



## The ID Project: Encouraging young women to get writing and challenge the lack of female influence in the performing arts



ID Project workshop with playwright Cassandra Bond. Image: Sarah Hehir.

During 2015, experienced creative writing teacher and playwright [Sarah Hehir](#) worked with young women in Medway to encourage them to try their hand at writing for the stage.

### How did the project come about?

Women and girls are under-represented in writing – [and particularly in theatre](#) - so Sarah wanted to get a group of teenagers and young women (15-21) together from different areas of Medway and inspire them to see themselves as the writers of the future.

### What worked and what were the challenges?

Sarah says that the biggest challenge was recruiting hard to reach teenagers and encouraging them to come to a new venue and mix with other teenagers: 'In the end however this actually became one of the project's successes as we regularly had 10 young women at workshops - with more on some dates.

'Recruiting was more time consuming than I thought it would be and worked best when I visited youth groups.'

As for successes, Sarah says: 'I am most proud of the ongoing writing support the girls get from me and each other'.

## What happened?

Sarah recruited from schools, youth clubs, via posters and through a diverse range of local Facebook pages. Her group then met on four consecutive Sundays to devise a play through discussion, drama and creative writing with the title *Missing*. As part of this, they also looked at writing by young contemporary female playwrights and had a visit from an actress who performed scenes from Sarah's play *Child Z* and helped them stage *Missing*. Sarah also arranged for Playwright Sam Hall from 17% to support them. Finally, the group performed *Missing* at Chatham's Sun Pier House as part of an open mic night as well as attending the premiere of *Child Z* at the Brook Theatre in Chatham.

## What was learned and what difference did the project make?

'My aim was to encourage young women to see themselves as writers in a very practical way,' says Sarah. 'And to continue supporting them through The ID Project Facebook page and by introducing them to the local creative community.' A total of 18 young women took part in Sarah's project, all of whom contributed to writing and performing *Missing*. 'I'm confident that the ID Project inspired a young generation of writers to aspire to writing as a career,' continues Sarah. 'The improvement in the young women's self esteem and skills was visible.'

One participant says: 'I'd like to do some more writing with you guys too - *Missing* was an amazing time for me and gave me a lot of confidence in my writing and acting. It was the first time I'd properly performed in front of a lot of people and my parents told me they were proud. I just want to thank you for that and for inviting us to your play last night - like I said it was amazing!'

## What's happening next?

Sarah is going to be keeping the [ID Project Facebook](#) going and signpost and encourage the young women in that network to continue to take part in local events. Sarah would like to run another, wider playwriting project with a more diverse group in the future.

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