

The Masks We Wear

Be your self?
NO ONE CAN
KNOW YOU UNTIL
YOU TELL YOUR
STORY

This is a multi-media book with music,
audio, writing, pictures and film.
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Foster Careline

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The Masks We Wear

This is a multi media book when you see this link  click on the link NEXT to it

The project was devised and created by seven young people living with Five Rivers fostering families. The project shines a light upon the importance of speaking up and disclosure. This piece of work is hard hitting and raw, yet touching and tender. Please be advised that some people may find the content sad and upsetting - it is an expression of the difficult situations that our children have been placed in. The work takes the viewer into these stories in the hope that it can build empathy.

‘The Masks We Wear’ is a blend of all the young people’s stories. The characters represent real characters in their lives and real situations they have experienced.

Whilst sharing their stories the participants looked closely into the lives of the people who had hurt them - the perpetrators. They noticed that the perpetrators were once victims, then realized how the cycle of abuse can happen.

Using this knowledge they echo the message throughout the performance that
‘Silence can be deadly – if it never gets broken’.

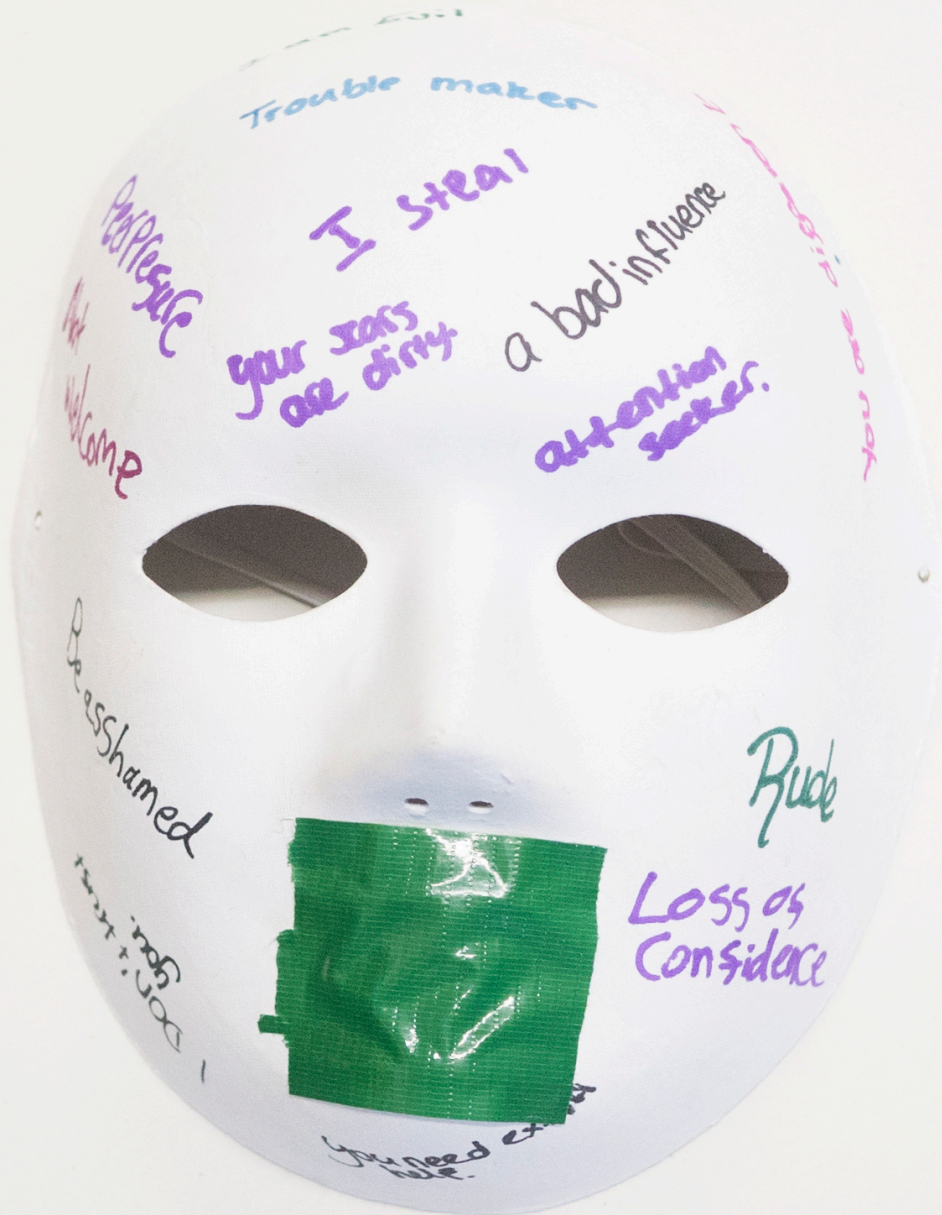
This is the message that they want everyone to clearly see, feel and hear.

These are their untold, unheard stories - until now.

The project shines a light on the resilience that young people can develop, bringing them through and out of difficulty in the face of adversity.

The message is

‘Speak out, stand up, be strong. No one can know you until you tell your story.’



The Masks We Wear

Voice: Are you ready for the interview? Don't be late...

Me: What are they going to see? Are they going to see the real me?

What is the real me anyway? The little kid in care or the adult that cares?

Nightmare: You're an idiot, a nothing, a loser, a creep

Me: I'm a person who's grown from all the things that she's seen

Nightmare: You're a waster, a weirdo, a true waste of space

I'm a person who's learned from many others mistakes ...

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you for coming, sitting down and talking to me today.

As you know, we're looking for a social worker, and wondered what experience you might have and what you might be able to bring to the position?

Me:

My CV might look empty, but its not about that
Cos a life's not like a record that can be played back

It goes forward, but lessons cut into the grooves
Each time you learn a new thing there's a scar that's smoothed.

You might look at me, think that you know my kind,

But no-one is who they are on the outside,
I'm gonna tell my tale, I hope you understand
It's a life well spent that was never as planned

Well it was always about my sister and me
at the back of the class we were both thicker than thieves

laughing and chatting and not doing maths
We'd rather be together than to do that crap

Later that same day, when we both went home
Teacher looked at us strange, why he did? I don't know

And back at home mum and dad were both fighting
empty bottles in the kitchen, drunk and back-biting

Alone in my room with them fighting below
Shouting at each other, saying change or go
But there are better ways to change, if the right
words spoken
Cos silence can be deadly if it never gets broken

Well the next day at school the teacher called us
both in
First he asked my sister if she'd stole something
From the changing room, the day before, she just
stayed quiet But word was out that she was a
thief, and me a liar

Then he looked beneath my sleeve, on my arm
saw scars
He asked me how they'd got there, if I'd done
myself harm?
I didn't say nothing, he said he couldn't hide it
That a life's not a life if you have to stay quiet

Well, on the way home, mum and dad were on the
street
Shouting insults at us, so we pretended not to see
But then they came across, lost the plot, knocked
me down to the ground
Screaming and shouting while people just walked
round

The next day, social services came,
Came and took both me and my sister away
Then we were separated, felt like I'd nothing at all
My life had no meaning was the writing on the
wall

And that night as I slept, I had the worst dream
ever
Playing back all the things that we'd once seen
That I was nothing, a nobody, a waste of space
A life without hope, no home, no place

And when I woke up, it was just me in a room
Just me and my thoughts, just me and this doom
& I thought about the people who'd been there in
my life
That they were not as they seemed, when you
saw them inside

My mum was a kid once, the youngest of 5
Her brothers bullied and abused her most of her
life
But she never spoke up, never learnt how to love
Instead stuck with the story of a life so tough

And my dad was the child of a violent man
Who kept him in line by raising his hand
But the weed gave him freedom, at least in his
head So he kept on smoking til his brain went
dead

And the teacher was a man who tried to speak up
Tired of the silence we all keep bottled up.
Cos a life's not a life if you have to stay quiet
And if a life's worth grabbing then you just have
to try it

Well after that moment, I was just given care
Never truly felt alone cos there was always help
there a hand to help, an ear to hear
To make me laugh when I was down and to listen
to my fear

So I guess that's why I'm here now, applying for
this
To help as I've been helped is my number one
wish
I'm a child of the state, know this system inside
out
Foster carer's showed me care, offered me a way
out

So like I say, my CV might look empty
But all the skills I need to know are deep down
inside me And when I saw the job come up, I had
to try it Cos a life's not a life if you have to stay
quiet

...a life's not a life if you have to stay quiet
...if a life's worth grabbing then you just have to
try it



Click on the link below

<https://vimeo.com/277255994>

The Beginning

Our aim was to create a multi-media art installation that would shine a light on the lives, experiences and resilience of children living in care. In just two weekends, we had a lot to achieve!

It was really important that the group defined the parameters. We decided to begin with an invitation to explore personal relationships within the group. With so few of us having met before this would involve facing our prejudices towards each other as a starting point.

We shared stories and experiences and the importance of being heard. The realisation quickly emerged that no one is as they first appear and this developed into a sub-theme for the piece.

The Middle

Our theatrical workshop leaders helped the young people to learn various techniques to create a plot based on the stories they shared. Scenes were then devised to represent the various points in the story.

It was important to ensure that the whole group was engaged in the brain storming phase and

contributing to the building of the plot line, which includes many details from their personal experiences.

The awareness of each other's experiences helped the group to bond and allowed the workshop to progress rapidly. The group negotiated difficult decisions about which scenes and story lines stayed and which had to be left out.

Moods, music and mask design followed, in preparation for the filming weekend.

Participants were open and supportive of each other outside of the workshops and new friendships were formed behind the scenes. The time between the two residencies allowed the story to be formed into a cohesive plot line.

The words of the participants were incorporated into a spoken word piece, to be used both as a narrative script and a spoken word poem. The masks were created by a professional maker following designs suggested by the participants and influenced by the narration. There was a lot of editing and adjusting carried out by the team of facilitators, who always tried to stay in keeping with the wishes of the group.

The End

There was a lot more to achieve in the second weekend! Firstly, the group reconnected and re-established their supportive friendship group. The participants were then able to see the result of all their hard work and creativity. First of all, there was the unveiling of the masks. On meeting their masks for the first time, the young people found they felt alien, so we needed to become familiar with them.

To help them, we revisited attributes of the characters they represented. They soon took on a life of their own and any participant could enter the world of any mask. We recorded music, vocals, spoken word and filmed all the scenes.

After the filming the masks were laid on the floor and the group observed a closing ceremony. Each mask was thanked, and the lessons it held were stated out loud before it was placed back in the box.

The Future

The story of 'The Masks We Wear' incorporates elements of the participants' true lives. As a collaboration it has a power that is instantly recognisable.

We came to a realisation that sharing one's personal story can create a connection that gives both the participant and the viewer strength.

Olivia Doherty, Participation Lead.

I am unique

I am actually
a nice person

College

I am

I am a person

I am a









The Teacher



The Mother



A Sister



The Father





The Nightmare

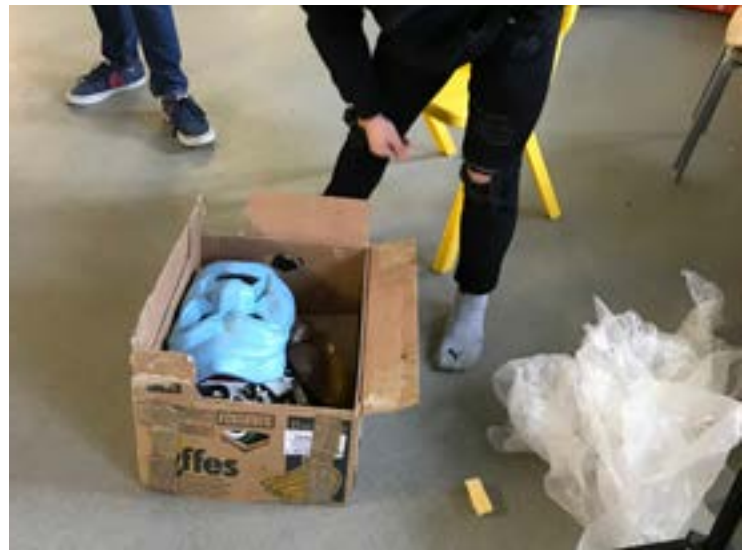
A Sister



The Sisters Together



Goodbye Masks! Goodbye Characters!



Closure & Change



For more information on how you can get involved in more projects like this, have your voice heard and help us to improve things for other children in fostered or residential care, like you.

Please contact:

Participation@five-rivers.org

or visit

www.five-rivers.org

or visit our online media platform

<https://issuu.com/fiveriverschildcare>



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