Raised Voices
Raised Voices is Arc Theatre's new female leadership/peer mentoring project – our latest to be funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and supported by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham.

Running over three years, our committed group of ‘olders’ (participants from previous projects Finding the Words and Girls Have Their Say) have worked to recruit and mentor a new intake of ‘youngers’ – leading them on their own exciting new adventure in the Borough!

Whilst improving confidence and self-esteem, learning leadership techniques and developing speaking and listening skills, our extended group has been working on a powerful new issue-based film resource, leading to a comprehensive tour to local schools, youth centres and professional platforms. And this time, our girls are pulling no punches! They have decided to tackle some of the hardest-hitting issues affecting young women today, including self-harm, sexual exploitation, domestic violence and female genital mutilation. They wanted to start new conversations on the subjects that even adults are sometimes too nervous to talk about, and they are passionate about getting their voices heard!

This booklet is designed as an accompaniment to the Raised Voices film and tour. It includes a range of work our participants have been exploring and writing about – including pieces from their film resource, facts and figures, quotes from inspirational women (including their House Patrons: prison reformer Elizabeth Fry; aviator Amy Johnson; human rights activist Rosa Parks; and war heroine Mary Seacole), and where to turn for help if you are affected by any of the subjects discussed.

Embracing female solidarity, our young women have worked hard to put together a resource they hope will help others to overcome really difficult challenges, but above all, they want to empower other young people to raise their voices and start talking today.

Natalie Smith, Project Leader and Arc Education Director
Raised Voices

Body image, self-esteem and self-harm

We care about the girls who can’t stand their own reflection. Who stare in the mirror but accept the rejection of a world which only values the lightness of our skin. The size of our butts and boobs but not what lies within.

"I must say that I don’t appreciate your friend’s kind wishes with respect to my complexion... and as to his offer of bleaching me, I should, even if it were practicable, decline it without any thanks."
Mary Seacole (1805-1881) - Pioneering nurse and heroine of the Crimean War who as a woman of mixed heritage overcame a double prejudice.

Some facts...

"At five, children begin to understand other people’s judgement of them. At seven, they’re beginning to show body dissatisfaction. As adults, 90% of British women feel body-image anxiety. Many young women say they are too self-aware to exercise; many say they drink to feel comfortable with the way they look; 50% of girls smoke to suppress their appetite - is it too strong to suggest that these things, these anxieties, are slowly killing them?"

Queens
by Ebunoluwe Ore

All my life I felt insecure, because I was taught to be perfect, and to have a boyfriend you have to be skinny. This is how the media tells us girls to be – beautiful. Insecure, I didn’t feel confident enough to live my own life, because I was afraid of what people were going to say.

Insecure. I tried different slimming down regimes. None of them made me look like the ‘beautiful girl’ in movies or on magazine covers.

Insecure – that WAS me.
I tried being different people, apart from being myself.
NOW I know that I am beautiful, no matter how the media tries to socially construct you.
We girls need self-worth. Please let us start thinking like the QUEENS that we are.

"As a society we’re putting pressure on our girls from a very young age to alter their bodies. Whether we like to admit it or not, female genital mutilation, designer vaginas, breast implants or butt lifts are carried out to satisfy men."
Leyla Hussein – FGM survivor, Campaigner, mother and Co-Founder of Daughters of Eve.

"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."
Maya Angelou

"As a society we’re putting pressure on our girls from a very young age to alter their bodies. Whether we like to admit it or not, female genital mutilation, designer vaginas, breast implants or butt lifts are carried out to satisfy men."
Leyla Hussein – FGM survivor, Campaigner, mother and Co-Founder of Daughters of Eve.
We care about the girls who paint a face on to hide the pain, feeling worthless and ugly every day. Feeling the sadness and the shame.

We care about the girls who flick through the magazines and compare themselves to photos of the people seen on screen. Does it make them cut themselves? Stop eating or compare to the photoshopped images of perfect skinny bodies; giant lashes and fake hair?

Some facts...

- Self-harm is the term for any behaviour, action or habit, which can cause damage to your health. This can include cutting, but also includes overeating [and undereating], taking drugs, smoking and drinking too much alcohol. It is thought that around 10% of young people may try and hurt themselves on purpose at some point, but the figure could be much higher. Around 90% of young people treated for self-harm in A&E will have taken an overdose, and yet the most preferred method of harming is to cut.

Source: selfharm.co.uk

"Have you ever been hurt and the place tries to heal a bit, and you just pull the scar off it over and over again?"

Rosa Parks

This is a Poem
by Joyce Bofenda

this is a poem
you know my name - not my story
you see my smile - not my pain
you notice my cuts - not my scars
you read my lips - not my mind
that’s the end of my poem

Stories Behind the Scars
by Chloe Butler

I almost didn’t see her.
The little girl in the corner of the bus stop.
Looking upon the cruel, cold world with that empty feeling I know so well.
Was she looking for some good: a piece of light to keep her warm?
I stopped. I stared.
I saw myself, and not just in the reflection of her eyes.
Her eyes, so painstakingly blue with flickers of emerald green; they were so beautiful, so sweet, so wise.
The pain came flooding back all at once.
OH NO! STOP! Not again!
Not the stories behind the scars.
Sexual and domestic violence

We care about the girls
Who take a beating every day
And not just from a punch or slap
But in every single way
Maybe he controls
How she spends her time
Who she is allowed to see
It’s his choice to define
Maybe he likes to put her down
Steal her confidence and self-esteem
Maybe he forces her to do things
And ignores the sound of her scream

Some facts...

“...The World Health Organisation estimates that one in three women will experience physical and sexual violence. If you thought these statistics are skewed because women in the developed world are more frequently subjected to violence, you were wrong. A 2014 study estimated that a third of women in the European Union have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. The situation in the UK is even worse. In our country, 44% of women have been subjected to violence. The vast majority of women surveyed said that they did not report the most serious incidents of domestic violence to the police. In fact, according to Women’s Aid, it takes on average 35 assaults before the police are called...”

Leyla Hussein
Child and female sexual exploitation

We care about the girls
Who are targeted because they are young
Who are seen as ‘fresh meat’
Their journey has just begun
Maybe they are given gifts
But this comes at a price
What is expected in return?
Who can they turn to for advice?
Can’t they see that they are being abused?
Don’t they understand the deal?
What started off as just some ‘fun’
Has turned into something real
Very real and very scary
But they think they are to blame
How do they stay safe and sound?
This is not a game

Some facts...

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation and/or coercion of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for things such as money, gifts, accommodation, affection or status. The manipulation or ‘grooming’ process involves befriending children, gaining their trust, and often feeding them drugs and alcohol, sometimes over a long period of time, before the abuse begins. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power, which limits the victim’s options. It is a form of abuse which is often misunderstood by victims and outsiders as consensual. Although it is true that the victim can be tricked into believing they are in a loving relationship, no child under the age of 18 can ever consent to being abused or exploited.

Source: Barnardo’s, 2012

Those who Love have Lost

by Emily Fawsitt

Those who love have lost, engulfed in a prison,
The bars; worthlessness, the victim: a coward,
if only her voice was to be risen.
Those who love have lost,
his cut glass blade scrapes along her pale skin
“Don’t let him win”
“Don’t let him win”
Yet he is the one committing the sin.
You swore on your soul to love her like a knight to his lady,
now you swear on her life, nobody can see you as shady.
Those who love have lost,
But what has she to lose more than her existence?
Her life is third world, her voice is a hostage
Why is this so hard to see?
She walks into the room,
takes a deep breath, sits and breaks down while sobbing the words: “He abuses me…”

Those who love have lost,
a mass massacre of her dignity mingles with her mind.
as she tries to find the scar from the ‘BANG’ that left her hand charred.
A brutal strike,
1,2,3 the numbers hike, until they’ve reached her anguish heart.
Those who love have lost.
His cut glass blade eases along her pale skin
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Source: Barnardo’s, 2012
Some facts...

- Sexting is a form of sexual exploitation – it is illegal in the UK to take, hold or share indecent photos of anyone under 18. It is also against the law to watch pornographic material under this age. And yet:
  - 79% of 13 to 18-year-olds use mobile technology to take and distribute images
  - 40% of young people see nothing wrong with topless images
  - 58% of 14 to 17-year-olds have viewed online pornography
  - 33% of young people aged 11 to 13 have received a sexual image on their phone
  - the search term 'teen porn' has increased by 255% in the last 8 years


"Viewing pornography affects young people’s sexual beliefs... Pornography has been linked to unrealistic ideas about sex, more casual attitudes to sex, beliefs that women are sex objects and confusion about sexual relationships."

Basically... Porn is everywhere. The Children’s Commissioner Press Release, 2013
Raised Voices

Female genital mutilation

We care about the girls who suffer FGM. Do you know about them?

Some facts...

- FGM consists of the partial or total removal of the genitalia for non-medical reasons.
- It is estimated that over 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of female genital mutilation in England and Wales each year, and that 66,000* British women are living with the consequences of FGM. However, the true extent is unknown due to the ‘hidden’ nature of the crime. Summer is known as the ‘cutting season’ – some girls will be sent away, others are at risk in their own homes. Some will be as young as two weeks old.
- The practice is supported by families and communities because it is a tradition that has existed for generations – people believe that a girl needs to be cut for the sake of ‘family honour’ in order to marry well – a girl who is not cut brings shame – she is seen as unclean and sexually promiscuous.
- Female genital mutilation is illegal. It is child abuse. It is violation. FGM causes death, disability, physical and psychological harm for millions of women every year. It forces girls into a future of pain from the moment they are cut – living every single day, physically, emotionally and mentally scarred.

*Source: Tackling FGM in the UK, published by The Royal College of Midwives, 2013

One Girl, One Life
by Beautiful Ayogu

One girl
One life
One cutter
One knife
Nothing left, nothing remains
Why do we girls have to go through all of this pain?
One girl
One life
Still counting the days. I have to survive
Wrong
Right
What life is this for me?
One girl
One life
Too many scars to even stay alive
24,000 girls
Too many knives
How many lives will be able to survive?
Go away, enough of the pain
It’s my life
It’s my rules
So go away, enough of the pain
24,000 girls, 24,000 girls

“We need to protect our girls from harmful practices and empower them to make sure they are not in a position where they feel powerless ... I want other girls out there to see that if you really want to make a change, regardless of trials and tribulations you go through, that you can make changes if you wish to.”

Leyla Hussein

One Girl, One Life
Raised Voices

Extract from the film

Christy: The highlight of my day was hearing some year 11s talking about FDN or something...

Shania: FDN? Don’t you mean FGM?

Christy: Yeah! That’s it! What, have you heard of it?

Shania: Nah, it just sounded right. What’s that about then?

Christy: It’s female… female something something. I forgot. All I know is, they get a razor or something and they cut the girl’s ‘bits’ off!

Shania: What bits?

Christy: You know, part of ‘down there’.

Shania: I think you mean female genital mutilation. It’s quite serious, Chris, it’s not something to joke about. You don’t know who is affected by this...

Where to turn for help

Emergency Services: Call 999 if you or someone you know is in immediate risk of harm

Crimestoppers: Call 0800 555 111 or visit crimestoppers-uk.org/ to report crime anonymously

Child Abuse Investigation Command/Project Azure: Call 020 7161 2888 (dedicated Metropolitan Police service for girls at risk of FGM)

Samaritans: Call 08457 909090 or visit www.samaritans.org/ (confidential emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings)

ChildLine: Call 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk (free UK 24-hour helpline and online service where children and young people can talk to a trained counsellor (dedicated to helping anyone with any problem, or if they are in distress or female)


CAMHS (Child and Adult Mental Health Service): Visit www.nelft.nhs.uk/our_services/mental_health/camhs/camhs_services (NHS community-based mental health services in the north east London Boroughs)

YoungMinds: Visit www.youngminds.org.uk/ (UK’s leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers)

Self-Harm: Visit selfharm.co.uk (support for young people impacted by self-harm)

Life Centre: Call 0808 802 0808 (under 18s) or visit www.lifecentre.uk.com (providing support and counselling to anyone who has experienced sexual abuse or rape)

Rape Crisis: Call 0808 809999 or visit www.rapecrisis.org.uk/ (charity offering rape and sexual violence help)

Daughters of Eve: Text 07979 390331 or visit www.dofeve.org/ (protecting girls and young women who are at risk from female genital mutilation)

TheSite.org: Visit www.thesite.org/ (for young adults to turn to when they need support and guidance through life)

B-eat: Call 0845 634 7650 (under 18s) or visit www.b-eat.co.uk (dedicated to helping anyone experiencing difficulties with food)

Changing Faces: Call 020 7391 9270 or visit www.changingfaces.org.uk/ (supporting and representing people of all ages who have disfigurements to the face or body from any cause)

Body Gossip: Visit http://www.bodygossip.org/what-we-do (campaigns through Arts and Education to empower everybody to be the best version of themselves and rock their own brand of gorgeous)

Shape Your Culture: Visit www.facebook.com/ShapeYourCulture (run by AnyBody UK to help girls and young women realise their unique skills, create their own media and tell their stories)

"Each person must live their life as a model for others.”

Rosa Parks

“Every step I take in the crowded London streets may bring me in contact with some friend…”

Mary Seacole
“Female solidarity

We care about the girls
Who don’t understand their own strength
The girls who bitch about us
And would go to any length
To bully us and treat us bad
Without a thought for clarity
We care about the girls
Who don’t yet understand
FEMALE SOLIDARITY!
Because together we are stronger
We can right the wrongs
We can shout from the rooftops
We can sing our songs
We can raise our voices
Together as one
And hopefully make the changes we need
That benefit EVERYONE!

“The human heart... tells us that we are more alike than we are unalike.”
Maya Angelou (Letter to My Daughter)

“I love to feel for the sorrows of others.”
Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845) – The first penal reformer to devote her attention solely to the plight of imprisoned women

“No-one had faith in me except myself... and who can blame them? I knew somehow I could do it, and it was up to me to prove it...”
Amy Johnson (1903-1941) – Pioneering female English aviator who set long-distance records during the 1930s

“Friend may be waiting behind a stranger’s face”
Maya Angelou (Letter to My Daughter)
With special thanks to the Raised Voices LBBD Steering Group: Jo Carwell (Health and Personal Development Advisor), Charlie Crawford (Operational Team Manager, YOS); Shelli Green (Youth Crime Prevention Coordinator, Catch 22), PC Jay Harris (LBBD schools for Barking & Dagenham Police), Elaine Ryan (Safeguarding Lead for Education and Child Protection Advisor for Schools and the lead on Sexual Exploitation), Sasha Timmermans (MARAC Coordinator), Karen Witt (Assistant Headteacher, Eastbury School); Noelle Gilbert (Grants Officer, Education and Learning Programme) and colleagues at Paul Hamlyn Foundation; Leyla Hussein (Co-Founder of Daughters of Eve and Hawa’s Haven); Kala Boller, Sue Richardson, Catherine Cook and colleagues at Jo Richardson Community School; Kingsley Hall Choir and Community Centre; MOPAC; LBBD Public Health; Barking & Dagenham Police; YOS Mission to Mend; Dolores Altaras and Peter Sinclair at Tom Easton Flavasum Trust; Pryme Kingz; and the parents, guardians and families of the young women involved for their continued support and encouragement.

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