact on... what you're trying to do and the integrity of the work. So there might need to be compromises along the way in the design of the project for example.”

Freelance writer

7.4.1 Financial sustainability versus addressing needs

Freelance writers and representatives from writing organisations explained that there are trade-offs between running financially viable programmes and addressing the greatest needs. Here, the key trade-offs are in terms of the length of programme or programmes, geographical coverage, and the extent to which everyone who wants to access these programmes can do so.

Breadth versus depth of coverage

An interviewee working for a writing organisation explained that they have to trade-off longer term, more targeted work versus more widely accessible but less intense projects:

“I can spread our activities thinly across the whole of my region and sustain them for hopefully the long term. ...What that means is that there's whole groups of people, young people particularly, who miss out on engaging in creative writing because they aren't close enough to a group or because the group's the wrong age group, or because they just haven't heard about it. We've resisted the urge to go in and serve those young people, not because we don't think they need it, but because if you do that you tend to operate for a short period of time and then walk away again. And the mainstream arts world is full of projects being parachuted into communities, heavily invested, coming complete with press releases and photo opportunities, which last for a short period of time and then disappear.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Financial viability versus access

Representatives from other organisations explored the difficult balance between financial sustainability, and access. Both concluded that one invariably comes at the cost of the other:

“As soon as children and young people have to pay for provision it just gets hard to make it accessible to young people who don't have access to that kind of money.”

Representative from a writing organisation

One interviewee said his organisation had explicitly decided to prioritise access over sustainability. Another reported that their organisation funds bursaries using cross-subsidies, although not all eligible parents use them:

“We get very little take-up (of our bursaries), and I wonder if that isn't because people don't want to share that information or don't want to have to go through that registration process, so I wonder if we are perhaps losing some of those lower income writers that absolutely should be at the heart of what we're doing.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Paying writers well versus access

Another concern was that efforts to increase access could negatively affect writers, as they make it more difficult to pay them a fair wage:

“There's the practical thing isn't there of needing to pay artists to work with children and young people, ...and at the same time feeling like it should be completely free for everybody and I think that's the difficulty.”

Representative from a writing organisation

7.4.2 Income generation versus equity of access to creative writing

Because of the difficulties in making a living from creative writing, there is not equity of opportunity in becoming a writer. Interviewees noted several emerging trends among creative writers:

- Older and retired people can more easily afford to write:

“There is a rump of people who have got some economic stability and possibly some spare cash in the way they didn't have when they were in their twenties. ...It's probably less affordable for people who are in their twenties.”

Representative from a writing organisation

- There is increasing pressure to obtain qualifications including Masters degrees and doctorates. Because an increasing number of universities (and other providers) offer creative writing programmes and qualifications, several interviewees talked about creative writing ‘qualification inflation’. That is, an expectation that creative writers will have a formal qualification.

“Increasingly there is an expectation that writers will have gone through an MA programme, and then even more now a PhD programme. ...We are creating barriers to entry for the marketplace by demanding that people have gone through those.... I mean, in the long term that is a real barrier to entry. That will mean that the writing world would be populated exclusively by those who've been able to afford to professionalise themselves through the higher education sector.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Furthermore, this creates an expectation among potential clients such as schools that writers will (and should) have formal qualifications, inhibiting writers without such qualifications from finding paid work.

- We spoke to two writers with young families, who said they find the pressure of generating income and paying for childcare can inhibit their ability to work.

7.4.3 Authenticity versus conformity

Interviewees also talked about a trade-off between writing authentically (whether for themselves, or helping others to do so), and pressure to ‘conform’ with funders’ or clients’ requirements:

“I might want to do a project in a school that is shaped entirely around a creative agenda but needs to be shaped differently in terms of what the school will pay for, for example, or what a funder might pay for.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Instances where this can arise can include pressure to:

- Write something ‘saleable’, versus writing that, as one freelance writer put it “you just think is worth writing for a different reason”;
- Produce an end product, versus focusing on the writing and creative process, and;
- Narrow the ambition or creative scope of a project in response to funding requirements:

“I’m sure that the reality is that [funding does] affect which projects go ahead and which ones frankly don’t because we can’t find the funding or the match funding that we need in order to deliver it. So it is having an impact on creativity, definitely.”

Representative from a writing organisation

Narrowing the scope of a project can also occur when writers and organisations work with schools, where, as one freelance writer suggested, “everything has to hook into the National Curriculum”. Consequently, “if they did want me to come in and they were going to pay then how would it tick all the boxes that they need ticked?” This can be frustrating if it detracts from the process of learning about the authentic process of creative writing, as opposed to writing more instrumentally.

For organisations, this can mean making tough decisions about which programmes to run. One interviewee explained that her organisation would like to run many more niche courses, but that it is constrained by the cost of doing and low demand for something which is, by definition, niche.

7.4.4 Investment in one’s own writing, versus other projects

This was widely discussed during the interviews. Generally, interviewees felt all their work had value, although some saw taking on additional work (such as running workshops with schools) as intrinsically valuable, while others saw it more as a means to an end so they can afford occasionally to pursue more personal creative projects.

Unfortunately, the need to generate income can detract from writers’ freedom to pursue their own projects:

“The two days at school are my bread and butter. I do ‘write club’ because I really enjoy it and I love working with other writers and that generates some income, but then I have to take on educational writing to fund time and space for creative writing, so the biggest challenge for me is finding time.”

Freelance writer

However, other writers talked about the need to publish their own work before being able to access the jobs market, creating a situation whereby they felt locked into financially unstable work.

7.5 What are the implications for writers and writing organisations?

Despite the financial pressures faced by writers and writing organisations, most people working as (or with) creative writers feel compelled to continue doing so, driven by a strong sense of purpose.

Most writers want to stay, impelled by their passion and sense of purpose

Around two thirds of interviewees said they would stay involved in creative writing, because of their passion for writing, and the enjoyment they get working with young people:

“I believe strongly in [creative writing’s] transformative possibilities for young people.”

Representative from a writing organisation

However, around a third of the people we interviewed were less certain, in part because of precarious finances, and also because of the challenges of working with schools and parents. As one respondent put it “a smoother path would be nicer.”

7.6 Conclusions and implications

Achieving financial sustainability is a huge challenge for writers and writing organisations, with a number of factors making this difficult. Writers’ lack of certainty about their ‘value’ and abilities to negotiate are exacerbated by a lack of access to professional networks which could provide this information and support.

Organisations supporting writers should:

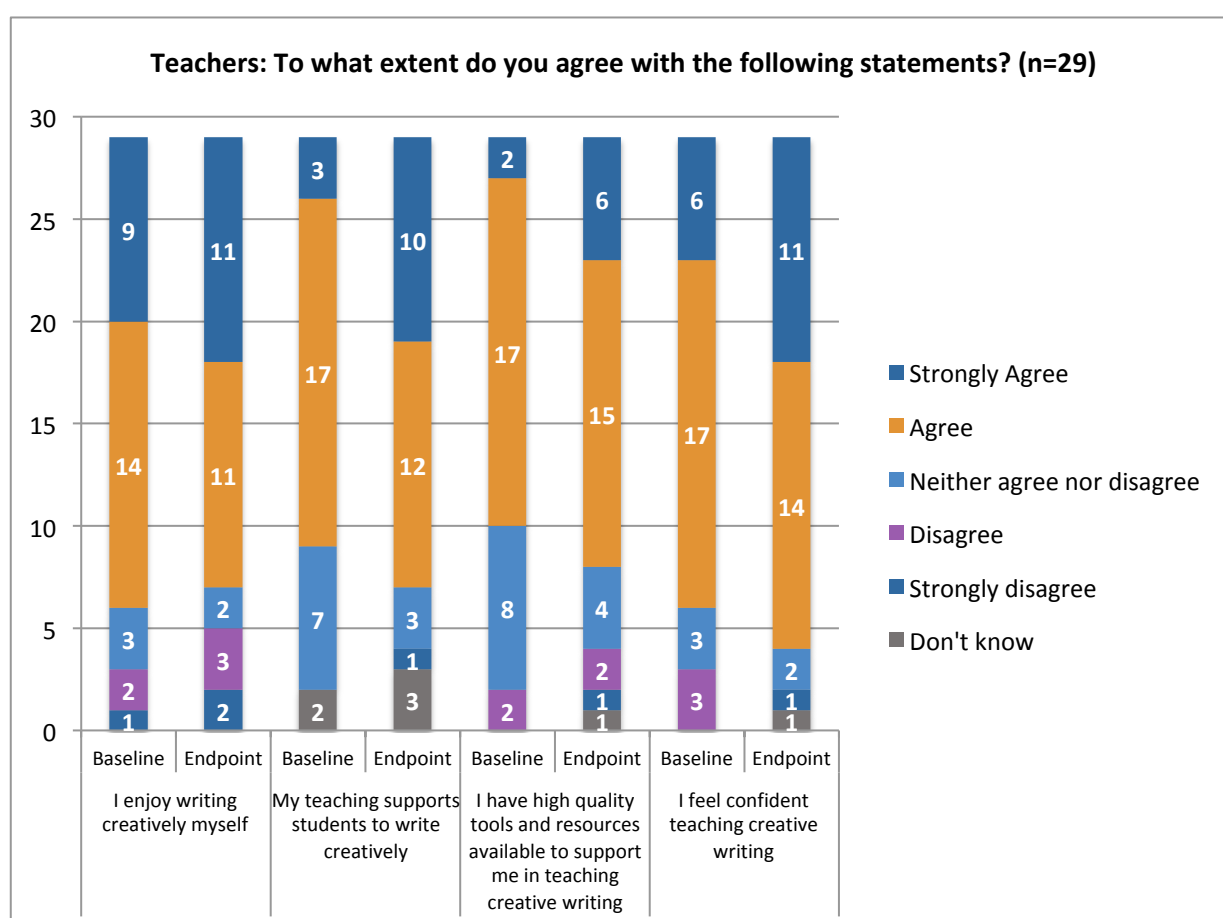
- Set guidelines for writers’ fees;
- Share information about how other writers generate and sustain income;
- Raise awareness among writers about the existing networks available that can provide them with professional support, and;
- Discourage writers from working for free or too cheaply.

8. How confident do teachers and writers feel teaching creative writing?

8.1 Teachers' confidence

Teachers who felt initially confident about teaching creative writing at the beginning of their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity tended to feel more confident by the end.

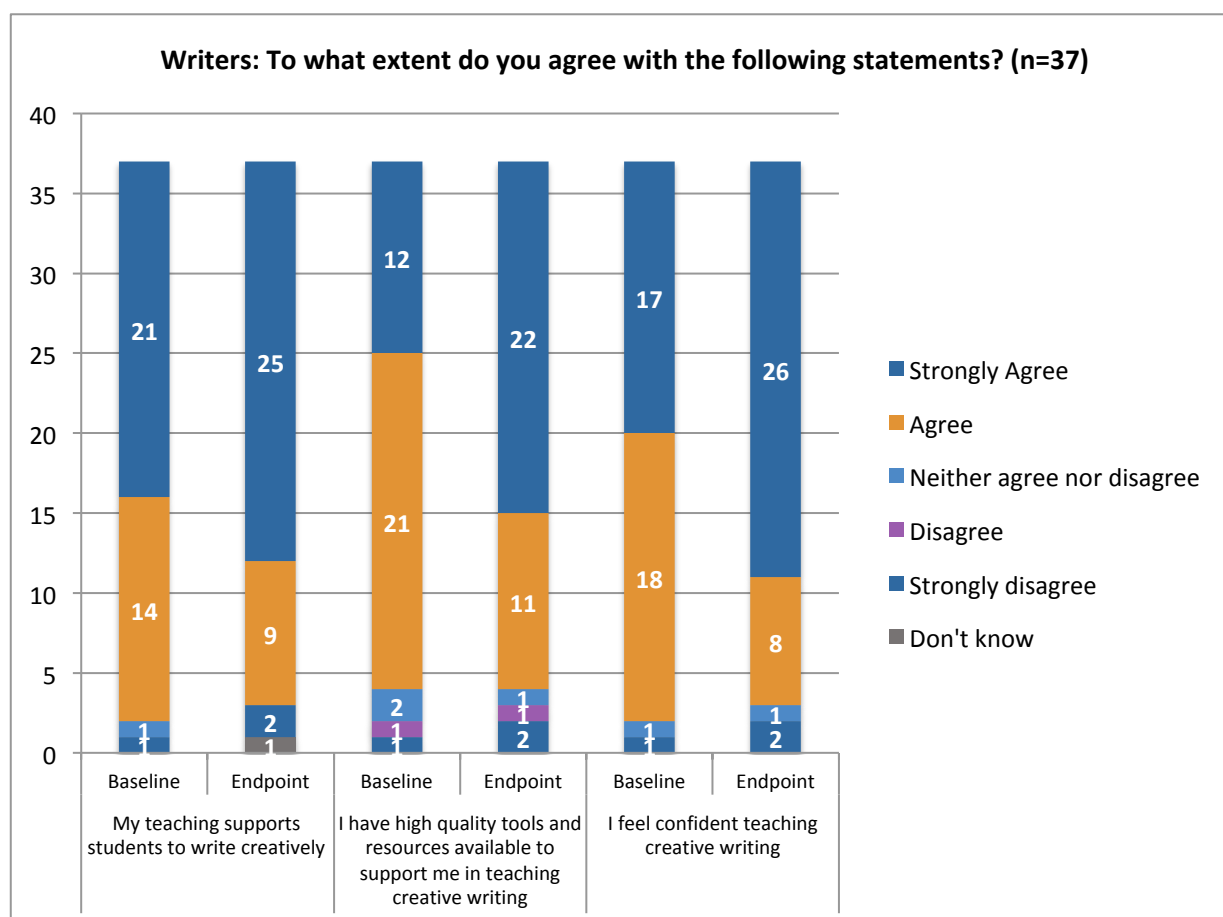
Teachers report feeling slightly more confident teaching creative writing, having been involved in a CWiS programme or activity. They also feel they have better access to quality tools and resources, and that their teaching helps pupils to write creatively. The matched survey responses in the graph, below, indicate that the number of teachers who 'strongly agree' with the statements about their teaching increased between the baseline and endpoint responses. However, the number who responded 'disagree' or 'don't know' for each question remained similar, perhaps suggesting that teachers who initially felt more confident and supported were more likely to feel they benefitted from involvement in a CWiS programme or activity.



8.2 Writers' confidence

Writers were more likely to report feeling confident teaching creative writing than teachers although, as with teachers, it was the more confident writers to begin with whose confidence increased most during their involvement in CWiS programme or activity.

Mirroring teachers' results, writers reported feeling more confident in relation to their own teaching and ability to support students, having participated in a CWiS programme or activity. As with teachers the number of writers who disagreed stayed similar, again suggesting it was perhaps the writers who initially felt more confident who benefitted the most:



8.3 Conclusions and implications

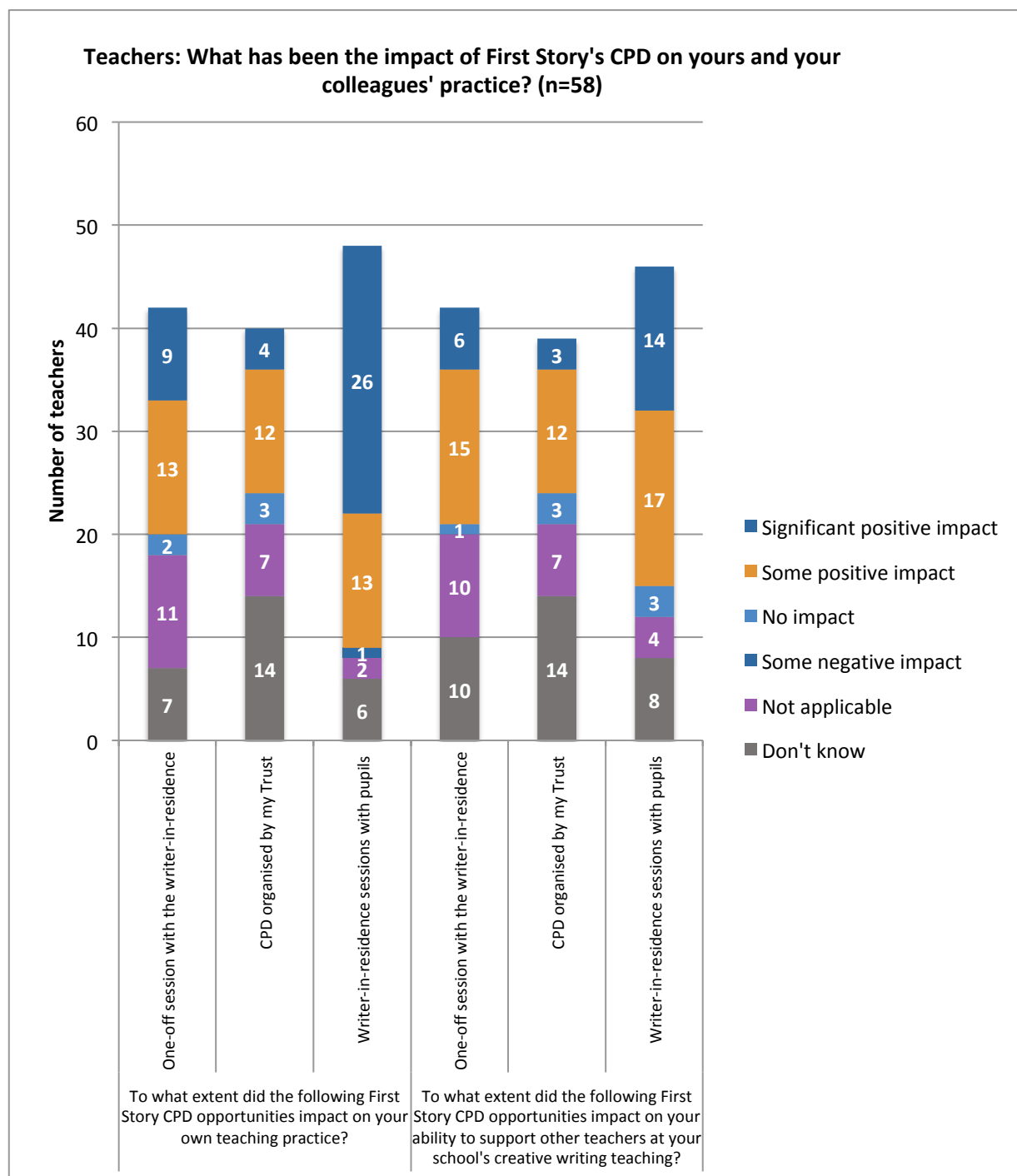
Involvement in Paper Nations or First Story seemed beneficial in terms of teachers' and writers' confidence, although it was generally the more confident practitioners to begin with who seemed to benefit the most.

Organisations supporting creative writers and creative writing in schools should make engaging with and supporting less confident teachers and writers a priority for future work, ensuring these groups have access to training, support and resources that will help them develop their practice.

9. What is the impact of First Story's CPD on teachers and their colleagues?

Teachers say First Story's Writer-in-Residence workshops had the greatest on theirs and their colleagues' practice.

Teachers said they found attending pupils' sessions with a Writer-in-Residence had the most impact on their own teaching, and their ability to support their colleagues' teaching. They found attending CPD organised by their school or Trust comparatively less helpful:¹⁴



¹⁴ All relevant post and perceived impact responses were included. Responses from the same teachers in different years were kept. Where teachers had both perceived impact and endpoint survey responses for the same year, the endpoint response was used.

9.1 How did First Story's CPD shape teachers' and school librarians' practice?

When practitioners (teachers and school librarians) talk about the impact of First Story's CPD on their practice, they generally do so in relation to the Writer-in-Residence workshops. They say these increased their enjoyment of creative writing and confidence as writers; increased their repertoire of ideas for teaching creative writing; and, encouraged them to share their ideas with colleagues.

We interviewed seven teachers and three school librarians as part of First Story's CPD intensive study. Interviews explored how the training had affected perceptions of, engagement and practice in, creative writing. They highlighted three key ways in which CPD (in particular the Writer-in-Residence workshops) had an impact on them and their creative writing:

1. **The CPD influenced practitioners' enjoyment of creative writing and confidence as writers**, and the Writer-in-Residence workshops especially helped teachers and their pupils overcome their nerves as writers. One teacher said:

"The first little bits of the first sessions that you're sharing are a sentence or two sentences. And then you build up. And I think it worked really well and very, very quickly the group was established as a really safe space where [pupils] all shared and they all appreciate each other."

Teacher

Writing for self-expression was seen as an important element of the Writer-in-Residence sessions, with one practitioner saying "taking part in the sessions has really made me enjoy [writing] more", while another observed how important a "sense of freedom" has been in engaging him and his pupils. Another said:

"I'm sure they've helped the students but, in terms of my writing, the biggest influence was ... being in that room with [the writer] every week and seeing ... his writing and getting involved that way."

Teacher

This contributed to practitioners engaging more often with creative writing in their lessons:

"I would say actually I use it (creative writing strategies in lessons) a lot more now than I would have a year ago."

Teacher

2. **The CPD has influenced practitioners' pedagogy.** Teachers and school librarians reported a number of ways in which the CPD they accessed through First Story helped develop their pedagogy, including their knowledge of specific strategies for developing pupils' creative writing, and their access to resources. Again, practitioners particularly highlighted the impact of attending Writer-in-Residence workshops. They said that these increased their knowledge of strategies to develop pupils' creative writing, for example with an increased repertoire of ideas for activities, approaches to differentiating such activities, and access to resources. One teacher said "I would say I've got a lot more in my bank now to use." Another said:

"If this was three years ago I wouldn't have had a clue where to start. I think now I would have a much greater idea on how to start and how to structure a creative writing session. What sort of stimuli that you can use, how you would build it up and, certainly, I've got a much greater understanding and knowledge, and I feel much more confident leading a

workshop now. I certainly wouldn't have felt confident doing that three years ago. No way, I wouldn't know where to start."

School librarian

3. **The CPD prompted some sharing of practice between colleagues.** There were two main ways teachers and school librarians supported their colleagues' practice and implemented ideas across their schools:
- **Sharing ideas formally** by running their own CPD sessions to share ideas with colleagues.
 - **Sharing ideas informally** by raising the profile of creative writing activities, and having ad hoc conversations with colleagues.

"I've done some whole school competitions for creative writing that are sort of in line with First Story. So, like the Six-word challenge, the Dark and Stormy Night challenge, that kind of thing.... So, in that sense that's been advertised around all tutors, promoted with tutors, actual writing activities have been shared in English. And then now we've got a published version lots and lots of staff members have bought copies of our anthology."

Teacher

9.2 How did First Story's CPD shape perceptions of creative writing among school-based practitioners?

Practitioners feel First Story's CPD – and the Writer-in-Residence workshops in particular – confirmed (or in some cases increased) their belief in the importance of creative writing, the positive impact creative writing can have on pupils, and the importance of writing authentically (as opposed to focusing on technical competence).

CPD shaped school-based practitioners' perceptions of creative writing in four key ways:

1. **CPD increased practitioners' belief in the importance of creative writing.** All practitioners talked about how CPD had affected their views on the importance of creative writing. For some, CPD – and the Writer-in-Residence workshops in particular – helped them develop a broader view of creative writing, in terms of what it is, and what it can do. Several described a transition from seeing creative writing as educationally useful, to something that has intrinsic value in its own right:

"I think my impression of what creative writing is, is much broader. It incorporates a much broader spectrum. Creative writing really can be anything and I think, really, in terms of how I view creative writing, it's very much a case of just writing without the structures that have to be there to pass an exam. So, I've got a much truer sense about what creative writing is, that isn't to say that you would just publish anything."

School librarian

For other practitioners CPD mainly confirmed their existing belief in the importance of creative writing. This was often the case for practitioners who already held creative writing in high esteem and had become involved in First Story for this reason.

2. **Practitioners saw first-hand the powerful impact creative writing can have on pupils.** Seeing how the Writer-in-Residence workshops affected pupils had an important impact on practitioners. They described finding it inspiring to see pupils' enjoyment of, and confidence and pride in writing, increase. This was particularly notable where pupils had previously found writing challenging, with one interviewee describing "some real engagement with students that struggled before."

"Once you see the final product and what is possible giving young people time and space to explore their creative writing, I think it's quite astounding, the quality they've produced. We've sobbed! Emotionally it's really got to us – yeah there's some really powerful stuff."

School librarian

3. **CPD encouraged teachers to value writing authentically.** Several teachers increased the importance they accorded to writing authentically. Specifically, they talked about the need to give pupils space to write without checklists, or to write for the sake of writing rather than in order to pass an exam. One told us:

"It's breaking that mindset of... marking the success criteria, actually breaking them out of that for an hour or 100 minutes a week and saying, 'this is actually okay, you don't have to succeed against the check-list'."

Teacher

Two teachers talked about the beneficial impact attending the Writer-in-Residence workshops had on their relationships with pupils, in that it helped them open up and share the challenges of writing creatively.

“It has helped with the classroom situation, because I see the children a little bit differently, they see me a little bit differently.”

Teacher

4. **CPD affirmed training’s value in supporting creative writing practice.** Several teachers talked about how CPD sessions had improved their (and in one instance, colleagues’) perceptions of how CPD can support creative writing. One said the Writer-in-Residence sessions had been:

“Very valuable CPD, in itself, because you can see the structure and the ideas and how she built up the writing, and that, in itself, is very powerful CPD that can be used.”

School librarian

9.3 How does CPD shape wider school engagement with creative writing?

School practitioners talked about First Story’s CPD leading to knowledge-sharing among school colleagues. However, having an engaged link staff member in school gives the CPD a greater likelihood of success.

CPD led to knowledge sharing among school colleagues

Teachers reported that workshops held by writers for school staff contributed to increased capability among teachers and other practitioners. Specifically, interviewees told us sessions improved knowledge of creative writing pedagogy, by enabling staff to:

- Come together with colleagues and teachers from other schools to share ideas, and;
- Work with a professional writer, gaining knowledge and understanding of creative writing’s importance, benefits and how to teach it. One teacher noted this could be especially effective when whole departments attended, or when teachers in subjects other than English attended (such as teachers of Modern Foreign Languages).

CPD was supported by having a ‘link’ staff member

The teachers and school librarians to whom we spoke generally served as their school’s link with First Story, liaising with First Story, the writers, and organising the workshops. Link staff were also influential in terms of what CPD sessions are run, and who attends them.

Having an engaged link staff member is critical for the programme’s success for pupils. Several interviewees felt the link staff member affects the status of the work in school.

9.4 Factors limiting how CPD shapes wider school engagement with creative writing

Practitioners highlighted ten factors that can limit CPD's effect on wider school engagement with creative writing. Teachers' time, and the pressure imposed by the curriculum and exam preparation particularly limited practitioners' ability to engage. Staff turnover and the logistics of arranging CPD can also play a role.

Ten factors limiting CPD's impact on practice and its knock-on effects through schools were highlighted during the interviews.

1. **A number of teachers already use similar strategies on a regular basis**, indicating that in some schools it is the more engaged members of staff who are taking advantage of First Story's CPD.
2. **Staff can feel reluctant to develop their own writing outside the sessions.** A number of practitioners said that while they fully endorsed the work First Story did with young people, they did not want to write in their spare time. Some expressed guilt about this, while others said they simply lacked the time. One teacher described writing in her free time as a "busman's holiday."
3. **Staffing challenges, including high turnover and supply teachers.** One teacher highlighted the difficulties in retaining knowledge and skills within the school due to high turnover and supply teachers. She noted that supply teachers do not attend the training, and so pupils taught by these teachers are unlikely to benefit.
4. **A lack of capacity to evaluate impact on teaching.** One teacher talked about the challenge of understanding department (or across-school) CPD impact on classroom practice, noting:

"I'm not sure if it's a consistent approach across the school, I'd have to look into that further."

Teacher

5. **Curriculum space and time.** Several practitioners emphasised the difficulty of translating the work they did in First Story CPD sessions into the classroom given the pressure to cover curriculum content. One said that even though she believed creative writing was very important, her school has rigidly set curriculum and assessment frameworks which make implementation hard:

"In all honesty because I've moved schools it is different to what I would have done a year ago because at my previous school we had a bit more flexibility in terms of what we could cover. Whereas it's a lot more rigorous here in terms of assessment, there is less flexibility, and perhaps opportunity for creativity if I'm honest."

Teacher

6. **The pressure exams place on teachers.** Again, this can limit the extent to which teachers feel able to translate what they have learnt through First Story's CPD into the classroom, with one practitioner saying:

"What we do in the workshops is so free and enjoyable and for [the] love of writing. Whereas, to implement that in a classroom environment, sadly wouldn't work, so we had to take bits and say, "Right, that's going to get them on board," and then introduce success criteria and exam criteria and all the boring stuff."

Teacher

7. **Not involving a wide enough range of teachers in CPD.** Several practitioners highlighted the difficulty of engaging staff who do not already have favourable attitudes towards writing.

8. **The logistical challenges of running CPD.** Several practitioners mentioned the difficulty of finding a convenient time for teachers to attend CPD. Several said that they had colleagues who had wanted to attend First Story sessions, but who were unable to do so because of other commitments such as Parents' Evenings. A school librarian said that physically attending CPD was a challenge for her and her colleagues, as sessions took place at another school.
9. **A lack of buy-in from other staff, within and outside the English department.** A teacher and a school librarians talked about struggling to get buy-in from their colleagues regarding the importance of creative writing. Both felt the staff CPD sessions run by the Writer-in-Residence were critical in securing staff buy-in.
10. **Anxiety about not writing 'well enough' in lessons.** Some teachers still find writing 'live' during lessons challenging, for fear of not producing writing of an adequate quality:

"Sometimes I won't write [live] if I'm doing creative writing because I want it to be really, really good. So, in that respect I suppose that's quite similar to the students."

Teacher

9.5 Conclusions and implications

Of the CPD opportunities First Story offers school practitioners, the Writer-in-Residence workshops seem to generate the greatest impact, helping staff witness the benefits creative writing has for pupils, and experiencing these benefits directly themselves.

First Story should continue its efforts to:

- Invite interested staff members to attend the Writer-in-Residence workshops with pupils, and;
- Offer training to staff members with pre-existing interest in, or a passion for, creative writing. These staff could then serve as champions for creative writing in their departments and schools.

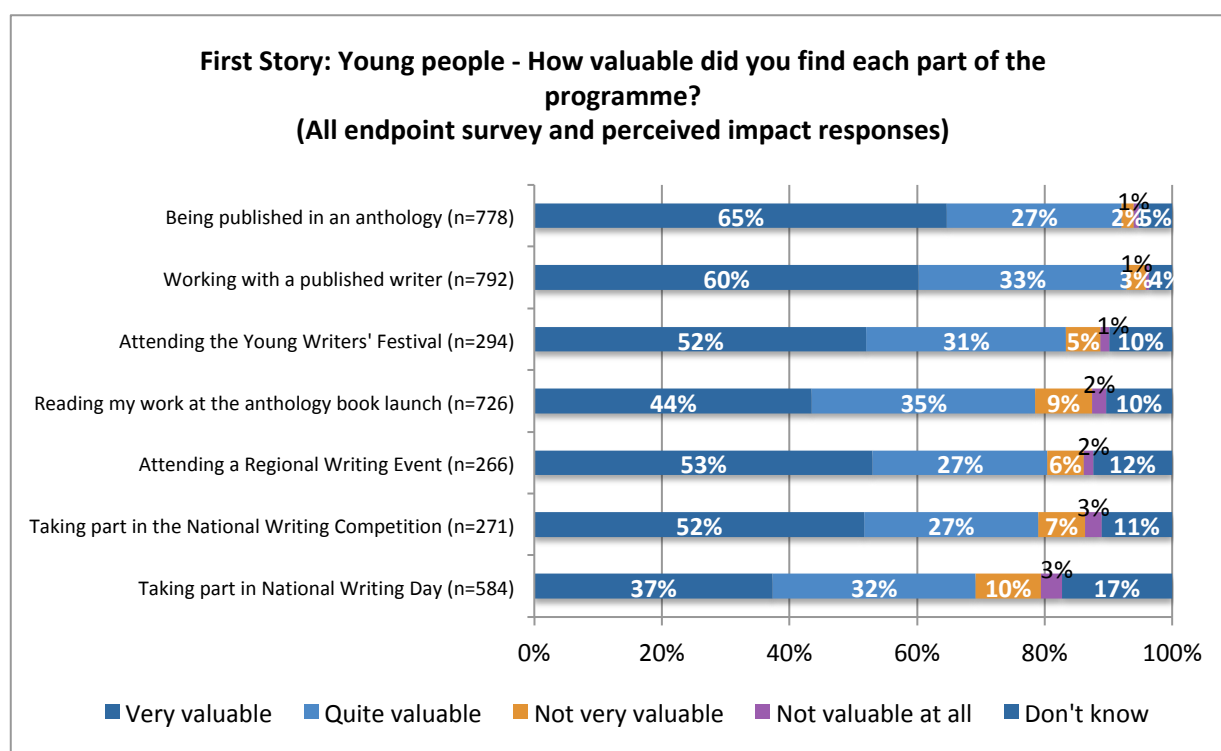


10. How valuable did young people find different types of activities?

10.1 First Story

Young people involved in First Story's programmes and activities found having their work published in an anthology and working with a published writer most valuable. This aligns with feedback about Paper Nations from young people indicating that the opportunity to work with writers is something on which they placed a high value.

Young people working with First Story found working with a published writer and publishing their work in an anthology the most valuable parts of the programme (a finding that juxtaposes some writers' scepticism about the need and value of producing a concrete output). Young people have more mixed feelings about attending creative writing events. They found attending the Young Writers' Festival relatively more valuable, and the residential with Arvon and involvement in National Writing Day relatively less so.¹⁵ We did not ask for reasons why this is the case in the surveys, although different elements of First Story and Paper Nation's activities and programmes are explored throughout this evaluation.



Asked what the best thing about being involved in First Story was for them, young people talked about factors including:

- **Having the time, opportunity and support to improve their writing skills**, with the support from a professional writer:

"The best thing about being involved in First Story is being able to spend an hour of a week to do nothing but write [creatively], and then get advice from a great author to make our

¹⁵ All responses to these questions in the endpoint and perceived impact surveys were used. Where had submitted responses via both forms of survey, their endpoint survey responses were retained, as these encompass their experiences of the programme as a whole.

stories even better.”

Young person’s survey response

- **Building their confidence and self-belief**, in relation to writing and more generally:

“The best thing about being involved in First Story is that you get your confidence back if you've lost it during the changes of primary to high school, and it makes you think about the good things about English instead of the bad things.”

Young person’s survey response

- **Engaging in the social and interactive elements of creative writing**, and in particular sharing their own, and listening to their peers’, thoughts and feelings:

“[The best thing about First Story is] sharing your ideas, which were hidden from everyone else.”

Young person’s survey response

- **Getting their work published:**

“[The best thing about First Story is] being able to express ourselves through creative writing and being involved in an anthology of our own.”

Young person’s survey response

Many of these same themes were highlighted during our Intensive Projects, and are discussed in more detail in relation to those studies (see sections 4.1 to 4.4, 10.3.1 to 10.3.4, and 13.1).

Asked how First Story could be improved, pupils’ answers commonly focused on:

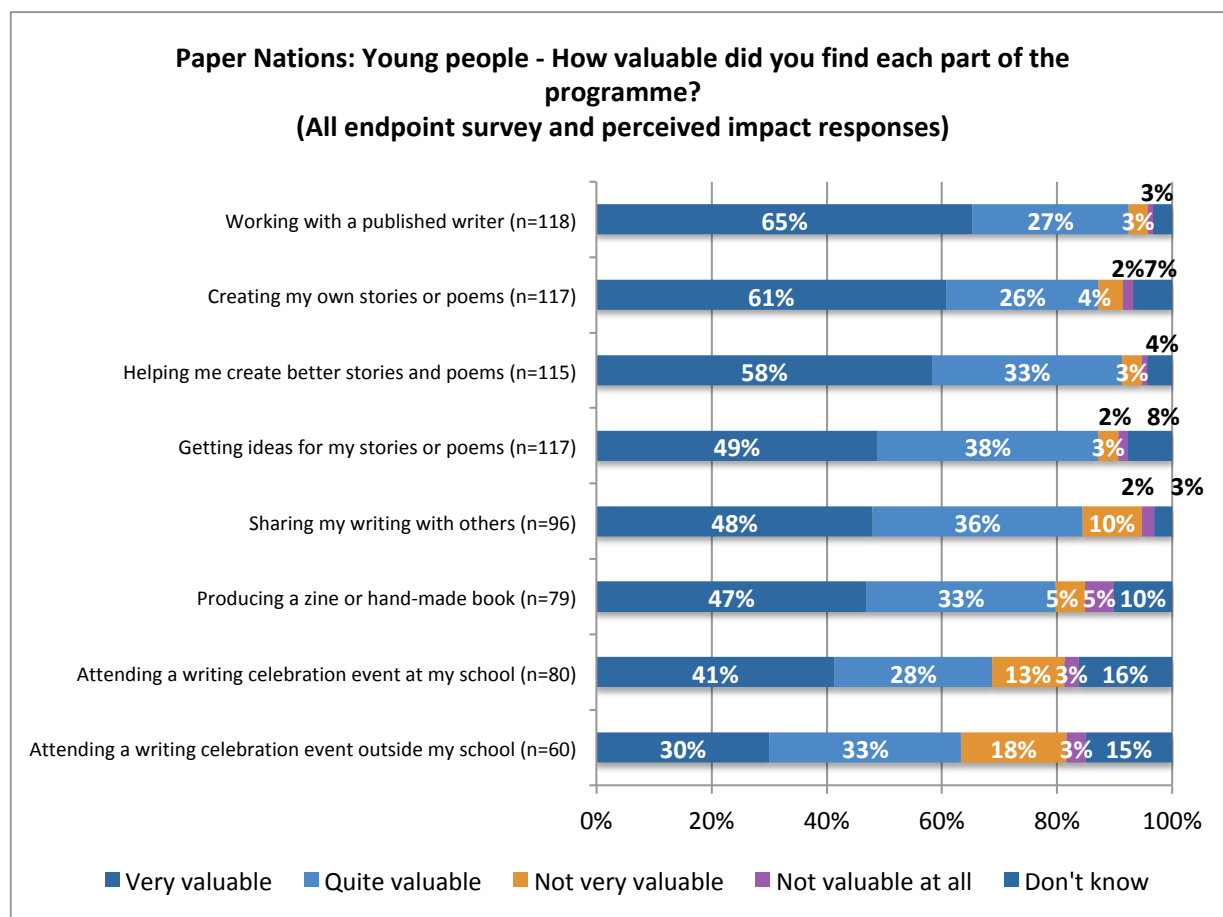
- Improving access by raising awareness about them, or holding workshops and events on different days of the week;
- Doing more of the activities;
- Going on more trips;
- Giving more pupils the opportunity to get involved, and;
- Running more games and competitions.



10.2 Paper Nations

Young people involved in Paper Nations' CWiS programmes and activities found working with published writers especially valuable. They found getting support on developing their writing – in terms of ideas generation, and the writing itself – useful.

For the young people involved in Paper Nations' activities working with a published writer came top, while young people reported mixed feelings about attending creative writing events:



Asked what the best thing about their involvement in Paper Nations was, pupils highlighted:

- **The freedom they experienced**, and how this helped them formulate ideas and boost their confidence when writing creatively:

"It showed me that if I don't know what to write or I have ran out of ideas, it's okay to write something totally random and it will be even more fun!"

Young person's survey response

- **Working with published writers, and co-creating work:**

"[The best thing about Paper Nations was] getting to meet an experienced poet and work alongside him to create beautiful pieces of work."

Young person's survey response

-
- **Participating in novel and unusual activities:**

"[The best thing about Paper Nations was] I got to walk around the village and sketch."

Young person's survey response

Many young people said their confidence (in writing and in general) had grown and provision of more activities was flagged as an area that would improve the programme further still.

10.3 In what ways has the Writer-in-Residence Programme impacted upon pupils in Years 7 and 8?

First Story's Writer-in-Residence workshops developed young people's ability to express themselves authentically, built their confidence (as writers and in general), and helped them improve the quality of their writing by providing scaffolding for pupils' creative writing, including the space and support to generate new and authentic ideas. The workshops also provided an important opportunity for pupils to work and bond with their peers and pupils of different ages.

First Story usually runs its Writer-in-Residence Programme with students in years 10 and 11. We ran an intensive study, focusing on how the programme impacts pupils in years 7 and 8, and how its delivery supports this impact.

We spoke to four schools who structure the programme in different ways:

- One selects pupils just from year 8, one from years 8 and 9, and two schools have selected pupils from across Key Stages 3 and 4.¹⁶
- The programme has run for the full academic year in two of the schools, and since mid-way through the year in the others.
- In all the schools, pupils were selected and invited to participate by the coordinator.

As part of this intensive study, we asked pupils to write poems about their experiences in the Writer-in-Residence workshops, to help them reflect on the workshops before taking part in the focus groups. Examples of these poems are included throughout this section.

10.3.1 What are pupils' strengths and weaknesses as writers when they enter secondary school, and what support do they need?

Spark and enthusiasm

Teachers, writers and young people themselves highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses pupils possess as they arrive in secondary school. Responses focused around pupils':

- **Creative spark and imagination**, and ability – as one teacher said – to “make up a story at the drop of a hat.” Teachers and writers said that as pupils progress through year 7 into year 8 they can lose this ‘playfulness’ and adaptability.
- **Enthusiasm for writing**. One year 7 talked about their motivation to join the workshops by saying “I just wanted to join because I really like writing stories and I wanted to improve.”

Confidence

However, teachers felt that these strengths can be tempered by a lack of confidence, especially if pupils are used to ‘right and wrong’ answers in writing, or have been criticised in the past for technical errors:

[Pupils'] confidence in expressing themselves ... is where they struggle because of the mechanics of the way they're taught within the curriculum, ...which doesn't really focus on expressing themselves."

Teacher

¹⁶ In one school pupils from year 9 participated in the focus group, talking about the workshops from their perspective and outlining the impact the sessions have had on their year 8 counterparts.

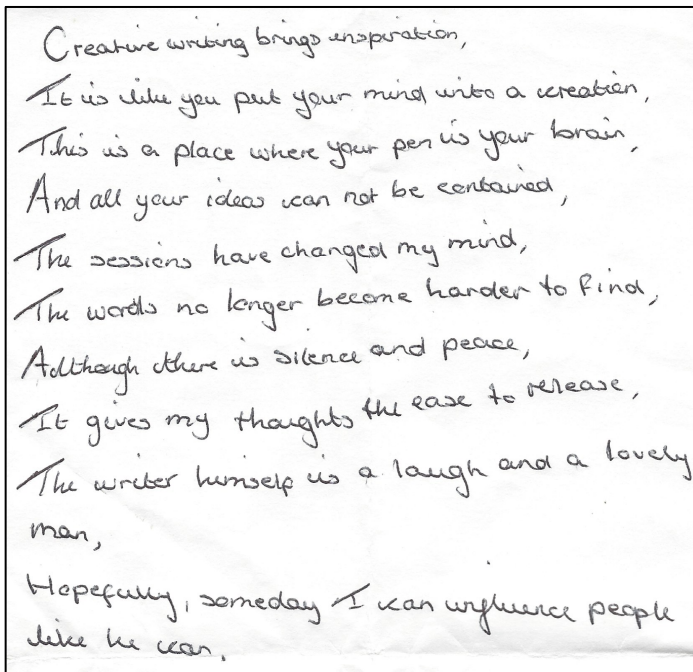
This can initially inhibit pupils' willingness to write down ideas because "they're so afraid to put it down in case of making a mistake". Writers and teachers said that building the confidence of pupils new to secondary was a priority (and a subsequent focus) for the Writer-in-Residence workshops, as creative writers, and in terms of presenting and communicating verbally. Generally, pupils' confidence and self-assurance grows as they move through year 7 into years 8 and 9, and providing extra support in the form of reassurance and scaffolding to year 7s can play an important role in supporting this.

Consequently, writers and teachers said pupils need help to see writing as a process.

One writer explained that, during workshops:

"I show them drafts and re-drafts of manuscripts, for example, of famous writers that they've heard of. They see how much change goes on and how much re-drafting. ... So, I think it's more a psychological barrier, that they imagine that there are people in the world who are absolutely perfect at writing, and they write it straightaway, and it comes out perfect, and they make no mistakes."

Writer-in-Residence



Creative writing brings inspiration,
It is like you put your mind into a creation,
This is a place where your pen is your brain,
And all your ideas can not be contained,
The sessions have changed my mind,
The words no longer become harder to find,
Although there is silence and peace,
It gives my thoughts the ease to release,
The writer himself is a laugh and a lovely
man,
Hopefully, someday I can influence people
like he can.

Poem about the Writer-in-Residence workshops,
written by a secondary school pupil

Writing quality

Some interviewees felt year 7s' writing could be strong (with one saying her colleagues are often "over-awed by the quality of [pupils] writing"). However, most writers and teachers said that pupils' writing on entry to secondary can have weaknesses such as a lack of:

- **Structure.** One school practitioner explained that invariably all younger pupils' writing "just comes out as a piece of prose";
- **Stylistic variety,** resulting in "formulaic" writing;
- **Technical accuracy,** including in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and;
- **Vocabulary,** either in terms of using simplistic or repetitive language, or using vocabulary that is more ambitious but doing so incorrectly.

As we explore in section 10.3.3, part of the workshops' power comes from not focusing solely on technique. However, both teachers and writers said it is important – both in the workshops, and across school – to develop pupils' technical abilities as writers.

Focus and feedback

Teachers and writers also observed that younger pupils joining secondary school and progressing through Key Stage 3 can struggle with:

- **Focus,** which sometimes means younger pupils at secondary school can struggle to "maintain the writing process for longer than 10 to 15 minutes", and;
- **Taking and responding to feedback** about their writing.

10.3.2 What sorts of support do pupils receive as they enter secondary school?

Beyond the provision of the Writer-in-Residence workshops for some pupils, we asked teachers what support their school offers pupils as creative writers. Teachers highlighted the importance of:

- **Transition arrangements between primary and secondary school**, which can include a focus on pupils' writing because it offers a foundation for wider academic success, but also because it offers a means for personal reflection and social learning;
- **Peer assessment of creative writing**, including reading and giving structured feedback on writing exercises in English lessons;
- **A structured school curriculum that outlines what progress in writing looks like**. One teacher emphasised that this is a crucial part of how her school structures and improves pupils' writing;
- **Mental health and wellbeing**. Teachers and writers both talked about how creative writing – in workshops and regular lessons – can support pupils' mental health, offering a means for pupils to express themselves while also occasionally flagging warning signs about a pupil's wellbeing.

10.3.3 What factors support the effective delivery of the Writer-in-Residence programme to pupils in years 7 and 8?

While teachers, writers and young people all picked out specific components of the Writer-in-Residence workshops that they feel are especially helpful in developing pupils' writing, an overarching theme from this study was that it is these activities in tandem that helps to make them effective. As one young person explained, "there was no one [activity] that was more important than the others. All of them together have helped."

Structuring sessions to provide support and freedom

The sessions adopt a structure that helps to support and 'scaffold' young people's writing, while ultimately also providing them with freedom to experiment and practise. One young person said that the support they received in the sessions was "just basic guidelines", before you "stray away" and "create your own rules."

"You write yourself and you figure out what you're doing yourself."

Young person during a focus group

Writers and young people said that the following steps could help provide differentiated support:

1. Discussing and formulating ideas together as group, so that everyone has an idea they can use;
2. Practising writing techniques together, first and then;
3. Letting participants experiment and providing support to individual pupils when needed.

According to the writers, this provides enough of a framework for all pupils in sessions to access the tasks, while offering freedom to those who want it. Getting this balance right can be challenging, and one teacher observed that occasionally "some students need a little bit more support initially to get them started with something." Equally, a writer said that providing targeted individual support can be challenging, until writers better understand pupils' capabilities.

Specific activities

We asked writers, teachers and young people to highlight specific activities that have helped scaffold and improve creative writing in the workshops. They mentioned:

- **Making lists of unfamiliar words**, then returning to the list and incorporating some of the words into new pieces of writing.

- **Playing word association**, and coming up with synonyms and related words for objects and events.
- **Writing flash fiction**, which involves the pupils writing a narrative of anything from 6 to 1,000 words in length.
- **Using questions and sentence starters** (such as ‘what if?’), which pupils then use to brainstorm and write ideas.
- **Using objects and visual images to stimulate ideas**, discussion and writing, such as talking about the connotations of specific colours, or handling an object of fruit and describing its impact on the senses.
- **Writing from the perspective of an inanimate object**, such as a lift in a tower block.
- **Group discussion of ideas and techniques**, such as subtext and how to write by ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’.
- **Letting pupils present their ideas verbally**, rather than sharing what they have physically written on the page.
- **Coming up with lies**, and defending them, to help formulate ideas.

Teachers and writers said it can be challenging to strike the right balance between working on pupils’ technical writing abilities, and developing their confidence and freedom as writers. One teacher felt teaching technical writing skills is more effective when ‘drip-fed’ into sessions.

One writer talked about how useful he had found First Story’s support book, saying it had given him useful ideas to help structure and scaffold activities in his sessions.

Modelling

Another important part of the workshops involved writers ‘modelling’ how they approach writing creatively. Teachers and young people said they found it valuable to see ‘how writers write’, and to see that, even for experienced writers, formulating ideas and drafting work takes time. They explained that this could help boost pupils’ confidence.

Creating a supportive environment

The environment that writers create within their sessions is a vital factor underpinning the effectiveness of sessions. Features of the session that writers, teachers and young people felt were especially valuable in supporting the generation of this environment were:

- **The writer being non-judgemental about pupils’ ideas.** One young person explained:

“[The writer] doesn’t stop us from doing anything, [saying] ‘that’s a bad idea, don’t do that’. She’ll let us try it, even if she knows it won’t work out that well. ... Then she’ll let us learn from our mistakes and do it [ourselves] but also be there to support us.”

Young person during a focus group

Discussing the rationale behind being non-judgemental, one writer said that encouraging pupils to experiment with ideas supports their enjoyment of writing which, in turn, will help them write more and better:

“It’s allowing them to prove to themselves what they’re doing is good, allowing them the freedom to write about what they want to write about. ... If you write about what you enjoy writing, you will write better, just by the fact that you are enjoying what you’re writing.”

Writer

- **Creating freedom to explore pupils’ ideas.** A teacher said they saw this as one of the main differences between workshops and normal lessons, saying:

“There’s more freedom in the workshops. They can write what they like. ...In lessons we tend to give them a success criteria ... whereas in the sessions here after school, they have that freedom to just explore their creative side without us telling them what they have to do.”

Teacher

As was discussed in section 10.3.3, above, the workshops offer structure, but this differs from that which pupils tend to encounter in school. In the words of one writer, the workshops offer “a freedom that isn’t possible within the curriculum.” Each of the young people’s focus groups said that this freedom is valuable in terms of helping them generate ideas. Pupils also do not feel pressure to produce a certain quantity of writing; rather, they can focus on the quality of the writing and ideas. For pupils, this freedom is one of the main differences between the workshops and regular English lessons that, in the words of one young person, can “kill creativity”.

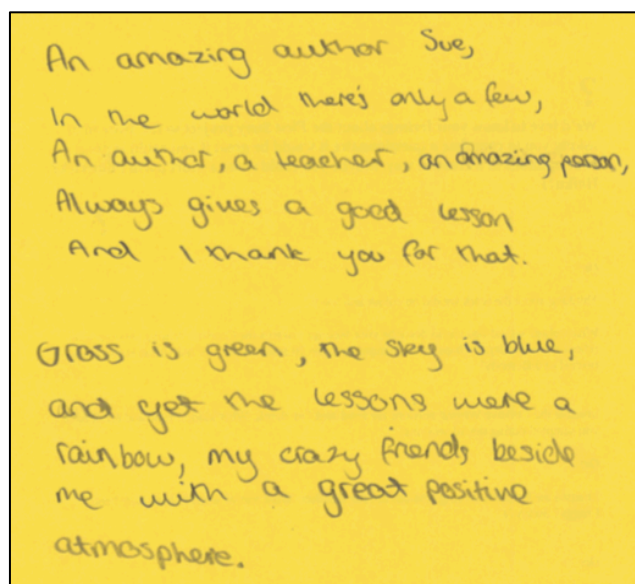
- **Ownership over ideas.** Young people said that one of the things they value about the workshops is having ownership over the ideas they create:

“In English it’s just like you’ve got this task to do and you’ve have to do [it]. You don’t ever get a chance to write just your own stories.”

Young person during a focus group

- **Sharing feedback with young people on their writing.** Methods that writers, teachers and young people said they found valuable in terms of getting feedback on their work included:

- Light touch verbal feedback from the writer and their peers, during pupils’ presentations of their work during the workshops;
- Getting focused feedback on specific aspects of writing, including vocabulary, spelling, and grammar, as well as tone, atmosphere, imagery, and so on;
- Using Google Classroom and email to exchange ideas and feedback remotely, and;
- Peer editing and feedback during the sessions.



Poem about the Writer-in-Residence workshops, written by a secondary school pupil

On the other hand, one teacher highlighted that relying on Google Classroom had been problematic in her school, partly because the writer had not previously used it, and partly because the pupils could not be relied upon to complete work outside the sessions.

- **Letting pupils ask for support, but also keeping an eye out for participants who are struggling but reluctant to say so:**

“A lot of them find [asking for help] hard to do, because it’s that bit about ‘I don’t want other people to know that I’m asking for support’. ...As we’re doing exercises, [I] wander

round and just check so that I can be with them, rather than them feeling 'I've got to put my hand up and everybody will look at me'."

Writer

- **Pushing but not forcing pupils to share their ideas.** Writers could then model supportive responses to pupils' ideas and writing. Initially asking confident pupils to share their ideas can encourage less confident pupils to read out their work. Another technique pupils described was the writer reading out a pupil's work, rather than the pupil reading it out.

This was one of the main differences pupils highlighted between the Writer-in-Residence sessions, and their English lessons in school:

"Everyone reads out their stories without having to feel like someone is going to laugh at them or make fun of them. Whereas when you're in normal school, ...everyone will start laughing at you."

Young person during a focus group

One teacher felt this had worked in her school's workshops because the expectation that pupils would share was established from the start. Young people remarked that being 'pushed out of their comfort zones' had been rewarding for them, giving them the opportunity to share and develop their ideas and writing.

- **Creating a relaxed atmosphere that feels different to normal lessons, by allowing pupils to talk while they work.** This is also crucial for helping pupils formulate ideas together, as one young person explained that, in comparison with her English lessons:

"Here you come in, have a look, have a chat, write stuff down, have another chat and think about what you want to do and how you want to word it."

Young person during a focus group

The provision of snacks and drinks can help reinforce the separation between 'regular' school and the workshops, as can letting pupils sit where they choose during writing activities (with an emphasis on being comfortable and focused, over and above being sat at a desk).

- **Creating a space in which pupils can focus on their writing.** Alongside letting pupils talk, young people said the spaces offer them an opportunity to focus on their writing that they do not always get in school:

"When you're writing in English you've always got someone that's shouting out or something like that, ...but when you're here you just get silence."

Young person during a focus group

One teacher highlighted that striking the right balance between letting pupils talk and work in silence can be challenging, and that she felt the writer in her school did not always get this balance right.

- **Encouraging pupils to share as much as they feel comfortable doing so.** Young people and writers said that part of the value of the workshops is that they offer the opportunity for authenticity, including the "sharing of very personal pieces," according to one writer.

- **Honouring pupils' home dialects**, and not insisting pupils write using Standard English. One writer explained this helps make pupils feel more empowered, and confident to express themselves authentically.
- **Encouraging peer support.** This is vital in building trust within the group, and also in providing participants with feedback and reassurance. Young people and writers described different sorts of peer support, including working in pairs and groups to generate ideas, co-write, and provide one another with feedback. Alongside benefits to pupils' writing, one writer noted participants "can actually get to know each other and feel safer in that space." Writers observed that peer support is important across age groups, as well as within the same age group.

Working with a professional writer

One of the major benefits for pupils of the Writer-in-Residence workshops is working with a professional writer. Doing so offers young people a 'break' from regular learning. Furthermore, pupils said they found writers' passion and enthusiasm compelling.

Part of some writers' appeal is their 'quirkiness', a word used by a young person in one of the focus groups. One teacher explained that seeing an adult formulate "silly or outrageous or wild or surreal ideas" is powerful, clarifying for pupils that "real people, real grown-ups, also play with ideas and are imaginative." Young people said they valued how human and funny the writers can be.

The anthology

Writers and teachers highlight that the anthology is an important feature of the Writer-in-Residence workshops, serving to exemplify pupils' work and provide something to aspire towards for participants. A teacher observed:

"This year, the students who attend, they've been really impressed to see the book from last year. ... When they saw that book, everyone sat up. You know, they were really impressed, and they had something to aspire to."

Teacher

Working towards publication in the anthology does introduce challenges, however. It can mean the workshops feel rushed. There can also be a tension between editing pupils' work so that it is 'polished', and this work losing its authenticity. One writer explained:

"One of the things that has really happened is seeing them moving from being uncertain about how to be a writer, how to apply themselves and everything, to actually thinking of themselves seriously as writers and professionalising their approach to it. ... I guide them, I show them how to determine what's good and what's not; if somebody is way out with a piece of writing I will say stuff, but my attitude is that [it] should be their work, not my version of their work."

Writer

Organisation

Teachers and writers discussed several features of the workshops' organisation, in relation to how it affects pupils in years 7 and 8. One reflection was that that term-long programmes can feel rushed, in contrast with the year-long programmes.

Attrition

Teachers and writers also raised the issue of attrition. Retention on the courses is variable, with some schools experiencing a higher dropout rate than others. Attrition can occur because:

- Pupils have other commitments, including family, academic work, and other hobbies and clubs.
- Timetabling can mean pupils find the sessions tiring, with one writer saying that during one session the pupils “were absolutely shattered.”
- Some pupils find the workshops overwhelming or intimidating if they lack confidence as writers.

Factors that can help reduce rates of attrition include pupils ‘coming back for more’, where they have participated in workshops in previous years.

One teacher said that support from two teaching assistants in calling and chasing pupils who were signed up for but absent from the workshops helped improve attendance.

10.3.4 What is the impact of the Writer-in-Residence workshops on pupils in years 7 and 8?

Authenticity of expression

A key benefit of the Writer-in-Residence programme for young people in years 7 and 8 is on their authenticity of expression.

Authentic expression in front of peers

Pupils said the workshops support them to be vulnerable and expressive in front of their peers:

“If you’re in a class most people would write what they think their classmates want to hear. Because you don’t want to seem like that different person that no one likes.... So in the group you write whatever you want, you don’t have to think about what everyone else wants to hear.”

Young person during a focus group

Authentic interactions more generally

Alongside the more authentic expression of their work, young people, their teachers and the writers also talked about the pupils feeling ‘more themselves’ in the Writer-in-Residence workshops. For example, a young person wrote in their poem (right) that, on Tuesdays when the workshop takes place:

One very special day

Can you imagine ~~not being able to go to sleep~~ through excitement?
 Every Tuesday I wake up and realise that today I can be me
 Every Tuesday I walk into a classroom of people who I can be myself around without worry
 Every Tuesday I stand up perform a piece that normally I think isn’t good enough
 Every Tuesday I loose myself in a world of ink in between the thin sheets of imagination and reality
 Every Tuesday I laugh at my class mates around me
 Every Tuesday I wish I had more time to realise the stranger into her new world
 Every Tuesday I ramble onto a page until my pen goes blue in the face
 Every Tuesday I see what I can achieve however put off
 But why ?
 Why not improve everyday
 Why not laugh everyday
 Why not run away everyday
 This day is special , this day is grate
 Lets keep it to Tuesdays
 One very special day

*Poem about the Writer-in-Residence workshops,
 written by a secondary school pupil*

“I wake up and realise today I can be me. Every Tuesday I walk into a classroom with people I can be myself around without worry.”

Young person during a focus group

One of the writers observed how friendship groups had changed among the participants, over the course of the programme, because “this is what they want to focus on.”

A teacher also reported enjoying more authentic relationships with her pupils, as a result of taking part in the workshops. She explained:

“Sometimes if they’re writing a poem about their mum or something, they’ll ask me about my mum, so then I’ll tell them. Yes, because you’re all just sharing ideas and it’s just a nice environment.”

Teacher

Pupils talked about finding the writing relaxing, and a means of reflecting upon and process their emotions:

“You just feel like someone, something or someone is getting you down, you just write about it and it can help relieve stress and anger.”

Young person during a focus group

Building confidence

Confidence as writers

Interview and focus group participants all talked about the workshops’ impact on young people’s confidence as creative writers. One young person talked about how their confidence had increased during the sessions:

“In primary school, I’d write something but then I’d feel that it was wrong, because I wasn’t confident. But now when I come to these sessions, I feel more confident of what I’m writing and how I’m writing it.”

Young person during a focus group

The workshops have not only boosted pupils’ confidence in their writing, but also in presenting their writing to others. A teacher talked about how quiet pupils became gradually more open about sharing their work:

“The main thing I’ve noticed is the confidence of the students. Some of them were really quiet at the start and they didn’t speak. They wouldn’t ever share their work. Now they willingly put their hand up and they want to read you their work, and that’s been really nice to see.”

Teacher

Improvements in the quality of pupils’ writing

Pupils reported feeling more confident about their writing in terms of their ability to generate ideas and develop imagery, as well as in relation to their spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary use. Two pupils talked about their grades in English, and said they felt these had improved as a result of their participation on the Writer-in-Residence programme. One pupil said “I just think that my writing sounds better, and more like what a writer would write.”

This may in part be because pupils are thinking “more forensically” about how they draft and edit their written work, but also – according to a teacher – because they are getting more practised at writing for longer periods of time, without losing focus.

Confidence in other areas of school life

Alongside their growing confidence as writers, young people's confidence in other areas of their school and personal lives is also evident. One young person talked about wanting to contribute more during lessons, mirroring one teacher's observation that pupils participating in the Writer-in-Residence sessions were more willing to share work and contribute in lessons:

"[For the] majority of the group, I think it's just made them feel a little bit more confident in themselves For a couple of people, it really has transformed their approach to school."

Teacher

Several teachers commented that pupils involved in the sessions had become more confident in working with other pupils during lessons, with one saying the pupils have "been helping some of the weaker students in their classes."

"One Head of Year said, 'I can't believe the difference in this student, the difference in his confidence, in the amount he writes, in his abilities, the way he walks around school. He said, 'I can't believe the difference'."

Teacher

Responsiveness to feedback

Pupils in all three focus groups felt the workshops had helped them become more accepting and responsive to feedback, with one saying the workshops have "helped me be more critical of my writing, from hearing other people's criticism." In general, another pupil said, participants learn not to "take criticism as a bad thing, [but as something that] is helpful to them."

Engagement with and enjoyment of creative writing

Workshops were also seen to have benefits for year 7 and 8 pupils in terms of their engagement with creative writing. Young people and teachers talked about increased levels of satisfaction and enjoyment, with one participant saying (in relation to poetry) that "I was like 'I've never done it, I don't know really what to do', but like now I like poetry more than (prose) writing." A teacher remarked how pupils write in their spare time (although as noted in section 5, survey findings raise questions about the true extent to which pupils are spending more time writing):

"They just really enjoy writing. They never ask what time it is (in the sessions). They want to stay, they're still writing when we're starting to pack away, they just really like it. They're writing in their spare time, bringing me things in, showing me."

Teacher

Helping pupils with additional needs

The workshops were believed to be beneficial for younger pupils with additional learning needs. For example, one teacher talked about autistic students finding the workshops "liberating". One young person with dyslexia explained that she now feels more confident writing stories and really enjoys the experience of the workshops.

Impact on teaching

Teachers said they felt the workshops have benefitted their practice, and in particular their willingness:

- To write more authentically with pupils during lessons;
- To open up with pupils and forge closer relationships with them:

"I've been able to form relationships with students other than in the normal classroom. So, I'm starting to understand more about them, finding out more about their personal lives."

It's just helped them understand me as well, so it's really helped us all with our relationships."

Teacher

A writer commented that the resources and structure imposed by the Writer-in-Residence workshops had helped focus his teaching:

"Working with First Story has pushed me to come up with more and to look at and understand what I'm doing far more, because of the length of time I'm with the pupils. So I can't just trot out clichés, I've got to come up with fresh ideas each week and that's a really good discipline."

Writer

10.4 Conclusions and implications

Young people find working with professional writers a particularly valuable part of their involvement with Paper Nations and First Story. Pupils find structured support in developing their ideas and writing important, and enjoy publishing their writing.

Young people involved in CWiS talked about how these programmes and activities were beneficial in terms of them building positive relationships with adults and peers, providing them with an outlet, and enhancing their confidence both as writers and more generally across school life.

Programmes and activities focused on increasing young people's engagement with and confidence in creative writing should give young people opportunities to work with professional writers on a sustained basis. These writers in turn should be trained and supported to develop young people's writing.

First Story's Writer-in-Residence workshops were believed to have a range of positive impacts for pupils in years 7 and 8, including building their confidence as writers, increasing their confidence both as writers and in general, and developing the quality of their writing. Participants involved in the workshops also describe the impact of the Writer-in-Residence programme on trust between young people and adults, and young people's wellbeing.

Programmes involving writing workshops for younger secondary-age pupils (and especially those in years 7 and 8) should:

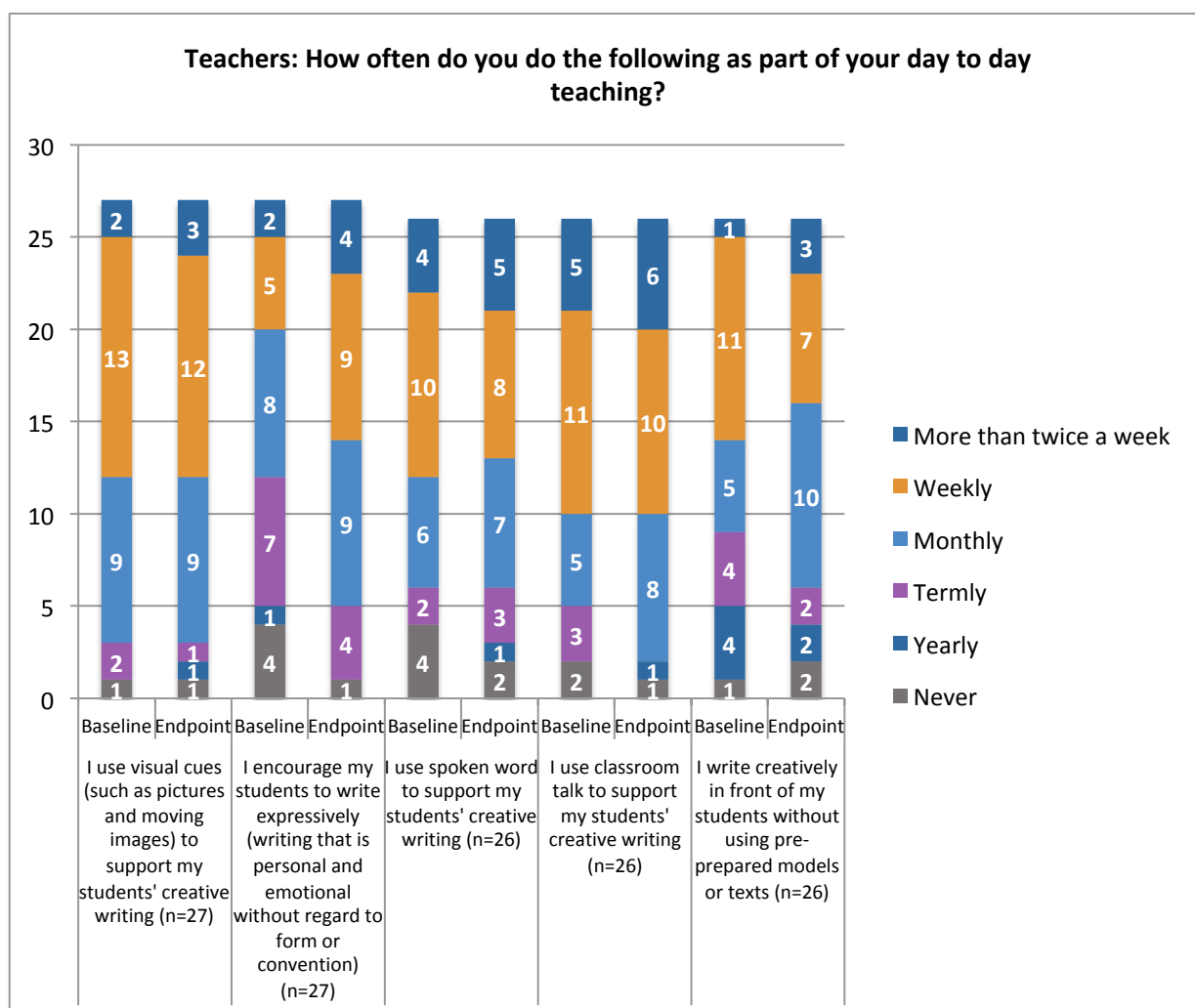
- Help writers observe one another's Writer-in-Residence sessions with younger pupils, to share and develop writers' teaching practice. This could be especially valuable for writers newly involved in the programme, and those working with pupils in years 7 and 8.
- Providing guidance to schools on ways of reducing attrition among younger pupils involved in the programme, for example by ensuring the workshops do not clash with other popular clubs such as football.
- Ensuring writers understand which activities might be especially useful when supporting younger pupils, such as tasks that focus on idea generation, and exploring the actual process of writing (including drafting and redrafting).

11. How do teachers and writers teach creative writing?

11.1 What strategies do teachers use when teaching creative writing?

In relation to the specific pedagogical areas measured in this evaluation's surveys including the use of visual cues and spoken word, CWiS programmes and activities do not appear to have had much impact on teachers' creative writing pedagogy. However, this may be because the most engaged teachers are more likely to become involved in the programme.

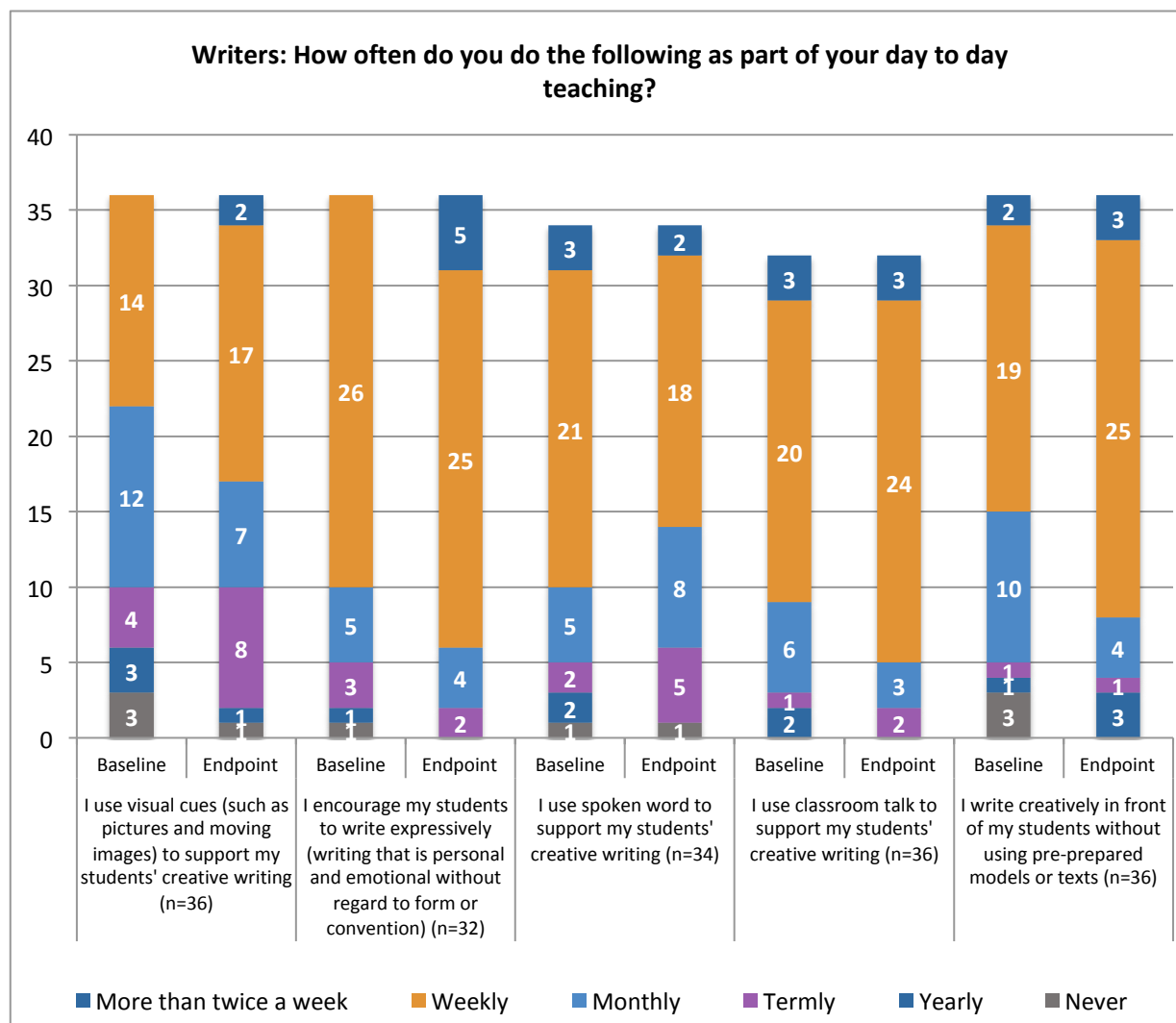
More teachers said in their endpoint surveys they regularly encourage their pupils to write expressively since their involvement in CWiS programmes and activities began, with nearly half doing this at least weekly by the end of the programme. Otherwise, the impact of the CWiS programmes and activities on teaching practice is relatively limited.



11.2 What strategies do writers use when teaching creative writing?

As with teachers, there were not large shifts in writers' teaching techniques over the course of their involvement in CWiS programmes and activities. This may be because writers already felt relatively confident in using the techniques explored in our surveys.

As with teachers, in general there were not big shifts in writers' teaching techniques over the course of their involvement in CWiS programmes and activities, although as the graph indicates, below, this may be because writers were frequently using these techniques in any case.



11.3 Conclusions and implications

Teachers and writers do not report major changes in their approach to teaching creative writing since their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, although this may be because they are more engaged to begin with (or the influence of the revised, more highly-structured GCSE syllabus). This highlights untapped potential for creative writing programmes to influence practitioners (both teachers and writers) who have had less opportunity to develop their creative writing pedagogy, or whose pre-existing attitudes towards creative writing teaching are less positive.

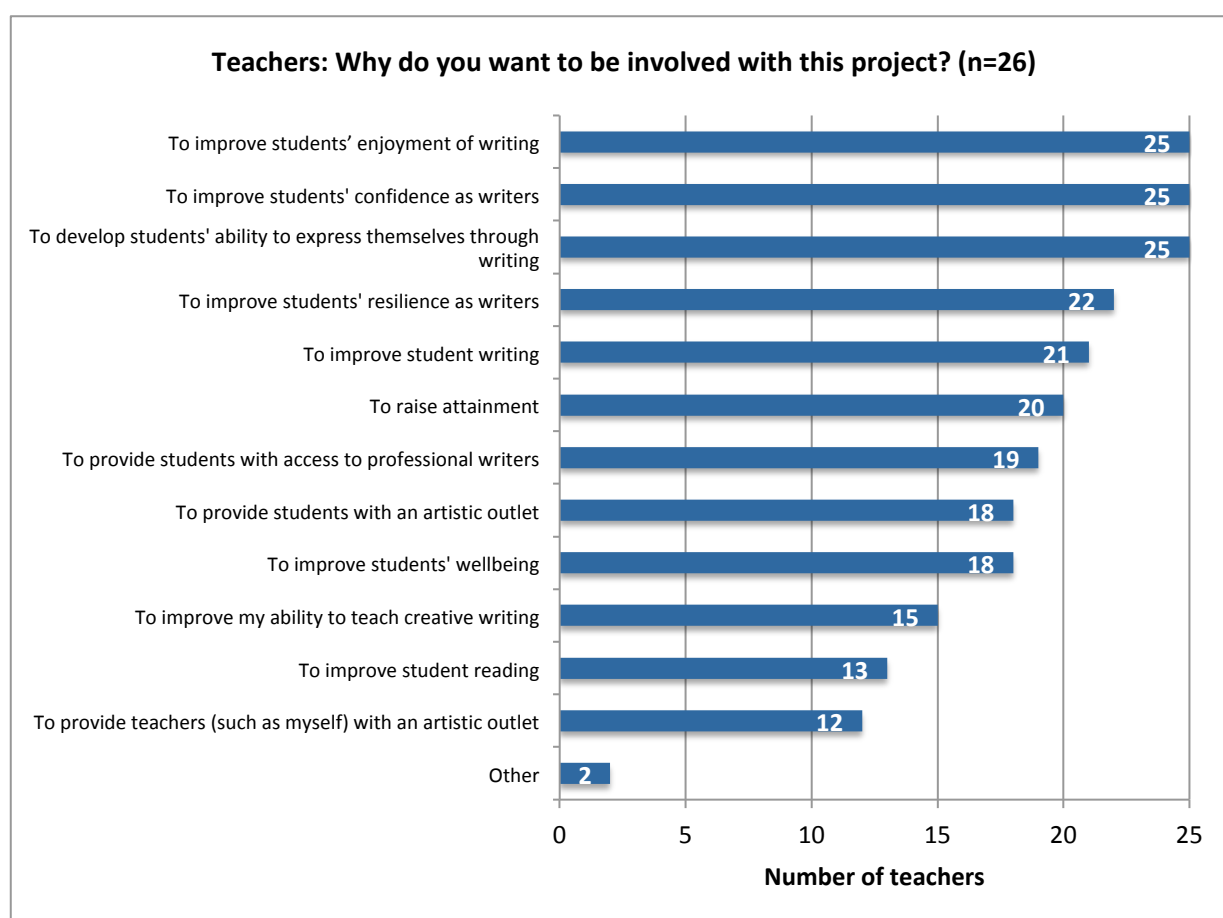
Furthermore, some of Paper Nations and First Story's latest teaching and writer-support resources were not included in this evaluation, and so the impact of these could be the subject of future research.

12. What were teachers' and writers' motivations for being involved in CWiS, and what impact did CWiS programmes and activities have?

12.1 Why did teachers want to be involved in CWiS programmes and activities?

Teachers wanted to be involved in CWiS to boost pupils' enjoyment of creative writing and confidence as writers.

Teachers wanted to be involved in a CWiS programme or activity first and foremost to improve their pupils' enjoyment of writing and confidence as writers. Their own teaching of creative writing, or desire to obtain an artistic outlet was less of a focus, and these findings align with teachers' involvement with activities such as National Writing Day, described in section 13.2.¹⁷



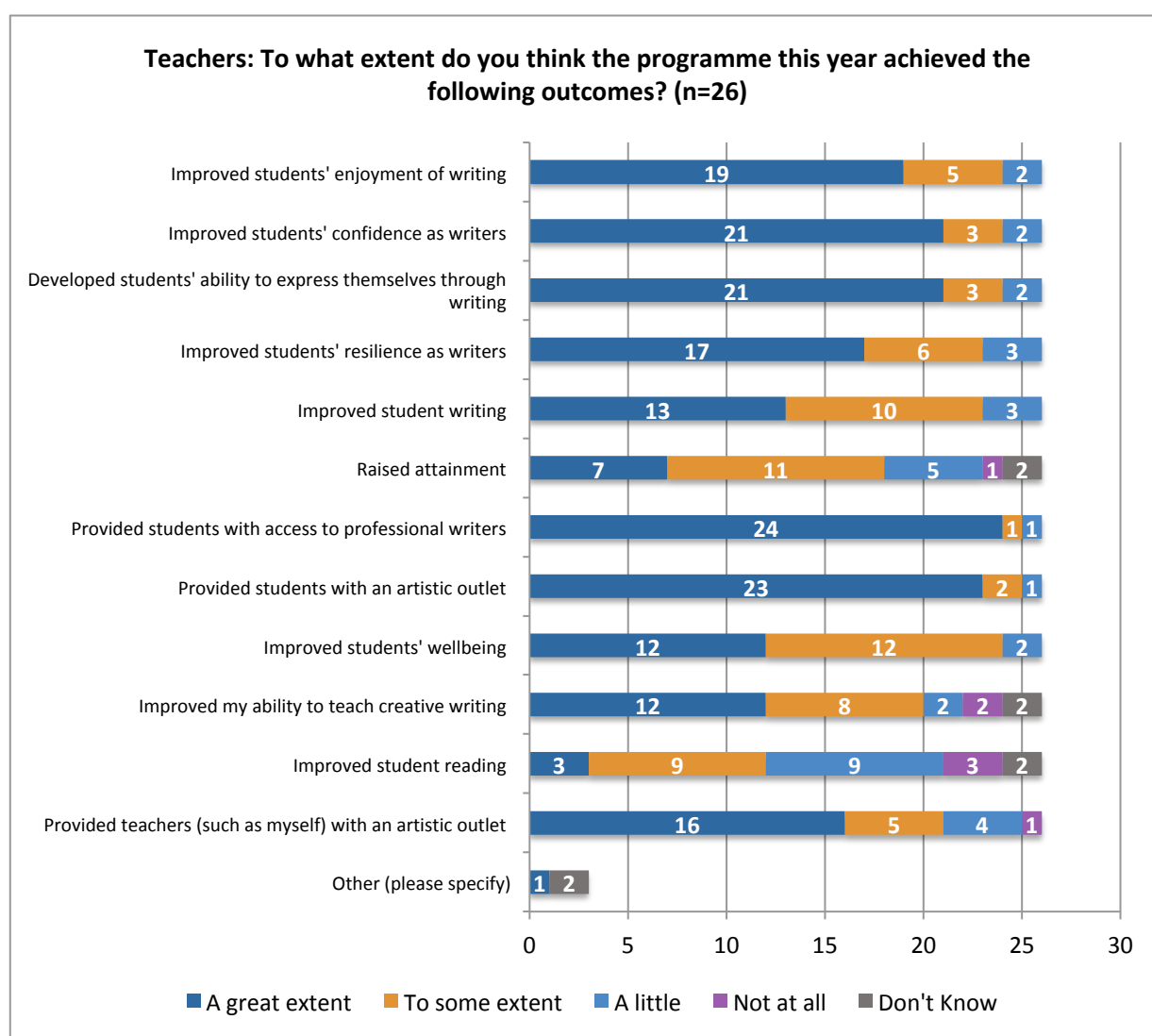
¹⁷ One teacher's baseline and endpoint responses during both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years were retained. Otherwise, all responses were within-year. Respondents without both baseline and endpoint data were removed. The matched responses align with the rationale given by all teachers surveyed, in the unmatched baseline surveys (n=79), and the perceived impact surveys (n=28 and n=12).

12.2 What impact do teachers feel CWiS programmes and activities have had?

Teachers felt CWiS programmes and activities were effective in addressing the outcomes that mattered to them, in particular boosting pupils' confidence in and enjoyment of creative writing, and providing their pupils with access to professional writers.

Teachers felt the CWiS programmes had been most successful in providing students with access to professional writers, providing pupils with an artistic outlet, and boosting pupils' confidence as writers. This is consistent with their feedback on First Story's Writer-in-Residence workshops, outlined in sections 9.3 and 10.3.1. Teachers drew less connection between a CWiS programme or activity, and improvements in pupils' reading or attainment. They were also less emphatic about CWiS' impact on their own teaching, consistent with our findings in section 11.¹⁸

The responses below show how teachers rated the success of the CWiS programme or activity in which they were involved. The answers in the graph below are presented in the same order as the previous graph:



Teachers selecting 'Other' said they wanted to provide opportunities for disadvantaged pupils to engage in cultural activities.

¹⁸ The matched endpoint survey responses align with the responses from all teachers who submitted responses.

Teachers also provided qualitative feedback in their survey responses on their involvement with Paper Nations and First Story. These comments correlated with their quantitative responses, with teachers emphasising the role CWiS activities had played in providing an artistic outlet and building pupils' confidence as writers:

"Children enjoyed working with someone different with more fluid creativity."

Teacher involved in Paper Nations

"The group have come on leaps and bounds with their creative writing and have found a fantastic outlet for their emotions and ideas."

Teacher involved in First Story

"Involvement in First Story has allowed pupils to flourish by letting them explore their own voice in a safe, playful and free space."

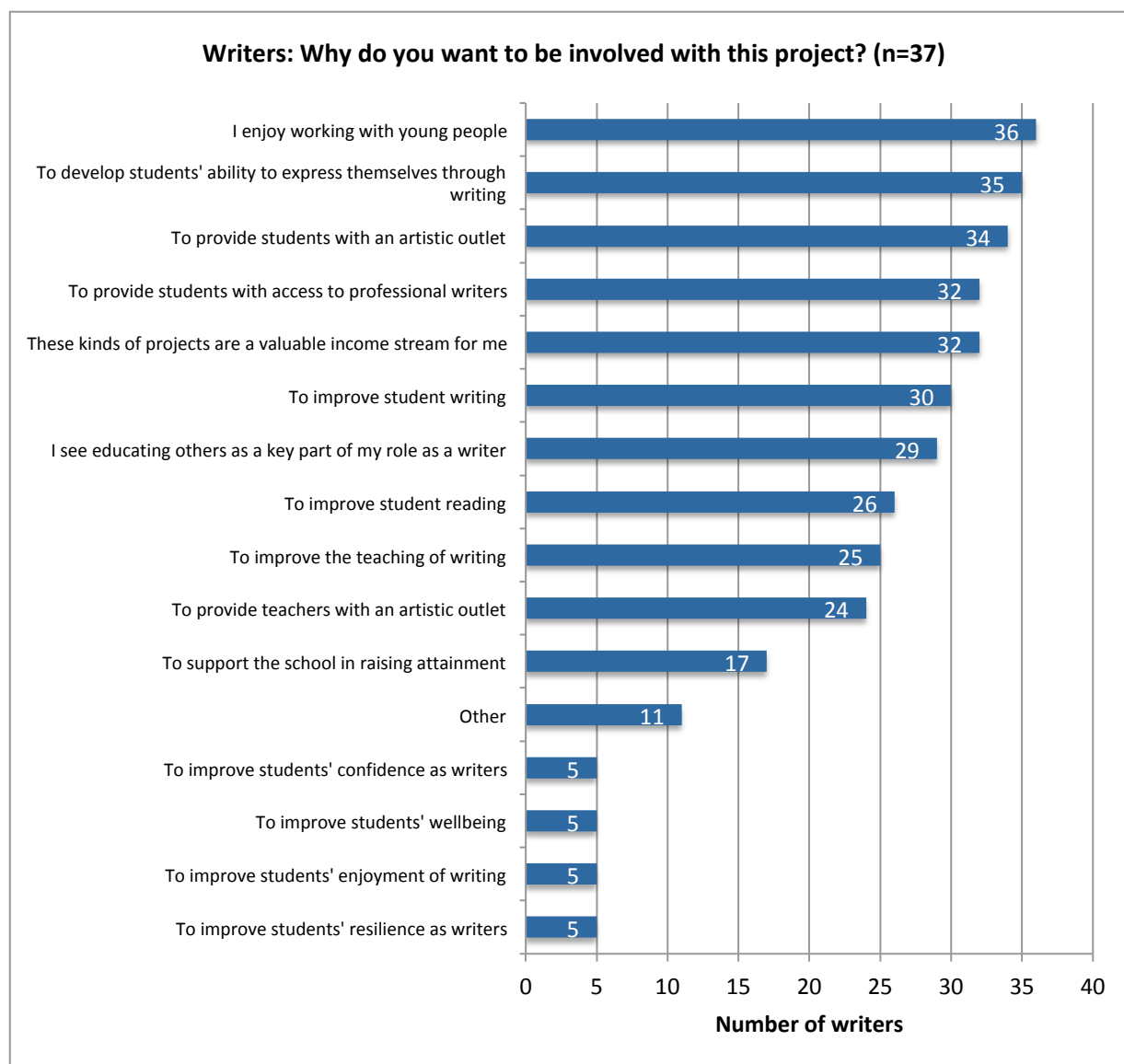
Teacher involved in First Story

12.3 Why did writers want to be involved?

Writers primarily became involved in CWiS programmes and activities because they enjoy working with young people and want to develop young people's creative writing.

Writers were most likely to report that they wanted to be involved because they enjoy working with young people, and wanted to help young people develop their writing and confidence.

Writers' responses to the perceived impact surveys, which were completed by some writers as a 'one-off' response after taking part in a CWiS programme or activity, were very similar.¹⁹

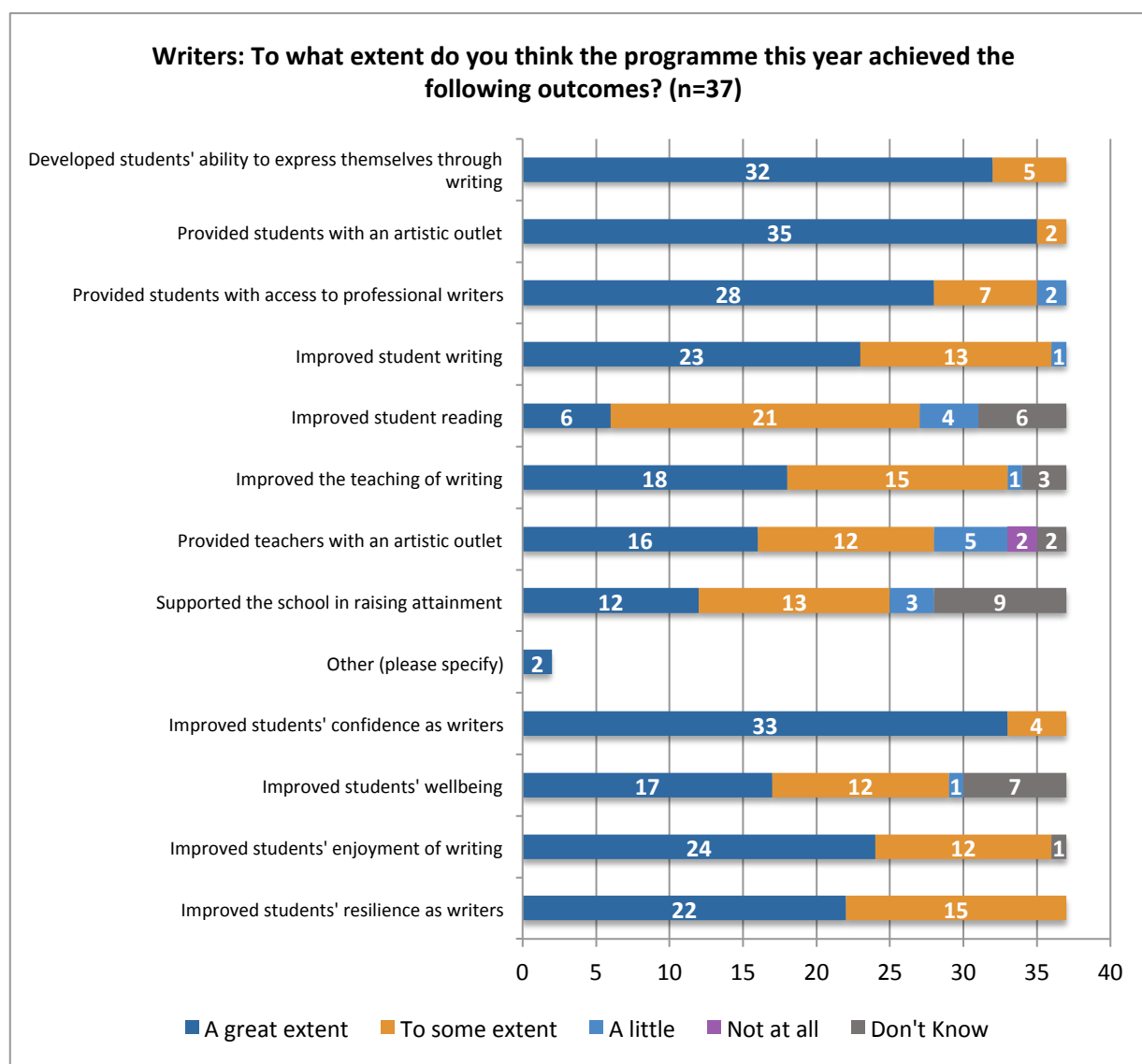


¹⁹ First Story did not include the options 'improve students' confidence', 'improve students' wellbeing', 'improve students' enjoyment of writing', and 'improve students' resilience as writers' in its surveys.

12.4 What impact did writers feel CWiS programmes and activities have had?

Like teachers, writers also felt the CWiS programmes and activities of which they were a part were successful in relation to the outcomes they identified as most important from the outset, including boosting pupils' confidence in and enjoyment of creative writing.

Writers felt CWiS activities were particularly effective in developing young people's expression and confidence. These areas of perceived impact are in line with the areas most prioritised by writers initially as reasons for their involvement in CWiS.²⁰ They felt the programmes and activities had less impact on raising attainment and providing teachers with an artistic outlet, although as shown in the previous graph these were not high priorities for writers to begin with.



When we asked in the surveys what had been important for them, schools and young people about the CWiS programmes and activities, writers' responses were similar to teachers', highlighting the impact on pupils' access to artistic outlets, ability to express themselves, and confidence as writers:

²⁰ We acknowledge, here, that some writers' baseline surveys did not include all the options, meaning these options appear to be prioritised less in the baseline survey responses.

“For my students it has been important to give them a voice and empower them with creativity, a sense of the alternative, and generally beneficial weirdness.”

Writer involved in First Story

“I am particularly pleased to have seen the growth in confidence of some of the most shy and self-doubting students. The sense of reward they get when they have produced writing that they and others are pleased with is evident - very rewarding for me as a teacher of creative writing too.”

Writer involved in First Story

“Masses of great ideas and experience picked up from fellow students; increased confidence in the fact that what I'm offering is important to students and important in the sense of passing on the torch to others (e.g., scout leaders) in encouraging young people to write.”

Writer involved in Paper Nations

12.5 Conclusions and implications

Writers and teachers wanted to get involved with CWiS programmes and activities primarily in order to boost young people's confidence and skills as creative writers. Generally, practitioners felt this is where the programmes have had the most impact, and so this may be where we could expect these and similar programmes to generate impact in the future. Both sets of practitioners felt the programmes had less impact on their teaching of creative writing.

13. National Writing Day

As part of First Story's 2017 National Writing Day intensive study, we asked pupils, teachers and organisational partners about their hopes for and experiences of the event. We undertook this intensive study during the first year of the evaluation, and First Story has since addressed some of the findings.

13.1 What were pupils' expectations for National Writing Day, and how did the day compare with these expectations?

National Writing Day in 2017 largely lived up to young people's high expectations. It created a buzz about creative writing, and gave young people opportunities to develop their writing. Young people felt the day could have been improved through better organisation and increased reach of school-based activities.

We asked pupils, teachers, and five of First Story's organisational partners what their hopes for National Writing Day had been, and how the day itself lived up to these hopes.

13.1.1 What were pupils' hopes and expectations?

We held three pupil focus groups in schools that were involved with National Writing Day. Schools had been involved in different ways but we asked each group to design their 'dream' itinerary. Pupils' ideas focused on three broad areas:

- **There would be a range of stimuli to prompt writing.** One recurring hope pupils had was that a range of stimuli would prompt ideas and creative writing, whether at a central event, or within regions or individual schools. Pupils said they wanted to:
 - Hear from famous people, including both writers and non-writers. Pupils wanted to speak to people who "have done well in life".
 - Hear from aspiring writers, including writers who have not yet been published, to get a richer understanding of what life as a creative writer is like.
 - Visit interesting and culturally significant places, such as museums. It would not be imperative for these places to have literary significance; rather, they would help stimulate writing.
 - See examples of famous writing, and working from quality texts.
 - Use a range of media, including film, to stimulate writing.

Two groups talked about how having an overarching theme (or themes) for the day would be a useful way to draw all the activities together. The theme or themes should be broad enough to give lots of flexibility.

- **There would be a range of activities.** An idea that came up in two of the three focus groups was having a range of workshops for young people to attend at a centralised event (or possibly regional events). Young people would choose from a broad menu of sessions, each one focusing on something specific such as approaches to writing poetry.

These activities would predominantly focus on writing for pleasure. Pupils said they were also keen for activities to involve collaborating in groups, both with peers from their school, and pupils from other schools.

While the emphasis should be on writing for pleasure, one focus group emphasised a desire to develop their skills as writers too. They felt that this could in part come from receiving feedback on their writing, either from peers or writers. Activities might lead to the generation of something concrete, such as an anthology of pupils' works from the day.

- **The day would celebrate success.** The three groups said their dream National Writing Day would involve celebrating success. Two groups suggested there would be competitions, and opportunities during the day itself to share examples of young people's work.

13.1.2 Did National Writing Day meet pupils' expectations?

Young people highlighted a number of ways in which the day met their hopes and expectations:

- **The day created a buzz**, and pupils used words such as "excited" and "inspired" when describing how they had found taking part. Participating in novel activities was a key reason for this 'buzz'. One group (who travelled from outside London to the central event at the British Library) felt attending a large event made it more prestigious. They also found the venue stimulating, and said:

"We saw Jane Austen's original manuscripts and things like that, and that was just mind blowing that it still existed."

Young person during a focus group

Another group, who had attended a session with a writer at a local library, described it as "fun", and enjoyed participating in an activity outside school. The final group had taken part in activities in school, interviewing a PE teacher about his life. Again, the change from their regular routine was something the pupils found engaging.

These experiences align with young people's dream National Writing Day, insofar as they wanted the day to be exciting and engaging, and for it to offer a range of activities.

- **The day developed young people's writing**, and gave them opportunities to learn new vocabulary and writing styles, develop their confidence as communicators, and work in groups. Again, this aligns with young people's dream days, which they said would help them improve as writers.
- **Pupils produced something concrete and had this output recognised by adults**, and one group of pupils felt particularly proud of the book of poems they produced. While this was not something they produced on the day itself, they talked about how satisfying they found receiving it:

"I mean getting the book with the like your poem in was absolutely amazing. I mean like my granny wants like six copies (laughter) for herself and wants me to buy them for her birthday and that is really special."

Young person during a focus group

13.1.3 How do pupils think the day could have been improved?

Pupils talked about several ways in which the day might have been enhanced so that it more fully met their expectations, including:

- **The activities at the central event.** The pupils who had attended the event at the British Library had doubts about the suitability of the overarching theme of 'looking through a window', finding it a little restrictive. They felt having a theme was a good way of stimulating conversation and ideas, but that 'looking through a window' could only take them so far. They felt having a theme "more open to interpretation" would be useful.

Some pupils felt side-lined in the workshops, which were also popular with adults and teachers. The pupils felt the adults' attendance added to the sense of community on the day, but would have liked more engagement directly with the workshop coordinators (and in particular the writers).

- **The structure of the central event**, which pupils felt was disorganised, saying:
 - Details about the day including arrival time and food arrangements were not clear.
 - Upon arrival, it was not clear what the timetable for the day was. Having a hardcopy of a timetable would have been helpful.
 - There was not a huge amount of interaction between schools.
 - Session timings throughout the day sometimes diverged from those specified beforehand.
 - There was not enough food on offer throughout the day.
 - Not enough time was given to celebrating young people's writing as part of the competitions.

The pupils also felt teachers did not receive enough recognition for their work.

It is worth noting that confusion about the event beforehand may be the result of communication between teachers and their pupils, as opposed to between First Story and young people.

- **The reach of school-based activities.** One of the groups participated in activities in school, but felt more pupils could and should have been involved, both within their school and in other schools. One said:

"Get more people involved with it because [in] our school, it's just our First Story group. If you got more people involved, like all the schools, like tell them that it is National Writing Day and get them to do things for it."

Young person during a focus group

- **The structure of school-based activities.** Pupils in two groups who participated in school-based activities on National Writing Day felt it was a shame it had not taken up a whole day. Relatedly, they would have enjoyed sessions involving larger groups, possibly whole year groups or Key Stages. One group suggested that an assembly would have 'set the tone' for the day and supported wider engagement by pupils. Another felt it would have been helpful to have a clearer idea of what was happening before the day itself.



13.2 What were teachers' expectations for National Writing Day, and how did the day itself compare with these expectations?

Teachers felt National Writing Day in 2017 created excitement among participants, gave young people (and adults) an opportunity to develop their writing, and was well organised. In so doing, it lived up to teachers' expectations, although the event's timing and the support on offer to schools could have been improved.

13.2.1 What were teachers' hopes and expectations?

We asked the three teachers we interviewed what their hopes for National Writing Day had been. They said they had hoped it would:

- **Promote writing for enjoyment.** Like their pupils, all three teachers talked about the importance of creating a 'buzz' around creative writing, both because it is an intrinsically important activity, but also because it can support young people's achievements and developments academically, personally, and socially. One teacher explained how 'cathartic' she hoped the experience would be for her pupils.
- **Support engagement from a wide range of pupils,** whether through a central event, or through activities in school. Ultimately, they wanted as many pupils as possible to take part, although one teacher also talked about the potential benefit of such activities for staff development. One teacher explained:

"What I wanted to do was to get every department involved and as a minimum one teacher delivered a lesson or a part of a lesson that involved a creative writing activity throughout the day."

Teacher

13.2.2 Did National Writing Day meet teachers' expectations?

Teachers felt the day was successful in:

- **Creating a buzz.** Like their pupils, the three teachers we spoke to all felt National Writing Day had created a buzz, both in their setting, and nationally. Teachers observed high levels of pupil engagement on the day itself, and this helped improve young people's perceptions and enjoyment of creative writing. One teacher said of her pupils:

"All said that they'd enjoyed it, and the next day they all came piling into the library first thing in the morning and told me that, 'oh I really loved it when we did that', and they were all talking about, 'I loved that person's piece', and things. So, they'd obviously paid attention and enjoyed it."

Teacher

One teacher, who had taken a small group of pupils to the event in central London, said that even though only a small group actually attended the event it had a positive ripple effect on other students. She said:

"I think at the school as a whole, I think seeing their peers win competitions ... and go to these days and come back and talk about it, it makes them think, 'oh well I could do that as well'. It makes it real and achievable, rather than just being something that people ... in books win.... It makes it seem tangible."

Teacher

- **Pupils developed their interest and skills in creative writing.** Again, like their pupils, teachers felt that the focus on creative writing and pupils' participation in novel activities helped them develop their skills as writers. This was achieved in several ways:
 - The activities encouraged many pupils to write in a way they had not written before, focusing on writing for pleasure rather than accuracy. This aligns with teachers' feedback on First Story's Writer-in-Residence workshops.
 - The activities themselves were novel, introducing pupils to creative writing in new contexts.
 - Pupils were not put on the spot and had a degree of flexibility allowing them to be as involved in sharing their work as they felt comfortable. One teacher said "there was a real sense of everybody [being] involved in whatever way, so if some people didn't want to read out their work, they were in a group where somebody would read it out for them."
 - Pupils were able to work together on creative writing tasks, not only developing their writing, but also their communication and teamwork skills.
- **The event's organisation enhanced its impact.** Two of the teachers picked out organisational features that had helped enhance the impact of National Writing Day (although this was not something pupils picked up on). One was impressed by the Twitter and media presence the day enjoyed, saying:

"I know that it was number two in Twitter world and I was excited to see and hear about it on the radio. So I think the profile was there."

Teacher

The teachers also talked about how the resources that First Story provided helped them and their colleagues plan enjoyable activities for the pupils, saying "I read through them, and I thought, 'Right, I'll steal that'."

13.2.3 How do teachers think the day could have been improved?

Teachers talked about several ways in which the day could have been enhanced. These were:

It would be helpful to share ideas

Each of the teachers discussed organisational factors that would help amplify National Writing Day's impact in future years. These factors included:

- **Linking with other, relevant festivals.** One teacher raised this, saying it would have been beneficial for the pupils to make ties with a regional literature festival that took place around the same time.
- **Tapping into local and regional networks.** Two teachers talked about how beneficial they would have found it to tap into writing networks so that they could bring writers into their schools, or link up with other participating schools.
- **Sharing practice with other schools.** The teachers said that it would be helpful to hear about examples of good practice taking place in other schools and, in particular, any ways of encouraging uptake in subject areas other than English. They would also have found it useful to share approaches to evaluating National Writing Day's impact on pupils.

"I think sometimes you do get too tied down with what's going on at a very localised level and it would be nice to see what another school was doing that might spark something. Especially working across the curriculum and getting the wider school involved and the wider community."

Planning sometimes hindered implementation

Teachers flagged several challenges around the build up to and implementation of National Writing Day. These included:

- **Resources arriving unexpectedly or late.** One of the teachers was not expecting to receive resources at all, and did not feel she put them to good use. Meanwhile, two teachers said some of the resources arrived too late. One acknowledged a trade-off between sending resources too soon, and therefore being forgotten, versus sending them too late:

“Some of the resources that arrived here for National Writing Day arrived slightly too close for me to really think about what I could do with them, but then there’s a fine line between arriving too early where they’re almost forgotten about, and arriving too late where it’s like, ‘oh, what am I going to do with this’.”

Teacher

- **The practicalities of arranging and attending events.** The teachers all discussed the challenges associated with arranging for pupils to attend external events, or making timetable alterations internally. They said this was not an issue with National Writing Day per se, but that it would be useful to hear about how other schools managed these challenges.
- **The timing of National Writing Day.** One teacher felt it would have been beneficial to hold the day a few days later, so that it did not overlap with a major GCSE exam. Doing so would mean that more pupils and teachers could be involved, and it would be simpler to introduce whole school activities or strategies such as assemblies and using tannoy announcements.

Achieving whole-school buy-in

All three teachers highlighted the challenge of gaining whole-school buy-in and wanted to involve more pupils in external events and internal activities. While all three teachers talked about the ripple effects the day had, they expressed concern that it might be the pupils who were already most engaged who took the most from the activities.

Another challenge was securing buy-in from secondary school teachers who may not consider creative writing relevant to their subject. Again, the teachers felt that learning from other examples of good practice would be invaluable. Holding National Writing Day outside exam season would also mean they could hold either whole-year or whole-school events more easily. One explained:

“I kind of felt that there was a really great buzz, but it was localised in particular areas, it wasn’t a whole school buzz.”

Teacher

One way for schools to secure buy-in, particularly from the senior leadership team, is to gauge the impact of events such as National Writing Day on pupils. Two teachers, though, talked about how challenging it had been getting round all the classes internally to support and monitor what was happening. Seeing examples of how other schools have kept abreast of the work taking place across the school during National Writing Day could be helpful for teachers.

13.3 What were partners’ expectations for National Writing Day, and how did the day compare with these expectations?

First Story’s organisational partners for National Writing Day in 2017 felt the event helped them reach a wider audience, particularly amongst young people; helped establish new writing communities; and, focused participants’ attention on writing for pleasure not technical accuracy.

They said the event could have been improved through greater media coverage, and greater support for partners and participants to help them plan their involvement.

13.3.1 What were partners' hopes and expectations?

First Story's partners hoped National Writing Day would:

- **Reach out to teachers and young people.** One of the single most important priorities for First Story's organisational partners was reaching out and getting as many people writing as possible. By doing so, they hoped to raise the profile of creative writing. This mirrors young people and their teachers' hopes. As one partner put it, "I think that it was just to get creative writing on the map."

There was a divide in partners' responses between those who wanted to engage existing audiences (including teachers and young people who wrote already), and those who wanted to use the day to reach further. One partner's priority was to use National Writing Day to engage groups with whom the organisation already had a relationship. For another, though, the imperative was more about reaching young people who might otherwise not engage in creative writing.

- **Let organisations showcase their work.** As a corollary of reaching out to current and new audiences, several organisations were also keen to use the day as an opportunity to showcase their work and raise their profile.
- **Support writing for enjoyment.** All the organisations we spoke to wanted National Writing Day to raise the profile of writing for pleasure - something teachers and young people also said highlighted. In turn, National Writing Day would help "nudge them (teachers) towards changing their practice." Another felt that by emphasising writing for enjoyment rather than box ticking, a greater number of pupils – and perhaps pupils who might previously have been disengaged – would participate, something teachers and young people also wanted to happen. She said:

"The objective was to re-engage young people who were disengaged, disinterested, tired of the assessment pressure in schools. And I thought it was a good opportunity for children to write without rules."

Organisational partner

13.3.2 Did National Writing Day meet partners' expectations?

Partners felt National Writing Day succeeded because:

It created a buzz

Like pupils and teachers, all of First Story's organisational partners told us they felt the day had been successful in creating a buzz about creative writing. This was achieved in a number of ways:

- **The campaign engaged a wide range of young people:** partners told us about whole schools of up to 1,000 pupils in which everyone took part. Importantly, partners argued that the campaign reached out to and engaged less confident and engaged young people, something several teachers and young people also highlighted. One partner recalled:

"In the assembly, [my partner] said, 'How many of you think you are creative writers?', and about a third of them put their hands up. ...at the end of the day when she asked, she had got them up to about 90%."

Organisational partner

- **Engagement was in part a consequence of the day's focus on the enjoyment, not the accuracy, of writing:** Pupils were encouraged to take part in novel activities, using unfamiliar writing techniques such as spiral poems. One partner said:

"I liked the idea that young people weren't going to be judged. I liked the idea that they were free to express themselves."

Organisational partner

- **Engagement led to the creation of writing communities:** this happened both within individual schools, and across the country. Partners said how much they liked the sense that National Writing Day was a shared endeavour, and found it heartening to see young people sharing their writing with one another.

"So many things were happening on one day. It did seem quite satisfying to think that there were people taking part in writing or conversations about writing in so many different parts of the country."

Organisational partner

- **In addition to inspiring young people, partners felt the day also inspired teachers:** As one partner put it, "Kids can go in all kinds of directions with the most limited of stimuli...Certainly the feedback we have got from teachers suggested that they enjoyed that."

There was a strong social media campaign

Several partners praised a strong social media campaign, which they felt communicated a clear message, and increased engagement with the day itself. The National Writing Day website was, according to one partner, "clear" and "simple". Another said:

"We felt that the social media campaign worked really well. Our comms manager said that First Story had prepared tweets and things to use that were really useful and were easy to use and it was well organised."

Organisational partner

The organisations could showcase their work

Most partners felt the day had enabled them to showcase their work. This was particularly due to the social media campaign.

The event helped build networks

Partners also talked about the benefit of working towards a common goal with other like-minded organisations. One felt "the main benefit has been new connections, new networks." Another felt First Story bringing together a range of like-minded organisations was a "brilliant way" to raise the profile of creative writing.

The event was well organised

Partners praised First Story for its level of organisation and, specifically, the support some of its staff provided in the build-up to National Writing Day, and on the day itself. One particularly praised the way one First Story regional contact used local connections and networks to ensure the day ran smoothly:

"All the staff at First Story were really helpful, really good at communicating with us and just very easy and friendly to work with."

Organisational partner

13.3.3 How do partners think the day could have been improved?

Organisational partners felt the day could have been improved by:

Securing greater media coverage

The partners raised a broad set of reflections in relation to the event's coverage and public profile. They highlighted:

- **The challenge of reaching out beyond already engaged audiences:** one partner expressed doubt about the extent to which "it reached beyond the already engaged literary or school audiences."
- **The need to gain more social and mainstream media coverage:** this would be particularly useful during the build-up to the event to raise its profile.
- **Partners obtaining due recognition of their input:** one partner raised a concern that it is a challenge to give each organisation due credit for its input, saying:

"Although we felt, because we contributed quite a lot to supporting National Writing Day, that we wanted a bit more accreditation of us as a partner."

Organisational partner

- **Promoting regional events.** Several partners noted that regional events were far smaller than the main event in London. One said:

"I guess compared to our London event, which had a sold-out audience of 250 people, that the events in Hull and Bristol were a lot smaller. In Bristol there were about 35 people there and I think no more than 50 in Hull. So maybe it's about giving those regional events the same profile as our event in London."

Organisational partner

- **Working with a range of organisations, including non-literary organisations.** One way in which partners felt the event as whole might gain a higher profile would be if connections were developed with businesses and other regional organisations.
- **Nominating ambassadors to help spread the word.** Several partners felt stronger regional ambassadors or writing champions would have helped raise the event's profile further.
- **Taking on an international or global remit:** One partner thought not incorporating international writers or organisations into National Writing Day was a missed opportunity.
- **Pulling together the event's output centrally:** One partner talked about the challenge of each organisation monitoring and sharing the 'best bits' from National Writing Day in terms of capacity. They argued that more central collation would be useful.

Helping schools and partners plan their involvement

Partners felt schools could benefit from having a 'menu' of options presented to them, well in advance, so that they could plan their involvement.

One partner raised a concern about National Writing Day clashing with other festivals (specifically, the 2017 Scottish Book Trust Festival). If such clashes cannot be avoided, more could be done to ensure the events complement each other.

Furthermore, another partner who sat on the steering group did not feel the committee fulfilled its potential. During the interviews, we only spoke to one steering group organisational partner, so it is not clear how representative this view is. She said it was too large and that its decision-making could be more effective:

“In terms of the steering groups we took part in in the run up to National Writing Day, ...it felt like more of a discussion forum. And the key decisions didn’t get made in that steering group, they got made in individual conversations between us and First Story.”

Organisational partner interview

Better organisation of marketing resources

One partner said that some marketing materials arrived late, and that this made it harder to promote the event. Another suggested developing marketing resources in Welsh.

13.4 Conclusions and implications

National Writing Day in 2017 was successful in creating a ‘buzz’ around creative writing, and in general lived up to participants’ high expectations. Young people, teachers and First Story’s organisational partners felt the day in 2017 could have been improved organisationally. The following approaches could help with this (some of which were introduced in 2018):

- Offer ‘young people only’ events during National Writing Day central and regional events, to ensure young people feel their needs are acknowledged and met;
- Consult schools to ensure the timing of National Writing Day (and communication about it) are conveniently timed and allow the maximum-possible number of young people to benefit, and;
- Ensure organisational partners are clear about what their involvement in planning sessions will entail, and feel recognised after the event for the support they provided.

14. Conclusions and implications

14.1 Conclusion

CWiS generated increased engagement with and enjoyment of creative writing among young people. The programme has provided nearly 3,000 children and young people across the country with opportunities to work with their writers, teachers and peers. CWiS also appears to have helped develop the quality of young people's writing. Young people and teachers' feedback suggests this may have been a by-product of young people writing for pleasure, rather than because CWiS activities focused on the technical accuracy of pupils' writing.

LKMco's evaluation of Paper Nations and First Story's CWiS programmes and activities indicates the value of working with professional writers for young people. While young people find writers' spark and quirkiness compelling, deeper value and impact is generated through pupils having the space to generate and write about ideas they otherwise might not explore. Feedback from young people, teachers, writers and organisations involved in Paper Nations' and First Story's CWiS activities indicates that support in generating, writing about and then sharing ideas can encourage pupils to express themselves more authentically on the page and with their peers.

CWiS also highlights the inherent challenges associated with increasing access to creative writing opportunities. The time and financial pressures facing schools and writers are significant, and have largely persisted in the face of coordinated activities under CWiS. Future work should continue to explore how these can be overcome. However, feedback from practitioners involved in CWiS suggests that, by providing coordination and networks, the programme has helped secure and sustain partners' engagement.

Securing fair pay for writers is also a substantial challenge, not least because it presents difficult trade-offs in terms of potentially reducing access to creative writing opportunities. In order to make creative writing in schools and with young people viable in the long run, greater knowledge and coordination among writers about their pay is needed.

Another challenge is reaching people who are not initially curious about or inclined to get involved in creative writing. Future work should prioritise involving these groups of young people and teachers, proactively recruiting them into activities so that they have a chance to experience the benefits of creative writing for themselves.

14.2 Implications

1. Pupils and their characteristics

A wide range of pupils has been involved in CWiS programmes and activities through First Story and Paper Nations. To continue to build on this success, organisations involved in engaging young people in creative writing should proactively recruit pupils from poorer backgrounds and/or with lower levels of prior interest and engagement in creative writing into the programmes and activities. The organisations could also work with schools to explore options to boost pupil retention.

2. How do young people, teachers and writers feel about creative writing?

Young people have overwhelmingly positive views of creative writers and the process of writing itself, and this could be leveraged to spark young people's interest in creative writing activities both inside and outside school.

One of the reason young people enjoy participating in creative writing activities with writers is the space it gives them to develop and explore their own ideas, build their confidence and overcome their initial fears of writing. Activities encouraging children to engage in creative writing should mirror Paper Nations and First Story's approach in making idea formulation and exploration a focus, over and above technical accuracy, at least initially.

Writers enjoy working with young people because they want to pass on their love of writing, because they themselves value developing their teaching skills, and because the work can offer an important income stream. Organisations recruiting writers to work in schools or with young people outside schools should emphasise these benefits (while helping to ensure writers have the support, knowledge and confidence to access fair pay for their time and expertise).

3. How engaged are young people and their teachers in creative writing?

The amount young people and teachers participate in creative writing did not change substantially following involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, although those who were writing less often said they are writing more frequently (or intended to do so) following their involvement. School remains the location in which most young people and teachers undertake most of their creative writing.

One challenge is to ensure that young people (and teachers) who might be less inclined to take up creative writing in the first place have opportunities to try it. This could mean:

- Schools proactively selecting pupils with little prior involvement or interest in creative writing for future activities and programmes;
- Piquing teachers' interest in creative writing by involving them in pupils' activities.

4. Of what networks are teachers and writers a part?

CWiS programmes and activities introduced valuable opportunities for teachers and writers to engage in creative writing networks. Some of the key barriers to creative writing did not diminish during the CWiS programmes and activities, although this may in part be because – through their involvement – teachers' and writers' awareness of these barriers increased.

Organisations supporting creative writing partnerships and networks should focus in future work on:

- The brokerage of relationships between writers and schools, helping to reduce the burden on writers' and teachers' time by supporting clear expectations and communication between the parties.
- The sharing of writers' teaching resources to reduce the time they spend planning activities.

5. How financially sustainable is the delivery of creative writing?

Achieving financial sustainability is a huge challenge for writers and writing organisations, with a number of factors making this difficult. Writers' lack of certainty about their 'value' and abilities to negotiate are exacerbated by a lack of access to professional networks that could provide this information and support.

Organisations supporting writers should:

- Set guidelines for writers' fees;
- Raise awareness among writers about the existing networks available that can provide them with professional support, and;
- Discourage writers from working for free or too cheaply.

6. How confident do teachers and writers feel teaching creative writing?

Involvement in Paper Nations or First Story seemed beneficial in terms of teachers' and writers' confidence, although it was generally the more confident practitioners to begin with who seem to have benefitted the most.

Organisations supporting creative writers and creative writing in schools should make engaging with and supporting less confident teachers and writers a priority for future work, ensuring these groups have access to training, support and resources that will help them develop their practice.

7. What is the impact of First Story's CPD on teachers and their colleagues?

Of the CPD opportunities First Story offers school practitioners, the Writer-in-Residence workshops seem to generate the greatest impact, helping staff witness the benefits creative writing has for pupils, and experiencing these benefits directly themselves.

First Story should continue its efforts to:

- Invite interested staff members to attend the Writer-in-Residence workshops with pupils, and;
- Offer training to staff members with pre-existing interest in, or a passion for, creative writing. These staff could then serve as champions for creative writing in their departments and schools.

8. How valuable did young people find different types of activities?

Young people find working with professional writers a particularly valuable part of their involvement with Paper Nations and First Story. Pupils find structured support in developing their ideas and writing important, and enjoy publishing their writing.

Young people involved in CWiS talked about how these programmes and activities were beneficial in terms of them building positive relationships with adults and peers, providing them with an outlet, and enhancing their confidence both as writers and more generally across school life.

Programmes and activities focused on increasing young people's engagement with and confidence in creative writing should give young people opportunities to work with professional writers on a sustained basis. These writers in turn should be trained and supported to develop young people's writing.

First Story's Writer-in-Residence workshops were believed to have a range of positive impacts for pupils in years 7 and 8, including building their confidence as writers, increasing their confidence both as writers and in general, and developing the quality of their writing. Participants involved in

the workshops also describe the impact of the Writer-in-Residence programme on trust between young people and adults, and young people's wellbeing.

Programmes involving writing workshops for younger secondary-age pupils (and especially those in years 7 and 8) should:

- Help writers observe one another's Writer-in-Residence sessions with younger pupils, to share and develop writers' teaching practice. This could be especially valuable for writers newly involved in the programme, and those working with pupils in years 7 and 8.
- Providing guidance to schools on ways of reducing attrition among younger pupils involved in the programme, for example by ensuring the workshops do not clash with other popular clubs such as football.
- Ensuring writers understand which activities might be especially useful when supporting younger pupils, such as tasks that focus on idea generation, and exploring the actual process of writing (including drafting and redrafting).

9. How do teachers and writers teach creative writing?

Teachers and writers do not report major changes in their approach to teaching creative writing since their involvement in a CWiS programme or activity, although this may be because they are more engaged to begin with. This highlights untapped potential for creative writing programmes to influence practitioners (both teachers and writers) who have had less opportunity to develop their creative writing pedagogy, or whose pre-existing attitudes towards creative writing teaching are less positive.

Furthermore, some of Paper Nations and First Story's latest teaching and writer-support resources were not included in this evaluation, and so the impact of these could be the subject of future research.

10. What were teachers' and writers' motivations for being involved in CWiS, and what impact did CWiS programmes and activities have?

Writers and teachers wanted to get involved with CWiS programmes and activities primarily in order to boost young people's confidence and skills as creative writers. Generally, practitioners felt this is where the programmes have had the most impact, and so this may be where we could expect these and similar programmes to generate impact in the future. Both sets of practitioners felt the programmes had less impact on their teaching of creative writing.

11. National Writing Day

National Writing Day was successful in creating a 'buzz' around creative writing, and in general lived up to participants' high expectations. Young people, teachers and First Story's organisational partners felt the day in 2017 could have been improved organisationally. The following approaches could help with this (some of which were introduced in 2018):

- Offer 'young people only' events during National Writing Day central and regional events, to ensure young people feel their needs are acknowledged and met;
- Consult schools to ensure the timing of National Writing Day (and communication about it) are conveniently timed and allow the maximum-possible number of young people to benefit, and;
- Ensure organisational partners are clear about what their involvement in planning sessions will entail, and feel recognised after the event for the support they provided.

Appendices

1. Overview of all survey responses

These figures represent survey responses with duplicate responses removed. Where an individual submitted two or more responses to one survey 'type', the earliest baseline and latest endpoint was kept for the purposes of calculating the totals, below.

What was the survey type?	Who was surveyed?	How many responses?	From how many schools?*	From which years?	About which organisation?
Baseline survey	Young people	1,078	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 509 from 2016/17. 567 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 665 about First Story. 411 about Paper Nations.
	Teachers	75	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38 from 2016/17. 37 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52 about First Story. 23 about Paper Nations.
	Writers	70	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 from 2016/17. 35 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 54 about First Story. 16 about Paper Nations.
Endpoint survey	Young people	763	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 494 from 2016/17. 269 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 549 about First Story. 214 about Paper Nations.
	Teachers	41	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 from 2016/17. 13 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31 about First Story. 10 about Paper Nations.
	Writers	59	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49 from 2016/17. 10 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 53 about First Story. 6 about Paper Nations.
'One-off' perceived impact survey	Young people	352	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 107 from 2016/17. 245 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 293 about First Story. 59 about Paper Nations.
	Teachers	27	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 from 2016/17. 23 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 about First Story. 2 about Paper Nations.
	Writers	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 from 2016/17. 1 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 about First Story. 1 about Paper Nations.
'Programme' perceived impact survey	Young people	191	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 69 from 2016/17. 121 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64 about First Story. 126 about Paper Nations.
	Teachers	11	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All about Paper Nations.
	Writers	22	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 from 2016/17. 15 from 2017/18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All about First Story.

*This is the number of schools given by respondents. The true number is higher, as some respondents did not list the schools in which they work.

2. Pupil characteristics by programme

	First Story	Paper Nations
Total number of students involved in the CWiS project / programme at this school	1124	1690
How many of those students speak English as an additional language (EAL)?	258 (23%)	84 (5%)
How many of those students receive pupil premium funding?	434 (39%)	484 (29%)
How many of those students have a recorded special educational need or disability (SEND)?	82 (7%)	174 (10%)
How many of those students are recorded as being gifted and talented (G+T)?	186 (17%)	84 (5%)
How many of those students are working below the expected level of progress in literacy?	261 (23%)	190 (11%)



This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood.

We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

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Society should ensure that all young people receive the support they need
in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood

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