




The Verbatim Formula (TVF) is a multi-component practice research project comprising a book chapter, journal article, website and video animation, with accompanying contextual documentation. The project is led collaboratively by myself, Dr Sylvan Baker, a lecturer at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Associate Director at People's Palace Projects, alongside Dr Maggie Inchley and Dr Sadhvi Dar at Queen Mary University of London and freelance artist Mita Pujara. TVF uses verbatim theatre techniques to better understand the experiences of care-experienced young people in terms of exclusion and marginalisation in Higher Education and their lived experience of the care system. TVF's aim is to encourage care and Higher Education professionals and other key stakeholders to listen to care-experienced young people, and to reconsider and realign their services in relation to the needs of their care-experienced users.

Within applied theatre practice, TVF innovates verbatim theatre techniques combined with headphone performance to elicit affective responses in audiences and to facilitate listening and dialogue. The care-experienced young people are co-researchers in the practice, and performances based on their verbatim testimony are used in service-provider and stakeholder settings to initiate dialogue and provide training. TVF has developed the 'Portable Testimony Service', where pop-up performances, drawn from a 'living archive' of over 150 testimonies of care-experienced young people and adult professionals, are delivered in relevant stakeholder contexts. To ensure the practice remains responsive to the young people and to key stakeholders, evaluation is embedded. TVF has been disseminated in a journal article; a book chapter; and workshops, seminars, presentations and conferences. Through performances (total audiences 750) and training events (total attending 160), the project website, a video animation explaining the methodology and artistic outputs, such as zines, an exhibition and accompanying brochure, the research has been shared widely with publics and key stakeholders.




The Verbatim Formula

Sylvan Baker



Materials which comprise or support this submission can be found inside the box or on the USB drive  embedded in the box's interior lid. Links to the website www.theverbatimformula.org.uk  (one of the outputs comprising this submission) are provided in the PDF of this publication found on the USB drive, indicated by the symbol .

Within this publication, references for components of the submission are found in the right margin using a lettering system A–H. Items marked with an * are components of the output, all other items are contextual.

- A* Book chapter: Sylvan Baker and Maggie Inchley. 2020. 'Verbatim practice as research with care-experienced young people: An "aesthetics of care" through aural attention', in Stuart Fisher, Amanda and James Thompson, *Performing Care: New Perspectives on Socially Engaged Performance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 171–186
- B* Video animation explaining The Verbatim Formula Methodology 
- C* Journal article: Maggie Inchley, Sadhvi Dar, Susmita Pujara and Sylvan Baker. 2019. 'The Verbatim Formula: Caring for care leavers in the neoliberal university', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 24(3): 413–419
- D Guardian article: Ruth Hardy. 2016. 'It's Child's Play: The Performance that Lets Young People in Care Share Their Stories' 
- E Zine from The Verbatim Formula residencies
- F Zine from the *Creative Scotland* project
- G Exhibition brochure from 'Can You See Me?'
- H Podcast interview and discussion featuring Dr Sylvan Baker: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0915g9d> 

Further information on these materials can be found on the reverse of the box's interior lid.

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THE VERBATIM FORMULA

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FIG 1 Launch of the Making Places Document at the Senior Common Room of QMUL, 2019

I

Overview

The Verbatim Formula (TVF) is a participatory research project for care-experienced young people, led collaboratively since its inception in 2015, by Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), People's Palace Projects and The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Central), through the work of Dr Maggie Inchley and Dr Sadhvi Dar at QMUL, Dr Sylvan Baker at Central (who was also an Associate Director at People's Palace Projects) and freelance artist Mita Pujara. This is a multi-component practice research project which is articulated and evidenced through a [website](#), a [journal article](#) and a [book chapter](#) which discuss our methods and findings as the project has developed, alongside a [video animation](#) explaining the methodology. The research has also been disseminated in [non-academic publications and media](#), and artistic outputs including [zines](#) and a [brochure](#) from an exhibition on the work of TVF. The core aims of the research are to understand care-experienced young people's experiences of Higher Education and the care system, to support their aspirations for a positive and stable future, and to develop democratic models of practice and evaluation. TVF innovates the use of verbatim theatre techniques, headphone performance, and listening and dialogue within an applied theatre project. In doing so, it offers new strategies for the use of headphone performance within applied theatre.

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The project began with a two overarching aims: first, to give care-experienced young people a voice, and, secondly, to work with them and the Higher Education sector to address the issues of exclusion and marginalisation that they experience in Higher Education. As the practice progressed, it emerged that care-experienced young people already had a voice but that adult professionals within either Higher Education or the care sector were not listening. It also became clear that TVF had the potential to work in collaboration with the Higher Education and care sectors to improve listening and dialogue between adult service providers and policy-makers and the young people who rely on their services. What has remained constant throughout is that the verbatim testimonies are provided by care-experienced young people during workshops and residencies. The young people, who act as co-researchers

in the project, work with the facilitators to interview and record one another to develop the testimonies and further to curate the performances. The performances are delivered by facilitators and performers who use headphones to listen to the testimony and then speak the words of the care-experienced young people. The performances have taken place in settings including the Old Pathology Museum at Barts Hospital (2015) and Kensington Town Hall (2016). TVF has also developed the 'Portable Testimony Service', where pop-up performances in university departments and local authority offices have taken place with testimonies drawn from a 'living archive' of over 150 recordings of care-experienced young people and additional testimonies from social workers and other adult professionals which have been gathered as part of the performances and other events. Ultimately, TVF aims to intervene in Higher Education and care systems in the UK, using the potency of headphone performance as a means of eliciting affective responses in audience members to facilitate listening, dialogue and empathy between care-experienced young people and the adults who care for them and, significantly, have the power to bring about change. We propose that through listening, attention and care, changes to behaviour and practices in key stakeholder contexts can happen.

In 2015, during a project commissioned by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and a series of residential workshops at QMUL with care-experienced young people around their perceptions of Higher Education, a methodological model for residencies was developed and subsequently shared with universities nationally in *Making Places* (see [website](#)). Collaborating with cross-sectoral Higher Education and Local Authority teams at Greenwich, University of East London and Goldsmiths, TVF co-delivered further residencies for care-experienced young people in these settings. TVF has developed a long-term relationship with CLICK (Children in Care Kouncil) Wandsworth, co-delivering with them major creative projects at Battersea Arts Centre, inspired by care-experienced young people's desire to be represented positively and creatively. TVF subsequently supported a cohort of care-experienced young people in gaining funding from the Wandsworth Youth Opportunity Fund, which funded their production of the audio-exhibition 'Can You See Me?' at City Hall and where they led activities and dialogues with 100 participants (see [exhibition brochure](#)).

Invitations and requests to collaborate have been received from a wide range of partners, such as the care charity Become, the City Hall Youth and Education Peer Outreach Team, the Wellcome Trust, the National Network

for the Education of Care Leavers and the Thomas Coram Institute, where TVF testimonies have been shared and used to initiate dialogue around the lived experiences of care-experienced young people in the care system and in Higher Education. TVF has raised public awareness at the *Being Human* and *Inside Out* festivals, the Wellcome Collection *Sick of the Fringe* festival, a pre-show discussion at the Almeida Theatre and in an [article in *The Guardian*](#) (2016). The project has twice provided training for 50 staff at Wandsworth Children's Services and for 25 Scottish practitioners as part of the Scottish Independent Care Review. It was invited to the Department for Education (DfE) to share its testimonies with an audience of 60, including DfE civil servants and the Minister for Children and Families, as well as to train 40 staff at the Office for Students as part of its development of a regulatory framework. In all of its events, a focus on the engagement of the co-researchers in the process of research serves TVF's broad aim to use participatory arts practices to help develop services that are responsive to the needs of care-experienced young people.

TVF has delivered 7 university residential workshops in 4 London universities and 1 in collaboration with a Scottish charity. It has worked directly with over 100 young people in care and collaborated closely with 5 Local Authorities and 3 public/third-sector bodies. It has raised awareness with up to 30 MPs and 55 MSPs. TVF testimonies have been experienced by approximately 750 audience members at public and policy events, an exhibition (see [exhibition brochure](#)) and presentations at festivals. Its methodologies have been shared with 100 arts and youth practitioners, 90 pupils from schools in England, and over 250 Drama, Social Work and Applied Arts students at QMUL, Central, University of Leeds and Goldsmiths. It has provided employment for 35 artists and facilitators. Approximately 625 participants at cross-sectoral conferences, seminars and workshops have heard its testimonies and experienced its practices. TVF was discussed as part of Mental Health Awareness Week on BBC Radio Three's *Free Thinking* programme, 20 May 2020 with an estimated audience of 8000.

TVF has received a number of grants and funding for this practice research:

2015	QMUL Centre for Public Engagement, <i>Inside Out</i> festival performance at Barts Anatomy Museum, £999; <i>Being Human</i> festival (Wellcome Trust) performance with care-experienced young people, £500;
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Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea,
‘Stepping Up’ Verbatim Workshops and Kensington
Town Hall Event with child asylum seekers, £3000.

2015–17	QMUL HEFCE Access Agreement, Verbatim Residential Workshop projects with care-experienced young people, £25,000.
2017–20	Arts and Humanities Research Council, ‘The Verbatim Formula: Creative Practice for Young People in Twenty-First-Century UK Care’, £249,993.
2019	‘Our Hearings Our Voice’, immersive performance, Scottish Parliament, £1000; Wandsworth Youth Opportunity Fund, the Change Exhibition and Conference, City Hall, £3400.

TVF won the QMUL Centre for Public Engagement Award for Influence in 2017 and was highly commended at the Emerald Real Impact Awards in 2018.

II Questions, aims and objectives

TVF’s aims and objectives have shifted and changed over time in order to remain responsive to the needs of the care-experienced young people with whom we work. The evaluation embedded within the practice has also resulted in strategic and methodological development that has, in turn, led to new insights and findings. Where initially the aims of the practice related to increasing access to Higher Education for care-experienced young people, it was clear from the first sessions in residential workshops that the verbatim testimonies shared through headphone performance were potent and offered further strategies to share the life experiences of care-experienced young people with adult professionals in the care sector and initiate change in their practices to bring about improvement.

However, throughout its development, TVF’s core aim has been to generate performance-based interventions for care-experienced young people through the use of verbatim practices. The initial aim was to give these young people a voice, but we (Baker, Dar and Inchley) very quickly learned that they already have a voice; it was rather that they were not being listened to in ways that were helpful and therefore productive. The practice shifted to using their testimony, through verbatim technique combined with

headphone performance, to initiate listening and dialogue with the adults in the Higher Education and care systems who have the capacity to make positive change happen. The practice has shown that the use of verbatim testimony in this way has significant potential for change.

TVF’s overarching aim is to generate new understandings of the care system that are based on the experiences of its young service users and to use those understandings to encourage care professionals, other stakeholders and policy-makers to reconsider existing practices, structures and mechanisms within the relevant sector. Therefore, the aims of the practice are as follows:

- ⊙ To develop the use of verbatim theatre and headphone performance within an applied theatre project in order to provide care-experienced young people with opportunities to communicate their needs, hopes and desires.
- ⊙ To work with participants as co-researchers in order to give care-experienced young people opportunities to develop performance skills and to take control over their narratives and how their stories are told.
- ⊙ To use headphone performance to communicate care-experience young people’s stories in affective ways to adult professionals who work in care (social workers, foster carers, local authorities and those who make policy decisions relating to care-experienced young people) and Higher Education in order to encourage listening and dialogue, and to facilitate change.
- ⊙ To develop The Verbatim Formula as a methodology that can be transferred to applied theatre projects and verbatim-based practice research beyond this project.

Therefore, this project asks:

How can verbatim theatre practices, and in particular headphone performance, be used as part of an applied theatre project in order to innovate new ways of working with care-experienced young people to encourage adult professionals in Higher Education and care settings to listen to them?

What are the advantages of working with participants as co-researchers in an applied theatre project?

What is the effect of using headphone performance to communicate the narratives of care-experienced young people? And how can the affective experience of watching these testimonies performed be harnessed in order to facilitate listening and dialogue between adult professionals and care-experienced young people?

SYLVAN BAKER

Finally, how can the potential of the methodologies developed in TVF be maximised to bring about change in the care and Higher Education sectors so that the needs of care-experienced young people are addressed?

The methodology and findings articulated here relate primarily to the first three aims and the research questions. The question of TVF methodology being transferable and replicable in other applied theatre contexts is one we have begun to consider in the video animation.

B



III Context

Social context

Throughout the practice for TVF, it has been made clear that care-experienced young people have resoundingly negative experiences of the care system in the UK, from social and educational exclusion through to increased risks of oppressive and criminalised behaviours. We articulate this in the book chapter:

Young people who enter social care have had severely disrupted lives. In 2015, a House of Commons Briefing Paper reported that in 61% of cases, social services had first engaged with looked-after children because of abuse or neglect. 'Mental Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children' (2016) found that half of children in care have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Once in care, children are often moved several times, a practice which intensifies emotional instability, and severely exacerbates their difficulties in planning for the future.

(Inchley 2017)

At the centre of many of these issues are the administrative and dehumanising systems within local authority and wider care processes in the UK (see Inchley 2017; journal article; book chapter). Beyond these generalised negative experiences, young people who have experienced the care system are also negatively affected within sectors such as education. In July 2020, the Office for Students (OfS) released a briefing identifying key issues for care-experienced young people in the UK as generally poorer educational and life outcomes, and under-representation in Higher Education (Office for Students 2020). The briefing drew on data and advice presented in the 2019 Department for Education Policy paper

A



C

A

FIGS 2-3 Verbatim Promenade Performance with CLICK Wandsworth at the Battersea Arts Centre (formerly Elm's House Children's Home), 2019

Principles to guide higher education providers on improving care leavers access and participation in HE to stress the importance of improving access to Higher Education for care-experienced young people, and how universities and other social bodies such as local authorities can support this. Alongside these reports, Leverhulme Trust funded research at University of Sheffield, *Pathways to University from Care: Promoting the Participation of Care Experienced Students in Higher Education*, found that over half of care-experienced young people are not comfortable disclosing their status whilst at university, with numerous other issues and areas for support identified, from financial support and pastoral care to specific staff training and improved drug and alcohol support services (Ellis and Johnston 2019). Whilst Higher Education is just one context where care-experienced young people are excluded and marginalised, their experiences in this setting reflect the wider issues they experience.

Following the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UK's 1989 Children's Act, local authorities have been required to give 'due regard' to children's wishes and feelings in matters affecting them. Statutory Guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children states that local authorities should ensure that the voices of children are at the heart of commissioning, planning, delivery and evaluation of the services they use (National Children's Bureau, 2013). It is however difficult to calibrate how much a young person's own wishes, desires and needs are listened to in the planning for their future, and difficult to ensure, as OFSTED has stated, that children are able to express themselves in ways they prefer.

(OFSTED 2014 cited in Inchley 2017)

This practice research project intervenes in this area by drawing on applied theatre and verbatim practices that centre the voices and experiences of care-experienced young people and encourage active listening on the part of the adults responsible for them in Higher Education and the care system. In particular, we argue for listening, dialogue and care as the key intellectual and methodological grounds in which the research is situated.

Academic context

As articulated in the *book chapter*, listening is central to TVF and is vital since a report from the Children's Commissioner for England on children in care and care leavers has suggested that being listened to is the difference between good and bad care (Children's Commissioner for England 2015). Drawing from this, we focus on listening within the project both in understanding being listened to as an important aspect of care, but also appreciating listening as a key area for improvement, specifically in terms adult professionals listening to and paying attention to the care-experienced young people with whom they work. As further elaborated in the *book chapter* and *journal article*, we drew on research around care and feminist care ethics from Maurice Hamington (2004), Nel Noddings (2013) and Joan Tronto (1994, 2017), and black feminisms and notions of care from Audre Lorde (1984), and more recently Akwugo Emejulu (2018), to centre listening with our practice research. Importantly, listening was fundamental not only as a quotidian practice within our facilitation and development of the project, but also in the use of verbatim and headphone performance, which is discussed further below.

As the project developed, we have drawn on the wealth of work on applied theatre that raises and seeks to address issues around change (around impact). Applied theatre has a long history of questioning the complex relationship between the aims and intentions of applied theatre practitioners, the communities with whom practitioners work and the often contrasting (or at least conflictual) aims of donors, funders and host organisations. These conversations have framed debates in the field of applied theatre since its inception (see, for example, Neelands 2004, 2007; Nicholson 2006; Thompson 2006). This field of work has been augmented by conversations about the politics and problems of evidencing 'impact' in applied theatre projects (see, for example, Baños Smith 2007; Dalrymple 2006; Etherton and Prentki 2006; Prentki and Preston 2009). Although TVF sits within this academic context, the practice seeks to bring service users (care-experienced young people) together with service providers (adults in Higher Education and the care system) to develop — through verbatim, listening and dialogue — a shared aim of bringing change to professional behaviours and practices to deliver services that are needs-based.

Practical context

In TVF, we used interviews with care-experienced young people as the performance text and employed headphone performance, or recorded delivery, as a strategy with performers made up of participants, facilitators, workshop leaders and the project team. The aim was to allow care-experienced young people to engage critically with their own narratives, and to then invite the audiences, made up of professionals in the Higher Education and care sectors, and policy-makers, to listen to these stories. Through TVF, we used verbatim performance not as a form but as a set of techniques, thus innovating verbatim strategies within an applied theatre process.

Verbatim theatre is a well-established theatrical form, with well-known performances that include *London Road* (Blythe 2011), *Talking to Terrorists* (Soans 2005), *The Permanent Way* (Hare 2013), *Home* (Fall 2013) and *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman 2000). Rather than approaching the making of a script or performance in a similar way to these performances, TVF instead extends the practice of headphone theatre-making processes popularised by Alecky Blythe, who traces its lineage through Mark Wing-Davey to Anna Deavere Smith (Blythe 2011). Blythe refers to the practice as “recorded delivery,” a term that she used to name her theatre company. The process involves playing the recordings of interviews for performers through headphones in the performance itself, where they then repeat what they have just heard with the same rhythm and intonation as the recording. Whilst simple as a technique, we argue that the process brings a more realistic or ‘truthful’ quality to the performance because the performer has to exercise concentrated listening in order to remain faithful to the original. There are existing analyses of the politics and ethics of using headphone verbatim (Garson 2014; Wake 2013, 2014), however TVF does not engage with the aesthetics, the politics or the ethics of any ‘truth claims’ within verbatim. Instead, TVF argues for the importance of verbatim theatre and headphone performance as a technique used within an applied theatre process; to produce affect and to bring about reconsideration and change thereby. As Hammond and Steward propose, “In this sense, verbatim is not a form, it is a technique; it is a means rather than an end” (Hammond and Steward 2008: 1). Therefore, TVF uses headphone performance as a verbatim theatre method, not with the aim of creating ‘performance’ but instead using it to give care-experienced young people ownership over their narratives and experiences, and to

facilitate affective responses in the audience. We have found that the affect leads to increased attention and improved listening between care-experienced young people and adult professionals, leading further to dialogue and better reciprocal understanding.

IV

Methodology

Overview

The methodology for TVF was iterative and developmental, shifting and changing throughout the practice according to early findings and evaluation. Most importantly, we were responsive to the needs and desires of the participants as co-researchers in the work; that is, as our co-researchers *in* the practice rather than as subjects of the research. Therefore, just as the aims and objectives of the work developed, so did the methods that we employed. Here, the overall methodology in our practice research is articulated before the development of our methods through the residencies and performances is detailed.

Throughout TVF, we employed a methodology framed around listening, attention and care. Listening, attention and care are important in order to facilitate ownership for the care-experienced young people over their stories and how they are represented in order to allow them to be listened to by adult care professionals (see the [website](#)). This is further explored in a conference paper, which is evidenced on the [website](#). Listening, then, is central to our practice:

It is perhaps not really children at all who cannot communicate, but adults who fail to hear well enough. In particular when it comes to communication, there are a range of benefits from adults listening better. Without listening, how can there be the trust that attachment theory suggests is necessary for healthy relationships to develop? Without listening, how can the care system, and time poor adults who are expected to look after children, really act on the wishes and desires of children? Most pertinently for our research, the self-identified need of children for being listened to suggests the possibility of improving children’s experience of care by intervening in the everyday communicative structures and bureaucratic practices which are central to young people’s experience.

(The Verbatim Formula 2020b)



FIG 4 Verbatim Promenade Performance with CLICK Wandsworth at the Battersea Arts Centre (formerly Elm's House Children's Home), 2019

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It is clear that our practice research needed to be grounded in listening, which was something that eventually ran through the whole of our practice. Listening was the linchpin in terms of the gathering of verbatim testimonies, carried out by the TVF team and by participants (and later alumni) of TVF; through the headphone performances where performers made up of participants, ourselves and alumni (decided by the participants for each residency/performance) carefully listened to and performed these testimonies; and by the audience through the act of care-ful listening and attention to the stories told through the testimonies. These ideas developed through the residencies and workshops, the development of the verbatim practice and the performances.

Residencies/Workshops

TVF works primarily with young people aged 14–18 years old with experience of being in the UK care system. The journal article deals with how the residencies have been structured and the aims that underpinned them; each residency ran between overnight to a five-day format with up to 13 participants from a range of different networks responsible for care-experienced young people, such as the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Education and Youth Peer Outreach Team. A majority of participants have been young women, with a large proportion of these young women of colour. Three academics and young people, including student ambassadors from universities such as QMUL and eventually previous participants of TVF, facilitate the residencies. The importance of these youth facilitators is central to the practice (see journal article) since they often act as role models for the participants as previous TVF participants or primarily as Black and Global Majority facilitators who have come to acting or Higher Education through non-traditional routes.

Through these residences, alongside other applied theatre and artistic practices that are evidenced further on the website [\[link\]](#), in the book chapter and the journal article, such as icebreakers involving sharing and food and doodling, we use verbatim techniques to capture and then develop performances about care-experienced young people's lives, their needs, their hopes and desires.

Verbatim

As discussed above, we grounded TVF through the verbatim techniques of headphone performance. For the purposes of this project, this concerns care-experienced young people talking about their experiences of care. Crucially, we wanted

the participants to be co-researchers, and therefore the planning, subject matter and practical implementation of the interviews to gather the verbatim testimonies is often undertaken by the participants themselves. The participants take charge of the forms of the performance, including who tells which testimonies, which often leads to facilitators and others in the team performing testimonies (see the [journal article](#) and [website](#) for further examples). Furthermore, as part of the process we collectively discuss verbatim practices (including key issues, such as ethics and the importance of respect for the words, the voice of the speaker, the speaker themselves) thus adding to the pedagogic experience for participants who gain new performance and critical analysis skills that will be useful to them beyond TVF.

As evidenced on the [website](#) and discussed in more detail in the [book chapter](#), we specifically employed a headphone technique that has a long history in verbatim performance (see III. Context). This technique is important because it ensures that testimonies are shared in ways that honour the original tone, intonation and intended meaning of the speaker whilst also preserving anonymity. Anonymity is not only significant ethically, it also allows the care-experienced young people the freedom and confidence to talk openly. Extending how headphone technique is used in more traditional theatre settings, we argue that it also facilitates an act of care, attention and listening because the young people are positioned as experts in terms of their own experience and are listened to carefully by the performers (who may be other participants, facilitators or alumni of TVF). This act of care is transferred to the listening that audiences do when confronted with testimonies being repeated directly from the mouths of the different performers. As articulated in the Findings section below, this careful listening and its affective potential was something we discovered as the project developed and was a key finding as it extends the use of headphone performance from being solely a practice associated with verbatim into an important tool within applied theatre more generally.

Performances

During the performances, testimonies are performed by participants, TVF alumni and facilitators to invited and public audiences, and to specifically invited groups, such as social workers. To extend the practice beyond the performance itself, we also curate conversations between young people and the audiences, conversations which are led by the participants, recorded and some of which are

added to our living archive of testimonies and performed as the Portable Testimony Service in future events. In the [book chapter](#), we articulate further the importance of these exchanges alongside the performed testimonies since they facilitate the caring and reciprocal encounters between the young people and adult professionals, leading to better understanding which can initiate change in behaviours and practices.

These performances and sharings, which take place both in large-scale settings such as the Old Pathology Museum at Barts Hospital (2015) and Kensington Town Hall (2016), and smaller locations, such as the finance department of QMUL, contain verbatim testimony shared through headphone performances by participants, alumni of TVF and facilitators and researchers. Who shares which testimonies is decided by our co-researchers, the care-experienced young people. At the start of the project, the realisation came quickly that the sharing of these verbatim stories was not only about disseminating the stories but that the practice also elicited affective, emotionally charged responses from audience members. Therefore, beyond the use of headphone performance as effective for sharing stories, we also argue that within an applied theatre project, verbatim more generally and headphone performance specifically, are effective methodological tools to generate affective responses from audiences and stakeholders that can bring change. It is important to note, however, that TVF is not about exploiting the stories of care-experienced young people, since the process of gathering and curating these testimonies is led by the young people who have been trained in the use of verbatim techniques and act as co-researchers within the project. Crucially, in TVF, they have ownership over which stories are told, how they are told and who re-tells them.

Listening and attention

Through the use of headphone verbatim performance as a central method within an applied theatre project, we have developed a methodology that centres listening, attention and care as grounding principles. Whilst listening is present through the verbatim methodologies employed, we propose that it becomes an overarching methodological framework that runs through the practice research project as a whole. Taking listening as a starting point therefore makes possible other methodological, more democratic choices, such as the young people conducting the interviews themselves, selecting the testimonies for performance and deciding who voices those testimonies.

Alongside, or within, these practical decisions that lead from listening, is a deeper reliance on listening as a practice of care and ethics. Drawing here from the book chapter, it is clear that listening is a complex act that is not solely auditory but instead involves the whole body:

Sue, a foster carer, describes how she adopts an embodied form of caring and how she 'hears' without words being spoken by the other (Noddings 2013: 22): 'All the time I listen with my eyes and my ears because I can read as much from the body as I can from what's being said, or what's not being said. So even at breakfast time, when the lad's going out the door, I check him over and talk to him, how you're doing and stuff. It's every day, it's all the time, it's part and parcel of everything. (TVF Audio Archive, 2015–2018). Sue's mode of listening seems to suggest a practice that is beyond the gesture of a simple aural attention to what is being said.

(Baker and Inchley 2020: 180; see book chapter).

We propose that listening isn't just about aural attention within TVF, but is instead something that runs through each aspect of our practice, from the residencies in which the verbatim testimonies are given by care-experienced young people through to the performances where they are shared and from which further testimonies by adult professionals are gathered by the young people. The methodology of listening invites care and attentiveness, which is further discussed in the book chapter and journal article as extending both existing practices of verbatim into applied theatre settings, and further proposing a methodology of listening that utilises these forms and which can be used in other settings to interrogate and begin to address other societal and cultural issues. As explored in more detail in Findings below, TVF is both grounded in the needs and desires of care-experienced young people and, as a framework and methodology, is transferable.

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Timeline

2015	June–October	5-day Residential and Performance, QMUL, 12 participants and 30 audience members; Performance, 'Building a life beyond care', Greater London Authority (GLA), 55 audience members; <i>Inside Out</i> festival, 2 performances, Old Pathology Museum, Barts Hospital, 200 audience members.
	January	Article in <i>The Guardian</i> : Ruth Hardy. 2016. 'It's Child's Play: The Performance that Lets Young People in Care Share Their Stories', <i>Guardian</i> < https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2016/jan/21/its-childs-play-the-performance-that-lets-young-people-in-care-share-their-stories >;
2016	March	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea collaboration; Performance, 'Stepping Up', Kensington Town Hall, approx. 200 audience members, including local councillors, local residents and participants' friends and family; Keynote presentation, 'Theatre and Attachment', QMUL, 60 delegates; Residential, 'I Wish I Hope Residential', 13 participants and 22 audience members of social workers and foster carers.
	September	Conference paper, University of Greenwich, <i>Youth Matters Conference</i> , 56 delegates.
	December	Presentation, <i>Aesthetics of Care Symposium</i> , Central, approx. 100 audience members; Presentation, <i>Symposium Theatre and Performance vs the Crisis in the Humanities</i> , Central, approx. 100 audience.
	June	Portable Testimony Service event, Idenham School, QMUL, 80 participants.
2017	July	Training event, Liverpool Arts and Cultural Partnership, Liverpool Everyman, 30 delegates; Residential, 'No Dream is Too Big', QMUL, 10 participants; Performance, care leavers sound installation and Student Services workshop,

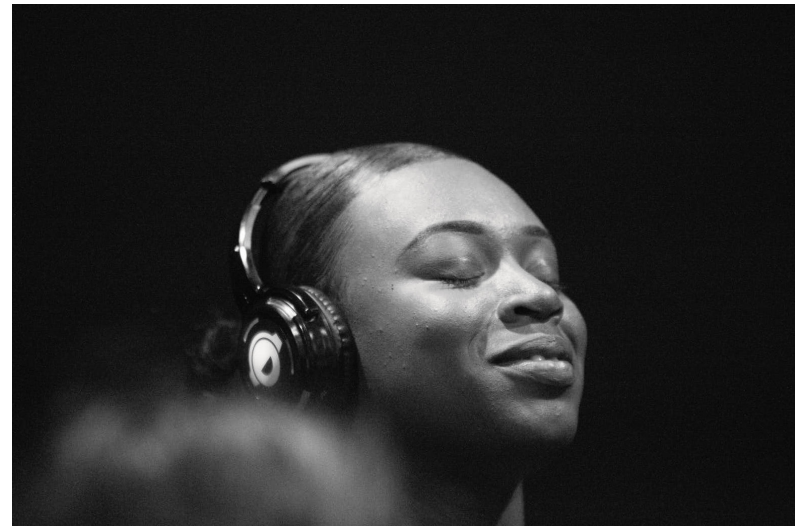
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QMUL Professional Services Day, approx.
240 audience members;

Evidence to Greater London Authority
Peer Outreach Team Enquiry into Children's
Rights, Palace of Westminster, 55 audience
members.

2018	January	Conference paper, <i>Connecting Communities Participatory Action Research</i> , University of Greenwich, 100 delegates; Portable Testimony Service workshop for Balkan Academics, artsadmin, London, 25 delegates.
	May	Portable Testimony Service event and meeting, Wandsworth Local Authority.
	June	Residential and event, 'Audio Chatback', Battersea Arts Centre, approx. 50 audience members; Residential, University of East London, 12 participants and 30 audience members; Portable Testimony Service event, 'Verbatim Masterclass', Gifted and Talented, 50 students.
	July	Portable Testimony Service event, 'Handle with Care', Wellcome Collection Late Night Care Event, 100 audience members.
	August	Presentation, 'Caring About Care: Promoting Successful Trajectories Through the Development of More Human-scale Systems', Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth, University of Sussex, 45 delegates.
2019	February	Residential, Goldsmiths, 18 intergenerational (14–66 years old) care leavers and 24 audience members of academics and social workers.
	March	Preshow discussion, <i>Transracial Adoption</i> , <i>Shipwreck</i> , Almeida Theatre, 34 audience members, including students.
	April	Performance and training workshop, Office for Students (OfS), 22 participants from OfS Participation Team.
	June	Baker chaired conversation on care with Lemn Sissay, Wellcome Collection <i>Sick of the Fringe</i> festival, 250 audience members of publics; Invited performance, Department of Education (DfE) for the Undersecretary for Children and Families, DfE staff and Wandsworth social workers, 45 audience members.
	July	Publication of journal article: Maggie Inchley, Sadhvi Dar, Susmita Pujara and



FIGS 5-6 Verbatim Promenade Performance with CLICK Wandsworth at the Battersea Arts Centre (formerly Elm's House Children's Home), 2019

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		Sylvan Baker. 2019. 'The Verbatim Formula: Caring for care leavers in the neoliberal university', <i>Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance</i> , 24(3): 413–419.	
September		Podcast interview, 'Loco Parentis'.	
October		Training and workshop, Creative Scotland, Edinburgh, 18 participants, youth workers and commissioners.	
November		Weekend residential, 'Our Hearings, Our Voice', 11 participants; Performance and co-delivered workshop, with 'Our Hearings, Our Voice' participants, Scottish Parliament, 155 delegates, including 55 MSPs.	
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2020	February	GLA City Conference and Launch of exhibition, 'Can You See Me?', photography and poetry created by TVF and care-experienced young people from Wandsworth, at City Hall, 93 participants, including social workers, DfE staff and youth workers (see exhibition brochure); Publication of book chapter: Sylvan Baker and Maggie Inchley. 2020. 'Verbatim practice as research with care-experienced young people: An "aesthetics of care" through aural attention', in <i>Performing Care: New Perspectives on Socially Engaged Performance</i> , ed. by James Thompson and Amanda Stuart Fisher (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 171–186.	G A
	May	BBC Radio Three, <i>Free Thinking</i> programme, 20 May 2020 as part of Mental Health Awareness Week.	
	December	Podcast interview on care and TVF as part of the <i>Small Axe Podcast</i> series to accompany the Steve McQueen film series on the BBC.	H

and very much more. Therefore, this project is vital and timely; particularly when government departments such as the DfE are demanding more support for care-experienced young people (see Department for Education 2019; Ellis and Johnston 2019). Our initial research — residencies, gathering testimonies and curating performances — focussed on access to Higher Education, and we discovered that one of the most valuable outcomes for our participants was experiencing Higher Education as a realistic, viable option; demystification of what university is and importantly spending time with university outreach departments and careers officers in order to discuss possible futures. For care-experienced young people whose futures are often limited, this sense of futurity and hope is vitally important in order to diminish the barriers to access to Higher Education they experience.

As the project developed along lines indicated by what our participants and collaborators were telling us and the project evaluation, however, it was clear that our initial assumptions and aims needed to be revisited and revised. Firstly, as researchers, we entered the residencies with the assumption that the care-experienced young people did not have a voice and that TVF would help to support them to develop their voices. It quickly and abundantly became clear, after the first day of the first residency, that these young people had a voice, but that they were not being listened to. Therefore, as articulated in the book chapter, the project's aims shifted to consider the importance of providing a platform through which these care-experienced young people could speak and be listened to by adult care and Higher Education professionals — adults with the power to bring about change in the Higher Education and care systems in the UK. This is a subtle shift but one which is crucial to the project and, in particular, to maintaining the young participants as co-researchers in the work. We built in creative evaluation throughout the project rather wait until the end (see the website [\[3\]](#)) because we aimed specifically to use the artistic practices of applied theatre and verbatim performance to create democratic processes throughout TVF and to also set the agenda for the project moving forward. Therefore, the process was both fluid and adaptable when the needs of the care-experienced young people shifted or, as indicated here, when our preconceptions of the practice were proved incorrect.

Another key finding at the early stages of the project was the importance of the role of verbatim, not only as a performance form that we were innovating within an applied theatre setting, but also as a way of producing affective

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Findings

Early findings

As already indicated and articulated in the book chapter, our preliminary research confirmed that care-experienced young people experience, during and after local authority interventions, issues including exclusion from and marginalisation within Higher Education, social deprivation



FIG 7 Launch of the Making Places Document at the Senior Common Room of QMUL, 2019

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responses in audiences which led to more attentive listening and care on the part of adult professionals. Verbatim theatre is important as a practice since it allows us to recognise the voices of care-experienced young people and position them as experts in their own narratives and lives. However, beyond being a useful tool to communicate these stories and experiences, we discovered that the headphone performance deepened the affective experience for the audience both in terms of the potency of the stories being told and their emotional responses to them. Furthermore, the verbatim testimonies led to dialogue and conversations between the young people and the adult professionals, dialogues which are not always present in existing care relationships, often due to workloads and time constraints placed on social workers, for example. Importantly, the carefulness and attentiveness that performers use to understand and re-tell the testimonies extended to the ways in which the audiences listened and attended to the testimonies being heard. Greater listening and attention on the part of professionals in care and in Higher Education has led to improved communication between young people and care professionals (see the [book chapter](#)) and, for the adults, reflecting on their work, why they do it and how they can improve it (see the [website](#), [journal article](#) and the [book chapter](#)). As the project developed, then, we discovered the importance of verbatim not just as a method within the process to facilitate the hearing of stories, but also in terms of generating better listening and understanding, and a willingness on the part of the adult care and Higher Education professionals to enact change through the practice of care, listening and attention.

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Listening and change

We discovered the importance of listening as central to delivering change for the care-experienced young people via the services they use. But here, listening runs through the practice in terms of gathering the verbatim testimonies, through the headphone performances where the testimonies are re-told and carefully listened to, to the audience's acts of listening and paying close attention to these stories. As we argue in the [book chapter](#), care is present both in the act of listening and re-telling the testimonies and for the young people in the experience of being listening to. Here, listening emerges both as an aesthetic form (in relation to the verbatim practices) and what we have termed a 'care-based participatory and political practice' (Baker and Inchley 2020: 174; see [book chapter](#)). Through acts of listening, care-experienced young people

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are able to intervene in the structures in which they are represented and to enable care professionals and other adults who work with them to better support their experiences and needs.

We deliver change in TVF, then, through this process of listening, paying attention and care (see the [website](#), [journal article](#) and the [book chapter](#)). Importantly, a number of social workers who have attended events talked about how the experience of testimonies through TVF has led to deeper reflections on their work, the ways in which the systems they work within often inhibit care, as well as a commitment to create changes to their everyday practice in relation to care-experienced young people. The following is an example of one social worker's experience:

After a conference TVF facilitated with the Young People's Peer Outreach team at a Greater London Authority conference in Care Week in 2015, one social worker delegate pledged to reach out to a care leaver she worked with: "[I promise to] meet up with a care leaver who I know is very lonely. I usually only meet him when he asks for support over a specific problem" (Peer Outreach Team 2015). Such a change suggests the beginning of a process of 'humanizing' care systems and helping to improve the quality of 'reciprocity' in the exchanges between care experienced young people and the professionals working with them. Certainly, we hope that TVF performances can generate changes, however small, that cumulatively make it less likely that young people become distrusting of or disengaged from the adults who are their corporate parents.

(Baker and Inchley 2020: 185; see [book chapter](#)).

Here, the changes to everyday practices have the potential to deliver significant impacts on the lived experiences of the young people who we work with as part of TVF. We have found that it is through the careful and attentive listening, facilitated by the affective responses to the verbatim testimonies shared through headphone performance, that change starts to happen, whilst also recognising that if these small, everyday changes to practices and behaviours are to have a greater impact then structural and policy changes are also required to further improve the lives of care-experienced young people. Importantly, however, the performances and sharings were not the end of the project but rather the start of further conversations, listening and care-ful interactions between care-experienced young people and adult professionals who work with them.

Dissemination

The findings of our practice research have been shared widely and further supported by the wider artistic elements generated as part of the practice. TVF has produced 7 performances attended by publics and key stakeholders, including social workers and other adult professionals involved in making decisions about care-experienced young people's lives. An exhibition of creative work by care-experienced young people from Wandsworth, 'Can You See Me?', was launched at GLA City Conference in February 2020 (see [exhibition brochure](#)). Beyond these events, we also developed the Portable Testimony Service and delivered 5 practice research events that have tested the methodologies for listening and the use of verbatim for communication and to generate further attentiveness and listening between the care-experience young people and adult professionals. The Portable Testimony Service is both a mode of disseminating the 'living archive' of testimonies and of testing the methodological strategies of verbatim and listening that are central to TVF. We argued in the [journal article](#) that these Portable Testimony Service performances offer a temporal gap of heightened listening, where care and respect is communicated between the young people and adult professionals, which can initiate further change beyond the specific performance intervention as already explored here. Further details and images of these events and performances can be seen in the [zines](#), the [exhibition brochure](#) and on the [website](#).

The findings have also been disseminated through 3 training events at Liverpool Arts and Cultural Partnership, the Office for Students and Creative Scotland, where, in total, 160 social workers, Higher Education staff and civil servants have benefitted from training around TVF and its methodologies. TVF was also invited to give evidence based on the findings to the Greater London Authority Peer Outreach Team Enquiry into Children's Rights at the Palace of Westminster in July 2017. In addition to the [journal article](#) and the [book chapter](#), we have shared TVF with academic audiences through 6 presentations and papers at conferences and symposia and with general publics through presentations at the *Inside Out* and *Being Human* festivals, a pre-show discussion at the Almeida Theatre and a conversation with Lemn Sissay at the Wellcome Collection *Sick of the Fringe* festival. We have also raised awareness by sharing our findings in the UK and Scottish parliaments. Details about these further events and the project are also available on The Verbatim Formula website,

which articulates the research aims, the development of our methodology and the process of creative evaluation. The video animation in particular shares our methodological findings in order to disseminate the research widely and encourage take up of TVF methods more generally in the field of applied theatre.

Finally, TVF has worked with over 100 young people in care as co-researchers in the practice with whom we have shared the research through 7 university residential workshops in 4 London universities and 1 in collaboration with a Scottish charity.

VII

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