

# Finding the Words



**arc**  
theatre for change

**Finding the Words** was created in April 2012 as the result of very generous funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. This new film and public-speaking initiative is the latest in Arc's groundbreaking new series for young women since the performance programme **Girl E** by Clifford Oliver was commissioned by British Transport Police in 2011.

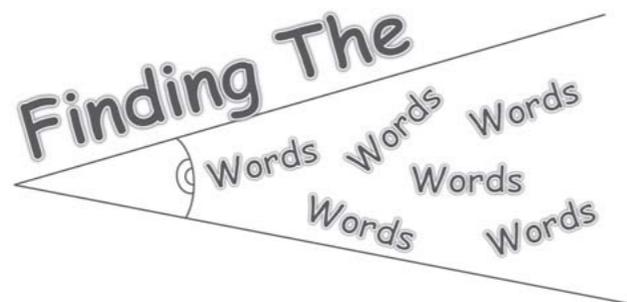
Tours of **Girl E** established that girls needed a platform to develop a stronger, louder, clearer voice in the subject of relationships, gangs, abuse and exploitation. We were able to bring together a committed team of articulate and passionate young women from Years 8 to 10 in Barking and Dagenham schools, who all had important opinions on these themes – we just needed to **Find the Words** to get our messages across.

The subjects debated – including bullying, offensive language, violence and rape – weren't easy ones to tackle, but using drama, poetry, research, script-writing and presentation skills, we explored how girls are affected in society today, and what we can do to help inform, support, protect and, above all, empower.

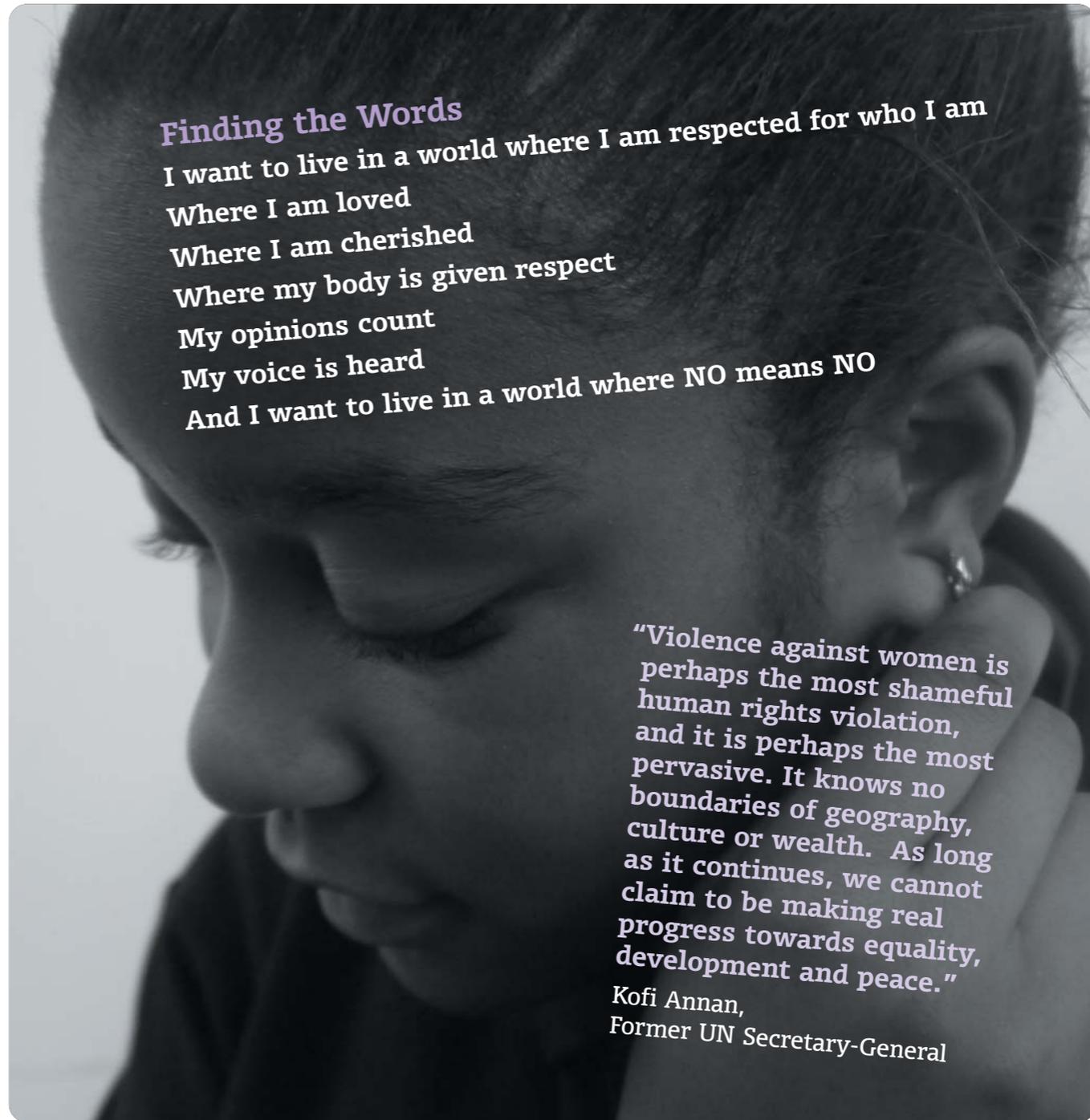
Our girls have had to write and learn lots of lines, film on location for long days in all weathers, and even become boys in order to produce the **Finding the Words** film! But they have also had great fun making new friends, sharing stories and ideas, and even seeing live Spoken Word performances along the way!

The DVD, booklet and touring programme have all been devised and compiled by our young women, who are currently working towards their Bronze Arts Award\*. We feel a great sense of pride in what we have achieved and we hope you will be able to use our resources to help highlight the themes we've explored.

Natalie Smith, Project Leader, Arc



\* [www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk)



**Finding the Words**

I want to live in a world where I am respected for who I am  
 Where I am loved  
 Where I am cherished  
 Where my body is given respect  
 My opinions count  
 My voice is heard  
 And I want to live in a world where NO means NO

"Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace."

Kofi Annan,  
 Former UN Secretary-General

## Respect: seeing things through a boy's eyes

We wrote a script for a scene of our film based on how we really feel boys behave and talk about us in everyday life. We filmed our scene dressed as, and acting like, the male characters we invented...

A: Errm nah... my girl wants me to stop doing that, you know.

B: You what?

C: Since when have you listened to your girl?

D: Bruv, are you serious? I'm not try'na hear that. You're letting a girl tell you what you can and can't do?

A: Ay, just chill with them talks, fam!

B: Hold up, who's your girl?

A: Kalisha.

D: Kalisha? Hmmmm...

B: Say nothing, say nothing...

A: What?

B: Well, all I'm saying is, don't trust that chick, innit. See, her friend, she set me up. Listen, yeah, she text me, so I went to link her and when we were walking near the blocks, all I see is a bag of man waiting there for me, looking like they wanted to hurt me. Swear down, I ran for my life! I swear, when I find her, yeah, I'm gonna make her pay for that, trust me!

A: What you saying?

B: I'm saying that I'll go to her yard if I need to, teach that sket a lesson... man like me has a reputation to keep, otherwise I will be some joke on road, innit!

"The thing I enjoyed most was playing the role of a boy, because as well as giving me the opportunity to act as the opposite gender, it gave me the chance to be in the shoes of a boy."

Phoebe Stephens

### Follow-up exercise

Discuss whether this is a realistic view of your experience of how boys behave and what they say about girls. In what ways would you say they might be acting disrespectfully? In pairs, write a short scripted piece of how you see boys talking about girls.

## Words: how language affects us

### Words by Ebunoluwa Ore

Words silently manipulate us and make us feel violated and unprotected when they are spoken in everyday life.

Words impact lives in the way they're spoken, which is dangerous and hurtful and makes us feel isolated and lowers self-esteem.

Words silently manipulate people's feelings and break hearts in the way they are said, and can also make someone wish they were dead.

### True Story Anon

He told me he loved me and he said he would do anything to protect me and always have my back. But if I did something he didn't like, he would punch me, grab me and hold me down. He would shout at me and call me names like BITCH, HOE, LOOSE, and worst of all, STOOSH. He would bug me for sex, but I would say; "No!" and he would get angry and call me STOOSH. One day I got tired of hearing it and I shouted back at him. His eyes went red and he grabbed me again, pulling me down. I remember him saying; "There's only two ways out of this – either a black eye or you make me happy". So I did...

### Follow-up exercise

Draw a picture or write your own poem to express how name-calling and other people's language makes you feel.

## Cyberbullying: the facts

- Between 8% and 34% of children and young people in the UK have been cyberbullied, and girls are twice as likely to experience persistent cyberbullying than boys

Department for Education, The protection of children online: a brief scoping review to identify vulnerable groups, 2011

**'Cyberbullying':** the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. Examples include communications that seek to intimidate, control, manipulate, put down, falsely discredit, embarrass or humiliate the recipient.

### THE LAW

Did you know?

Someone who is bullying another person using technology can be prosecuted according to the Malicious Communications Act 1988.



## Sexting: the truth

**'Sexting':** the exchange of sexual messages or images and the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and the internet.

In 2008, a teenager in Ohio, USA hanged herself after a nude photo of her that she sexted to her boyfriend was sent around her school after they broke up.

- Interviews with young people in Years 8 and 10 in two inner-city London schools revealed that up to 40% of young people have been involved in sexting, with girls most adversely affected

NSPCC, A qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting', 2012

Extract from **Now I'm Lost** by Jemima Orija  
 There's so much pain, I'm tired of the strain  
 You took my freedom and virtue and gave slavery and guilt  
 You gave me a scar that couldn't be healed or forgotten.

### THE LAW

Did you know?

It is illegal in the UK to take, hold or share 'indecent' photos of anyone under 18 (even to or from your boyfriend or girlfriend). Sexting is against the law as whoever has that picture on their phone or computer is technically in possession of an indecent image of a child. This means that person can be prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.



### Follow-up exercise

Research the law and consequences of sexting and cyberbullying in the UK and abroad.

# Violence, abuse and rape

Extract from **You Can't Tell Me**  
by Thandiwe Banda and Jemima Orija

It hurt me inside and out.  
It felt like my heart  
Was ripped out of my body.  
My body motionless  
Laid there while you defiled me.  
I loved you and you used me  
Like a toy.

## THE LAW

**Q:** Will my boyfriend/girlfriend leave me if I don't have sex with them?



**A:** No-one should be forcing you or pressuring you into having sex. If you're under 16 years of age, the law states you shouldn't be having sex at all. If you're over 16 and someone's trying to force you, that's illegal too. The law is there to protect you and keep you safe, not to get you in trouble.

From the  
**Finding the Words** film

**A:** There was no-one in at his house. I was waiting downstairs, but he told me to come up to his room. That's when it started to feel weird. He was different.

**C:** What do you mean 'different'?

**A:** I don't know. He just wasn't so nice and he seemed angry with me.

**B:** So did you go up to his room?

**A:** No, I told him I was OK downstairs and that I needed to go soon anyway as my mum would have done my dinner.

**C:** What did he say to that?

**A:** It was horrible; he came storming down the stairs shouting at me that I had to do what he wanted me to do and then he grabbed my arm and started dragging me up to his room.

**B:** Oh my God!

**C:** What did you do?

**A:** I can't really remember, I just sort of froze. It all became a blur...

**True Story** Anon  
My cousin got raped by her 'best friend' supposedly. He got her pregnant, but never came back to support her. She was left alone. No-one by her side, except God.

Extract from **I Heard Footsteps** by Katherine Pirie  
I heard footsteps coming and I knew this would be another long night, And something inside me screamed; "this time it really isn't right". The words he was saying were ruthless and cruel, And each time he hit me I obeyed each and every rule. I sat there blank faced and scared knowing that I couldn't cry, For I knew what would happen, if he saw the tears in my eyes.

Extract from **Story to Tell** by Sefunmi Olatunji  
See 'S' knew all about Joe  
And took no offence when he called her his 'hoe'  
Week by week the words got worse  
If words could hurt she would've needed a nurse  
The name calling and abuse just wasn't enough  
A month into the relationship Joe started getting rough.

## Follow-up exercise

Write your own definitions for the words RAPE and CONSENT.

- 36% of people interviewed believed that a woman should be held responsible for being sexually assaulted or raped if she was drunk, and 26% if she was in public wearing sexy or revealing clothes

Home Office, 2009

## To tell or not to tell

From the **Finding the Words** film

A: He reckons that because I had sex with Craig, that meant I was up for it...

B: That is sick. I can't believe it. I don't know what to say... But you've got to tell someone. He can't get away with this!

A: I'm not telling anyone. And you've got to promise me that you won't tell anyone either. Promise me.

C: Of course – if that's what you want...

B: What? No! You can't keep something like this to yourself. You need help. You need to talk to someone. And you can't let him get away with it. What if he does it to someone else?

### Follow-up exercise

Design a poster to encourage girls to report incidents of rape or sexual abuse.

- A study into teenage domestic abuse shows that over 50% of disadvantaged young women have been in violent relationships before their 18th birthday and children as young as 13 are being physically, emotionally and sexually abused in their relationships. Yet we still don't know how many young people are victimised each day, but don't tell a soul...

NSPCC, 'Standing on my own two feet': disadvantaged teenagers, intimate partner violence and coercive control, 2011

*"This project is important because you open other people's eyes as to why abuse is so damaging. I have learnt that all girls should stick together and if we stick together we can stop abuse and get over our problems."*

Eliane Lopes

## Where to turn for help

From the **Finding the Words** film

B: There's a place where you can go and talk to someone and get checked out, but you don't have to report it. It looks like our nearest one is Whitechapel...

A: That's miles away!

B: We'll come with you.

C: Excuse me? If I go to Whitechapel I will have to tell my mum where I'm going – and she always knows when I'm lying.

B: Well I'll go with you. Anytime you want. It's called The Havens and I'm sure we'll find it easily enough.

A: I'm not sure...

B: Look, whatever you want to do is OK. I'm here for you. We both are, aren't we?

C: Of course. I just don't think we can handle this on our own...

### [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

The UK's free, confidential 24-hour helpline for young people of all ages who are in distress or danger: 0800 1111

### [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

Free and confidential sexual health information for under 25s: 0808 802 1234

### [www.thehavens.co.uk](http://www.thehavens.co.uk)

Specialist centres in London for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted. Whitechapel branch: 020 7247 4787

### [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

Charity offering rape and sexual violence information and helpline: 0808 802 9999

### [www.getconnected.org.uk/abuse](http://www.getconnected.org.uk/abuse)

The free, confidential helpline, email and webchat service for young people needing support for their emotional and physical well being: 0808 808 4994

### [www.gangline.co.uk](http://www.gangline.co.uk)

Targeted Against Gangs offers real support and exit strategies through their freephone charity helpline: 0800 032 9538

### [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

A space created by Women's Aid to help children and young people understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if it's happening to you: 0800 2000 247

### [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

The free, 24-hour national domestic violence helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) and Refuge [refuge.org.uk](http://refuge.org.uk) : 0808 2000 247

### [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk)

Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people experiencing domestic violence: 0300 999 5428

### [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

24-hour, confidential, non-judgmental emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair: 08457 90 90 90

*"The closer we get to intelligent, strong, wise, compassionate, caring and kindhearted women having an equal voice in world affairs, I guarantee we will see the much needed, and long-awaited change from women being sexually exploited, controlled and looked down on, to them being respected, free and uplifted."*

Amen RaStar

**Finding the Words** are Adele Star Adeyemi, Precious Ayebola, Thandiwe Banda, Jennifer Ezebuenyi, Jolene Hayford, Cherry-Kandi Hazlewood Tennant, Hazvinei Kamhono, Leonita Laurent, Ariana Sofia Lomba, Eliane Lopes, Natasha Mtetwa, Sefunmi Olatunji, Ebunoluwa Ore, Jemima Orija, Katherine Pirie, Phoebe Stephens and Sylvia Zaranek

This resource was compiled and designed by the FtW participants with help from the Arc team and John Williams Design

**Images by** Ariana Sofia Lomba  
**Illustrations by** Phoebe Stevens

**Finding the Words Arc team**  
Natalie Smith - Project Leader  
Grace Pluckrose-Oliver - Filmmaker  
Neelofer Ajazmir - Assistant Project Leader  
Theresa Snooks - Communications and Design

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**To find out more, contact:**

Natalie Smith, Arc Theatre  
First Floor, The Malthouse Studios  
62-76 Abbey Road, Barking IG11 7BT

t: 020 8594 1095  
e: nat@arctheatre.com  
www.arctheatre.com

