

Stronger Together Report

The Stronger Together project has been a huge success and we have seen the positive impact that it has had on our pupils from Military families. We started September 2020 with 80 Military children (the largest group in a Hillingdon Borough School) and ended the academic year with 73 children. We have had high mobility recently in our Military cohort due to more deployments and family moves as lockdowns were lifted. During lockdown, we had 180 children still coming into school with Military children included as key worker children and were able to continue supporting these children through the Stronger Together project. We completed the project with an extension to the timing and all children from our Military families took part. We generally delivered 6-week block sessions with each year group, creating film and art projects exploring the themes of being a military child, friendship, and resilience.

The drama workshops have increased the confidence of pupils and allowed them to explore their emotions and have fun through games, storytelling, and improvisation. Digital illustration workshops gave pupils a chance to try something new and explore their imagination. The filmmaking element has enabled them to feel the pride of working as a team, and the opportunity to contribute towards something special and high quality. Over the course of the year, we delivered 67 workshops and worked directly with up to 90 military children and older people living in care. With cross-generation support and PR from creative ageing charity, Equal Arts, we created and shared 3 videos, 3 illustrations and 4 poems that we shared online with families, friends, and people within the community.

Drama and filmmaking

Working with theatre practitioner, Hannah Wood, and edited by videographer, Sam Miller, groups developed their own short videos based on family, friendship, and community.

Year 4's created a film exploring the "superpowers" they possess through being from a military family. They discussed what qualities they felt they were able to apply to situations such as moving schools, moving houses, making new friends. Each pupil chose a word and then worked on a series of movement that represented their superpower, which was then edited into a film. The qualities were independence, integrity, teamwork, kindness, resilience, and adaptability.



Groups of **Year 2 and 3** pupils put together a video based around what friendship means to them. The concept involved each child and some residents, staff and relative from Parkfield House Nursing Home catching a ball, saying what friendship is to them, then throwing it onto the next person. Each participant came up with their own words and it was edited together.



Reception pupils created a film documenting them colouring in their handprints, drawing their families onto the fingers and recorded their voices speaking about family life.

- “My Mummy’s not at home because she’s at work. I’ll be moving to a new school in America, and I feel really excited and happy”
- “Me and my sisters make a lot of mess! My Dad works in London and my mum looks after old people”
- “I’ve got my dad, my sister, my mum and my puppy. Now, my mum works in the RAF and my dad works in the train stations”



Illustration

Groups of Year 4s and 5s worked with illustrator Ben Poultney to create their own characters; they could be based on themselves, a character from a film, or something completely from their imagination. The characters, which all represented strength, were then edited into a photo of the pupils and in front of the school.



Poetry

Residents at Parkfield House Nursing Home took part in poetry workshops with poet, Daisy Barrett-Nash. The poems, that took place over Zoom, were all based around friendship and community and what this meant to them. The poems were then read aloud and recorded by either the residents themselves or the staff, which added a wonderful personal element to them. Enjoy some of the poems below.

Man's Best Friend by Robert

Dogs are a mans best friend they say
Stella was mine
My beautiful Alsatian
Raised her from a puppy after the war
My family's spirits were up
It takes a village to raise a pup

She was naughty sometimes
All dogs are
But on our walks in the country
She never ran off and explored
She always stayed
And kept me company

I used to be in the military
My job was to train the army dogs
I just loved the animals
They gave me Stella
When I served my duties
A beautiful love story
She was so gentle
So playful
I'd never change the memories

Even when they're painful

If I could be half the person my Stella was
I'd be twice the human I am.

My Sister Muriel by Audrey

Women's Institute was a community
I wish I'd have gone earlier
I got so much from it
Friendships, new connections, fun!
The other women made me feel safe and secure
Even though they were stay at home moms
And I was a working girl
So many adventures together
Kew Gardens, herbal gardens, always in nature

My sister was the crafty one
Always knitting or sewing
She was there first
I'm the younger sibling
I looked up to her
My constant best friend
After school we grew closer
My confidante, advise giver
What to do and what not to do
A role model - six and a half years apart
Took her time getting married
So there was no pressure on me
Total independence

Muriel was inspirational
Southerners County Fitness Champ
She went to university of an evening
Trigonometry, algebra, logarithms
A very clever woman
Matter of fact, proud winner
Looking back
I feel proud of my sister too
I followed in her footsteps
Her actions gave me permission to do!

Best Friends by Rose

Irene Butler, a couple of doors down from me
13 years old, we didn't get out much
But when I was younger you see
I played out on the road
football and marbles with the boys
I tend to get along better with them
It was easy to find joys

Anne was my best friend at 15
we used to have our boyfriends over
that was our Sunday routine
they came in the evening
for tea and a natter
Or country dancing on Saturdays,
that was always a cracker

My Cyril was best friends with my twin uncle
My uncle asked me out for him
That made me chuckle
when he turned up i said
how d'you know i wanna go?
he said, I just came on the off chance
I never left him after that, all those years ago

I was never just a wife
He was my best friend, my team
the making of my life.

Memories & Lyrics by Ken

I still see people now
Guys I went down the pub with
In a big country dreams stay with you

*Long you live and high you fly
And smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry
And all you touch and all you see
Is all you will ever be*

Rock concerts in my younger days
were my sense of community
at the time they were fun
beer showers everywhere
thunder only happens when it's raining

*Long you live and high you fly
And smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry
And all you touch and all you see
Is all you will ever be*

Season ticket at West Ham
Forever blowing bubbles
Cheering on the greatest football legend - Bobby Moor
Have you any dreams you'd like to sell?

*Long you live and high you fly
And smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry
And all you touch and all you see*

Live stream

On the 21st July, we did a live stream session between Glebe Primary School and Parkfield House Nursing Home. During the session we played some games, supported by drama facilitator, Hannah Wood, and shared the work that both groups had been working on. This included the 3 short videos and the resident's poetry. The children were so excited to watch the final product of the films they had been working on and proud of what they had accomplished together; they loved the process of putting together ideas, filming their pieces and then sharing it with others. The residents then shared the above poetry that they had written. The poems were really moving, and everyone was really touched hearing them being read aloud.

Robert's poem *Man's Best Friend* read "I used to be in the military, my job was to train the army dogs". As the Year 3's listened, they were all excited to add in "My Mum/Dad is in the military!". That likeness and cross-generational connection was exactly what we were hoping for through this project and showed just how powerful future connections could be.

There was one child whose grandmother had passed away the day before the live stream, who wanted to take part but was apprehensive and unsure how she was going to feel. She ended up feeling settled and confidently explaining all about the film they'd made and asking the residents questions. It was hugely beneficial for her to have that interaction.



Feedback

We gained significant positive feedback from pupils, parents, staff, residents, and relatives both throughout and at the conclusion of our project.

“I enjoyed playing drama games with Hannah, especially when we act out scenes and pretend to be different characters at a party” Lily, Year 3

“We enjoyed working together and being together.” George, Year 2

“It was wonderful to do something different and linking up with Glebe school was lovely to see the school children. I hope we can do it again.” Audrey, Resident at Parkfield House

“Are they continuing with this project? Both of my kids loved it!”

“My child has really enjoyed the drama sessions. It’s helped them to explore their feelings.”

“It’s been wonderful seeing the progression of some of the children throughout our drama workshops. Many of them talked about moving schools, making new friends and also how they have found lockdown and the pandemic. These sessions have given them the opportunity to explore their imaginations and offer peer support in a safe and creative space”- Hannah, Drama facilitator