

All Stories 2024 evaluation report

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Programme evaluation overview

The All Stories programme was established in 2021 with the goal of improving diversity in children's books by supporting and encouraging underprivileged writers from underrepresented groups to work on their craft and develop their manuscripts. The 2022–2023 programme expanded from the first year to include outreach (such as writing workshops and groups) in addition to offering mentorships. The third programme (2024), expanded from previous by offering writing workshops and groups across the UK (16 locations) and online, plus a networking event with industry professionals for past mentees. From the success of the programme and the feedback from the participants, the goal of supporting people at all stages of their lives to design, develop and increase their participation in high-quality creative activities was achieved.

The programme was funded by Arts Council England, the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society and Inclusive Books for Children, with support in kind from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and the Society of Authors (both offering a free year's membership to each mentee), Pen to Print (offering free sponsorship of their *Write On* magazine) and Megaphone (contributing the full cost of room hire for the Meet the Mentee event).

The programme offered ten mentorships to writers of picture books and young fiction from underrepresented groups who'd have otherwise been unable to access support due to a lack of financial means. All ten places were filled, with each mentor being paired with either their first or second choice mentee. The mentees represented the full range of underrepresented groups and resided across the UK.

All Stories also offered sixteen in-person and four online workshops (one with BSL-interpretation), providing an introduction to writing children's books, each presented by an award-winning author local to the area (Patrice Lawrence, Jane Elson, A.M. Dassu, Hiba Noor Khan, Polly Ho-Yen, Sue Divin, Eloise Williams, Maisie Chan). All Stories offered writing groups for the attendees following the workshops, providing the initial support to establish the groups with experienced writing group facilitators running the first two sessions and teaching the writers how to participate in such a group. This resulted in eleven in-person writing groups and nine online writing groups, helping to build supportive communities for the writers and improve access to cultural opportunities.

The programme also offered a networking event, Meet the Mentee, to enable former All Stories mentees to meet and discuss their work with industry professionals (editors and agents). This was done in partnership with Megaphone Writers CIC, a fellow Arts-Council-England-funded organisation and mentoring scheme for emerging children's and YA writers from underrepresented backgrounds.

A committee was set up to help plan, organise and run this programme, with six committee meetings over the course of the project. Given the expansion of this programme compared to previous, the committee was invaluable in ensuring the activities took place to a high standard. It comprised: Catherine Coe (programme manager) Patrice Lawrence (inclusivity consultant and pastoral support), Laura Warminger (workshop and writing group organisation), Nina Douglas (PR and social media), Natascha Biebow (content consultant).

Progress and quality of the mentorships

Nine out of the ten mentees fully committed to the mentorship for the full duration, meeting with their mentors regularly and attending the webinars and book clubs unless prevented by illness or work. The tenth mentee began the mentorship but unfortunately disappeared halfway through, despite many attempts to contact them.

All of the mentees felt they have significantly benefitted from the mentorship programme. One has already secured an agent. A further six feel ready to submit their manuscript(s) to agents.

The book clubs were a new edition to this year's programme and had a great reaction from the mentees. Each mentor chose a book and ran a book club, and almost all the publishers of the chosen books donated copies to All Stories so the mentees could receive them free of charge. The book club webinars were innovative in giving the mentees a safe platform in which to discuss recently published books and to help hone their skills in assessing the quality and engagement power of a book. One of the book clubs even included a surprise appearance of the illustrator – Dapo Adelo kindly offered to do this when he saw the next book club would be reading his book *Look Up!*

Each mentee completed an initial evaluation form, mid-mentorship feedback form and final evaluation form in order to ensure the progress and quality of the mentorships could be assessed. The mentors also completed a mid-mentorship feedback form.

The initial evaluation form asked the mentees to state their goals for the mentorship, which varied from revising a first draft to having three manuscripts ready to submit to agents. This continued to be a positive and somewhat unique aspect of the programme – it offered the mentees an opportunity to develop their work no matter which stage they were at in their writing and there was no set goal that they had to achieve by the end of the mentorship.

The mid-mentorship feedback forms were very helpful in order to gain candid feedback from the mentees and mentors. As in previous programmes, the feedback was used to tailor the mentorships midway through the process to ensure the mentees got the most out of the programme. The only change was to invite mentees to join one of the online writing groups; six mentees took up this invitation. The fact there was only one change to implement is a positive sign that shows the improvements of the programme.

Some of the questions on the initial evaluation form and final evaluation form were the same so that the progress of the mentees in certain areas could be assessed, as follows:

- **How confident do you feel as a writer on a scale of 1-10?**

Eight out of nine mentees felt more confident by the end of the mentorship, in varying scales, while one felt slightly less confident. The largest leap was from a 4 to an 8 out of 10.

- **How well do you think you know your writing strengths and weaknesses on a scale of 1–10?**

Eight out of nine mentees were more aware of their writing strengths and weaknesses by the end of the mentorship, apart from one whose score reduced from 5-6/10 to 3. The largest leap was from a 3 to an 8 out of 10.

- **To what extent do you feel you are meeting your writing ambitions on a scale of 1–10?**

Seven out of nine mentees felt that they were meeting their writing ambitions more by the end of the mentorship in varying scales – the largest leap was from a 4 to a 9 out of 10. One mentee’s score reduced from 5/6 to 0 out of 10, as they felt their mentor focused more on honing their ideas than writing. Another mentee’s score stayed the same at 5/10.

- **How knowledgeable do you feel about the children’s book industry on a scale of 1–10?**

All of the mentees felt they knew more about the industry by the end of the mentorship, many with greatly increased scores. The largest leap was from a 2 to an 8 out of 10.

- **What do you want to learn/have you learnt from the mentorship?**

Each of the mentees felt they had developed as a writer by the end of the mentorship. They highlighted the benefit of learning much more about the industry and the way it works, as well as gaining an understanding of how to pitch their work. Many mentioned how working with a mentor helped them build their confidence and better understand how to craft a commercial story.

- **How confident are you that you will be able to achieve the above (future) goal(s) on a scale of 1–10?**

Seven out of nine mentees were more confident, with two mentees rating it 10/10 at the end of the mentorship, while two mentees’ scores reduced.

- **How regularly are you planning to/did you write during the mentorship?**

Many of the mentees found the mentorship gave them the accountability and motivation to write regularly and often. Some struggled to find as much time as they’d hoped, due to work and personal pressures.

- **How confident are you that you’ll be able to keep to a regular writing routine during/after the mentorship on a scale of 1–10?**

Eight out of nine mentees were confident about this (giving an 8 out of 10 or higher), with only one giving it a 7 out of 10.

It’s important to give some context to the one mentee whose scores generally went down, as she did state that she got a lot out of the mentorship despite this. In particular, she said she “learned so much from all of the webinars” and “gained a lot more knowledge about the industry and the process of getting an agent/publisher”. She also “learned what themes are popular, and that different editors look for very different things”.

Progress and quality of the outreach activities

The outreach activities certainly encouraged and supported people from underrepresented groups to write for children, with over 400 bookings for the workshops and writing groups (in-person and online).

In an effort to ensure the workshop venues were fully engaged in the project, All Stories invited libraries and other community spaces around the UK to apply to host a writing workshop. We received a total of 23 applications by the initial deadline, but this did not include any from Wales, so we extended the deadline and did more promotion in that region to encourage applications. The final number of applications was 32.

The All Stories committee discussed the applications and selected the venues, based on the quality and consideration of the application, the support the venue would be able to provide and the venue's connections to communities from underrepresented groups, while also ensuring there was a spread of venues across the UK, and at least one venue in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The locations were:

- Rhyl Library, Denbighshire (presented by Eloise Williams)
- The Riverside Library, Pembrokeshire (presented by Eloise Williams)
- Blackburn Central Library, Lancashire (presented by Hiba Noor Khan)
- Mowbray Gardens Library, Rotherham (presented by Hiba Noor Khan)
- Lancaster Library, Lancashire (presented by Hiba Noor Khan)
- Cradley Library, Dudley (presented by A. M. Dassu)
- Mitcham Library, London (presented by Jane Elson)
- National Centre for the Written Word, South Tyneside (presented by Hiba Noor Khan)
- Verbal Arts Centre, Derry (presented by Sue Divin)
- Longton Library, Stoke-on-Trent (presented by A. M. Dassu)
- Dover Library, Kent (presented by Patrice Lawrence)
- Airyhall Library, Aberdeen (presented by Maisie Chan)
- Exeter Library, Devon (presented by Polly Ho-Yen)
- Crawley Library, Sussex (presented by Patrice Lawrence)
- Ipswich County Library, Suffolk (presented by Jane Elson)
- Barnstaple Library, Devon (presented by Polly Ho-Yen)

Each workshop was two hours long and presented by a local award-winning children's author from an underrepresented group. All Stories provided a 'workshop pack' to each venue/presenter, to be shared with the participants, which included materials such as leaflets from other writing support organisations such as SCBWI, the Society of Authors and Megaphone.

Over 90% of the workshop attendees who responded to the request for feedback said the session encouraged them to think more seriously about writing for children. Over 90% of people rated the usefulness of the workshop as at least 8/10, with over 50% rating it 10/10. Over 70% of attendees said they would consider applying for an All Stories mentorship in the future.

All workshop attendees were invited to join writing groups that All Stories established following the workshops. This resulted in eleven in-person writing groups and nine online writing groups. More than 90% of the writing-group members who responded to the feedback request said their group encouraged them to write more and 50% said they would consider applying for an All Stories mentorship in the future.

Please see appendices C and D for anonymous feedback from the workshop and writing group participants.

Progress and quality of the networking event

All Stories partnered with Megaphone Writers CIC (also funded by Arts Council England) to offer mentees a networking event where they could meet publishing industry professionals.

The aim was for the event to be an opportunity for initial conversations between the mentees and publishing professionals (rather than any formal offers), giving the mentees the chance to begin initial relationships and further develop their understanding of the industry. A booklet to showcase extracts of the mentees' work was produced for the event, and used as a starting point for conversations.

We knew that it was vital to prepare the mentees for the event as much as possible and ensure they felt safe and supported before, during and after it; this would be important for anyone, but particularly those from underrepresented groups. In support of this, we organised an online preparation event for the mentees to help prepare them for meeting the industry professionals and explain realistic expectations, i.e. not an offer or agent, but interesting conversations that may lead somewhere in the future. We also held a pre-event in-person mingle at the event location (with just the mentees in attendance) to help them feel at ease on the day.

We also ensured that mentees could attend the event no matter their financial situation, paying their travel expenses and, in the case of those travelling from further afield, hotel accommodation.

Twenty mentees attended the event (thirteen All Stories; seven Megaphone) and twenty-two industry professionals, held at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, in Southwark, London. It included a welcome address from a former Megaphone mentee, Nazima Pathan, who is now agented and published, and was followed by thirty minutes of organised networking where each mentee was paired with three publishing professional for three separate ten-minute conversations. Following this was some time for general networking where conversations could continue or new ones could begin. The atmosphere was friendly, welcoming and buzzy; some of the mentees arrived feeling very nervous, but they all relaxed during the course of the event.

Working in partnership with Megaphone was a very enjoyable and fruitful experience. It helped to lighten the load of organisation and gave the event more weight within the industry – for two programmes to be teaming up in this way. We hope to be able to run a similar event together in the future.

The feedback from both mentees and the publishing professionals was extremely positive overall (see Appendix E).



Impact and outcomes of the programme

The most important factor in assessing the impact of the mentorship part of programme is the work the mentees produced during their mentorships. While not all of the mentees achieved the goals they set out in the initial evaluation, most of those that didn't still felt satisfied with the progress they had made (and acknowledged that their original goals were too ambitious).

The mentees produced the following work:

- Adapted a short story into a full book, and redrafting ready for a round of agent querying.
- Honed six existing manuscripts.
- Wrote three new manuscripts, all of which are now being considered by a publisher.
- Wrote three manuscripts, each undergoing two or three revisions, and created two other ideas to explore later.
- Finished one highly polished manuscript, gained feedback on two other draft manuscripts and halfway finished another PB manuscript.
- Completed three stories ready to submit to agents and publishers.
- Wrote a completely new picture book which is ready to be sent to agents and completed the structure and format of a second picture book manuscript.
- Revised multiple drafts for a submission-ready manuscript, updated the synopsis, created ideas for further instalments, and a potential prequel.
- Created a whole dummy picture book alongside rewriting the text, decided how to use colour and how to make characters consistent.

By the end of the mentorship, six of the nine mentees felt ready to submit their work to agents, while one mentee had already secured an agent (followed by a two-book deal with Macmillan).

The programme also impacted the artists, creatives and specialists working within it. The mentors relished the opportunities to support writers from underrepresented groups and reported that they found the experience very rewarding. The in-house editors and agents who presented webinars were grateful to be asked to be involved and many even invited the mentees to submit directly to them; a wonderful and rare opportunity.

The workshop presenters are all published authors, and the programme supported them through offering paid work. The presenters gave wholly positive feedback from the experience, such as:

- "I loved working with the participants at my All Stories Writing for Children Workshop at Exeter Library. It's a privilege to share in someone's writing journey and I was so impressed with the way my group challenged themselves and got stuck in. I'm sure I'll be reading more of their writing in the future!"
- "They were so engaged, they didn't want to take any breaks!"
- "The workshop was literally bubbling with the participants, imagination. A joy to behold all those stories from under-represented writers just waiting to be told."
- "I had a wonderful time leading the workshop in Aberdeenshire for All Stories! The writers were keen to learn about different age groups, word counts, genres and book formats. I had lots of fun exercises around character, voice and setting and made sure that there were opportunities for participants to ask questions. It was brilliant that we were in a library too because we were able to look at some of the recent books that had been

published for children. A lot of people want to write for children, but they don't read children's books and don't know what is out there. So being in the local library surrounded by children's books was the perfect place to begin that writing journey."

- "An intimate workshop brimming with creativity and talent, in a stunning venue. I really enjoyed meeting the attendees and hearing their brilliant responses to the writing prompts and challenges."

The workshop venues also provided helpful and positive feedback across the board, such as:

- "What a lovely session – it was absolutely fantastic to welcome residents into Longton Library for an insightful, informative and incredibly enjoyable workshop. Az was very knowledgeable and talked about topics that I don't think have been covered in previous workshops I've attended – really getting down to some of the nitty gritty of what being an author can be like. There were some fantastic hints, tips and revelations, from working with agents, the editing process to when it's best to submit a manuscript for consideration. It was a delight to welcome AM Dassu to Longton Library and to host this workshop which we heartily hope will lead to an active writing group."
- "Jane's warmth and professionalism immediately won over the participants and the workshop was not only informative but also lots of fun. Thank you All Stories, we hope to work with you again in the future!"
- "What an interesting workshop learning about how to write a children's book. Patrice explored our writing skills using exercises and her own experiences which were both inspiring and practical."
- "It was a pleasure to host the All Stories 'writing for children' workshop for adults in our Airyhall Library. The team did a great job with the organisation and communication in advance of the session. Their selection of Maisie Chan as workshop leader was perfect as she brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with everyone. The participants really enjoyed the session and feedback was very positive. Although we have run writing workshops before, this was a unique opportunity to participate in a wider project and reach new partners/attendees. I look forward to working with All Stories again in the future should the opportunity arise."

The impact of the outreach programme can be measured using the anonymous responses provided by the participants. Their feedback was extremely positive, such as:

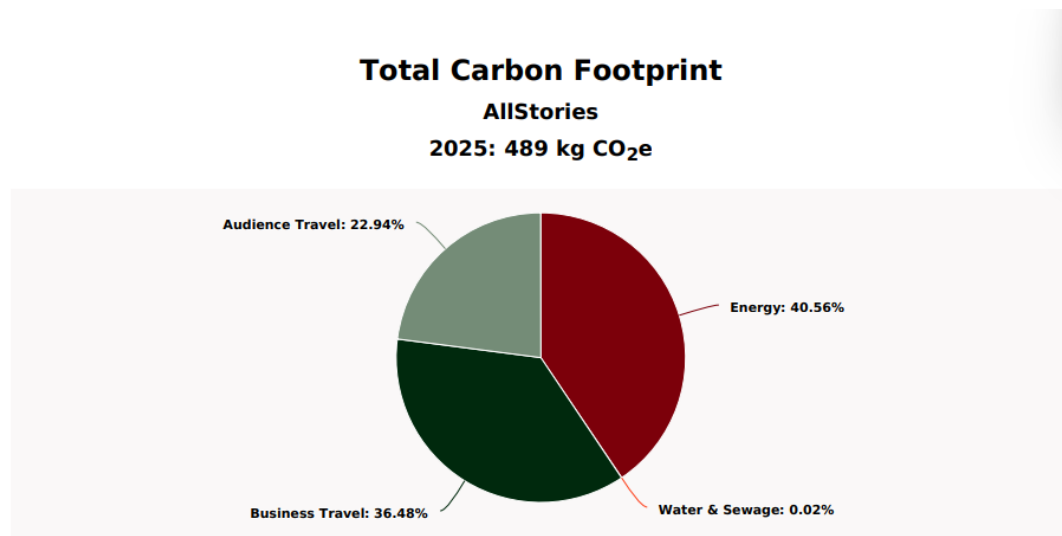
- "Very informative with great writing exercises."
- "Fantastic workshop. Inspired me to reboot my writing."
- "I've just started writing and have no idea where to go. This was a really informative and positive workshop."
- "Inspiring delivery - energetic and engaging!"
- "I feel more confident in my idea and planning my story"
- "It was so much more than I hoped for. There was a lovely creative and supportive atmosphere. I was preparing for there being much more people, but I really appreciated it wasn't an overwhelming big group."
- "It was excellent. I feel privileged to have received such wisdom, enthusiasm and experience, very inspiring."
- "Very enjoyable. Lovely, enthusiastic and encouraging mentor"

Further feedback can be found in Appendices C and D.

Environmental responsibility

The programme assessed its impact on the environment using the Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools. Travel data from workshop participants was collected to assess the environment impact of the project's in-person activities; participants were encouraged to walk or take public transport to events wherever possible. The total carbon footprint was 489 kg CO₂e.

Please see below for a breakdown of the environmental impact. There is no data from previous years in order to compare this, but it can be used in the future to ensure the project's environmental impact is reduced as much as possible.



This table presents your organisation's environmental impacts in Consumption and Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO₂e) terms.

IMPACT	CONSUMPTION	CARBON
Energy		198 kg CO ₂ e
Water & Sewage	1 m ³	101 g CO ₂ e
Business Travel	999 km	178 kg CO ₂ e
Audience Travel		112 kg CO ₂ e
	Emissions Total	489 kg CO ₂ e

Public engagement

All Stories was reliant on developing public engagement in order to reach the aspiring writers who were eligible and might have benefitted from a mentorship or workshop and writing group.

The 2024 mentorship programme received 42 applications. The applications came from writers based across the UK – including England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The number of applications was almost the same as for the 2022–2023 programme (43), which makes sense given the restriction for applicants to be writing picture books or young fiction, similar to 2022–2023 when applications were invited from writers of middle grade and young adult books only. We continued to build relationships with various organisations across the UK in order to ask for their help to promote the programme, including over a 100 libraries and community spaces, regional writing agencies and other writing and arts groups.

The website has had over 8000 unique visitors since the 2024 programme launched in on 10th May 2024 and over 200 people are signed up to the mailing list.

The social media activity was focused on [Instagram](#) rather than Twitter (X) in 2024–5. The following on this platform has increased from 711 in 2023 to 1,129 at the time of writing. An account was also set up on [Blue Sky](#) and [Threads](#), both to be developed in the future. Having a dedicated social media marketer meant the programme could post much more regularly, sharing details of upcoming workshops and reports of those, plus events within the mentorship programme such as the webinars and book clubs. The regular activity has led to more engagement with posts and stories, with over 1000 views per week.

Various activities contributed to the development of public engagement including regular social media posts, sharing writing news and opportunities, book recommendations and free sponsorship of [Pen to Print's Write On! magazine](#).

Potential improvements

While the programme was successful in its aims, I have identified the following areas for potential improvement, informed by experience along with feedback from the participants of the activities:

- Longer duration of mentorship programme (in 2024 it was six months; in 2022–23 it was nine months, longer as the mentees were writing middle grade/YA).
- Be more explicit about the pastoral care we offer to mentees, so they are encouraged to utilise it and are helped to get the most of the mentorship even if the relationship with their mentor isn't perfect. For example, mentioning pastoral support at every online event and explaining it is there if anyone has additional questions, concerns, or is simply unsure about something.
- Send diary invites to mentees to each event to encourage their commitment, and sharing a continuously updated document of upcoming events (and links to join) with the mentees, so they can easily check dates and find links to join the meeting.
- Be even clearer with the mentees upfront about how many hours they will need to put into the mentorship to get the most out of it; perhaps ask them to sign an agreement when they commit to the mentorship.
- Offer a mindful/mindset support webinar that helps mentees to manage work/life balance, setting realistic goals, decide on the way they want to write.
- Liaise with the mentors to ensure they can hold mentorship sessions at evenings/weekends if this is important to their mentee.
- Create writing critique groups for interested mentees from the start of the mentorship (this was implemented halfway through this programme).
- Longer duration of workshops or offering a series of workshops.
- Encouraging more writing group participants to give feedback about the writing groups (this was hard to elicit, hence the shortness of appendix D).
- Offer local authors the opportunity to shadow the presenters at workshops in order to aid and encourage the professional development of less experienced authors.

Appendix A: Anonymous feedback from mentees

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the mentorship, and feel I couldn't have had a more positive experience. The book clubs have been a fabulous addition to the content, where I have enjoyed reading a variety of picture books that I would not have otherwise experienced. And both young fiction novels were incredible informative regarding their style, as well as being extremely fun and an enjoyable read in support of the mentorship."

"I think it was delivered very well. Everything was incredibly well organised and that is a testament to Catherine's planning, organisation, communication etc. The content was brilliant - it was varied. I never felt I was hearing the same thing over and over. I was always learning something new. All the speakers were engaging and interesting. I'm really happy that all the webinars etc. were on Zoom as this is accessible and caters for everyone living across the country, especially those outside of London like me (even though it'd be lovely to meet the cohort / team in person one day!) I remember the very first intro meeting we all had and how supported I felt - a wonderful feeling. I felt very supported throughout the mentorship by both Catherine and my mentor which is SO important for a programme like this. As an underrepresented person, you're often on edge and on your guard a lot of the time - so to experience a safe environment where the people actually care (including the speakers of the webinars) is a huge, huge blessing and should not be taken for granted."

"I probably would have liked another month, but that's probably because I'm quite nervous to continue on my own."

"I really enjoyed the All Stories mentorship. I never had the opportunity to have a book coach which I really appreciated. My mentor is very knowledgeable and really helped me to hone my draft into something that I feel really proud of and that I consider submission worthy."

"The content is spot on really. I think that having regular critique groups with the other mentees from the start would boost the program. This was put in place later down the line though, which is great. The lady who arranged the sessions was lovely, but we felt that the arrangements for the critique group were made too formal – (and I know this put one mentee off joining it)."

"I would just say that perhaps the mentor needs to see more of a selection of the applicants' work before they pick who they work with. And perhaps let the mentee start writing a story even if the plan isn't exactly how the mentor would like it – sometimes it's good to just write and see how it goes!"

"I thought this was a brilliant mentorship, wonderfully delivered. I'm sad that I couldn't make as many Book Club sessions as I wanted to, but the ones I did attend I thoroughly enjoyed (I read all the books regardless, and thought they offered a fantastic range of talent!) The webinars were brilliant too and offered much food for thought. I particularly enjoyed hearing from James Catchpole."

"Really enjoyed the webinars they were really useful and things like the subscriptions to memberships were really vital in getting an insight into this world. The memberships is something I would not have committed to before the mentorship but I have now seen the importance of it

and value of it so will definitely be considering it. Monthly meetings with a mentor were also really good to make sure we kept on track and had an aim to work towards. People were really friendly and created a safe space to share ideas and discuss work.”

“One of the reasons I applied is that money has been very tight, and we fall into the category of a lower income family. The fact that the mentorship has been fully funded is amazing, and I would not have been able to take part otherwise.”

“I’ve learnt how the industry of picture books works - I feel like I have a good grip on the ins and outs. This has helped me to plan my next steps. I feel more confident in trying to find an agent.”

“In my other writing life, I write for performance. I now have a better idea about how to write for the page, and which areas I need to improve.”

“I have learned so much, both about the general process of storytelling, and my strengths as a writer, but also in areas I didn’t expect such as how best to pitch a book that may have series potential. There were also small things in my original story that I didn’t realise weren’t suitable for the age group, and thinking about this ahead of my starting to write will help me so much going forward!”

“The All Stories Mentorship has been an absolute privilege to be a part of. I feel incredibly supported by my mentor, throughout the mentorship and beyond. My manuscript feels it has reached a place that it would never have got to without this mentorship, and I feel incredibly lucky to have been a mentee.”

Appendix B: Anonymous feedback from mentors

"I really appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the mentorship programme again. It's been really rewarding seeing my mentees grow and change. It's been a good experience overall, though the only frustrating aspect was that sometimes the mentees didn't seem to be able to keep up the momentum in order to do the next steps after we discussed these in our sessions. Partly, this is very understandable, as the mentees are fitting in writing in between work/life, however it also meant they sometimes didn't benefit fully. I am wondering if it might be an idea to survey the mentees about the time frame - if for instance, they would find it more helpful to have more than 6 months."

"I've been a mentor for the All Stories programme for three years and cannot stress enough what a vital scheme this is. The writers who come through the mentoring process are from underrepresented backgrounds and so it is imperative that we give them the opportunity to access the expertise and nurture of their mentors, alongside the various workshops and seminars that All Stories provides, which they wouldn't otherwise have access to. This is particularly pertinent for children's writers as we know that young readers engage more with books and reading when they can see characters and situations in stories that reflect their own experience – and so nurturing talent from these underrepresented writers is immensely important for the future of children's enjoyment of reading."

"I really enjoyed it. I do a lot of work with budding picture book writers, but (since going freelance) this was the first time I'd been able to forge a longer relationship, rather than just giving short stabs of feedback or advice. I really appreciated that opportunity. Naturally, I didn't attend every aspect of the programme, but it seemed very rich and holistic to me. The webinars I caught up with were all excellent, and informative even for an old-timer like me! One or two of my mentees commented on the level of commitment needed, but I think better to offer a wide programme, with them politely bowing out when necessary, rather than offering too little. It's a tough old world out there but I hope we've managed to give these people a sense of the industry that's both encouraging and realistic. Not always an easy balance!"

"The programme gave me a wonderful opportunity to work long-term with a talented writer who needed help in directing her manuscript that was previously written as a film script. As with previous All Stories mentorships, I learnt a lot from the process of working with a writer in this way – in terms of tailoring feedback, offering nurture and support, and balancing praise with constructive criticism particularly when working with writers who face barriers in their creative journeys. The webinars for the mentees were all brilliantly varied, and the bookclubs were very enjoyable to attend – it was obvious in all of them how much the mentees got from discussing their opinions on published books."

"It has been such a wonderful experience working with my mentee and as part of the All Stories programme. I found the programme to be well structured and balanced in terms of industry-focused events for the mentees and the 1-2-1 support they received. I found it really useful that the events were recorded so that I could keep up with what my mentee was learning in terms of general industry info and then add to this in our individual sessions."

Appendix C: Anonymous feedback from workshop attendees

"I enjoyed it very much. It is the first time I have allowed myself to do this kind of thing (workshops) despite wanting to for a long time and jotting stories forever. I have been too unconfident. But it felt like a safe space and I am grateful. Some of my thoughts surprised me - always a good thing - and I began to think it might be possible to write....."

"Please do more."

"Patrice's enthusiastic mentorship was brilliant."

"Polly was absolutely brilliant!"

"Very informative, well-structured and enjoyable."

"It was incredible – I am so inspired."

"Well planned and engaging workshop."

"Very comprehensive and interesting"

"Informative and delivered brilliantly."

"A workshop with a fun and friendly feeling. I really felt more confident as a writer"

"Everything covered was absolutely amazing!"

"It was helpful and friendly, which encourages people to participate"

"Just a big thank you to all involved. I've come away feeling so inspired and ready to make changes in my own personal writing life."

"Honesty and encouragement from the host. Dealt with any questions easily and felt that was helpful"

"I enjoyed every moment of the session. It gave me a real insight into a world that I felt was not for people like me. I left feeling so inspired and hopeful."

"The facilitator was amazing."

"Great content and very well delivered."

"Delivered so well, it was very enjoyable!"

"I wish it was longer."

"It was inspiring and motivating to hear the writer's journey. The tips and the details she gave us about the publication process were really useful."

"Loved the confident and engaging delivery."

"It was so informative! I speak to authors a lot but I've never had such useful information passed onto me about the writing process and querying process."

"Very fun, friendly and interesting."

"I felt encouraged to start writing."

"Really engaging and welcoming."

"The presenter was very knowledgeable and had interesting stories to share."

"It was amazing and I learnt a lot of new things."

"Hiba was brilliant on so many levels, and meeting the others in the group was incredible."

"More workshops with writers of colour please!"

"Amazing workshop - I loved the insight the author provided on both her successes and setbacks."

"A fantastic session and a great intro into writing for children."

"Loved this - more workshops like this please!"

"Really enjoyed meeting a real life published author so down to earth and approachable. Lovely to see the journey which led her to become who she is today."

"Very enjoyable, friendly and fun, as well as informative."

"Appreciated the advice given by Catherine Coe in the question and answers session."

"Great detailed and nicely delivered, I wish it was more longer!"

"It was too tricky to understand they should make it simple."

"The writers both gave us the benefit of their experience. I was encouraged to do my research. Being authentic is my goal so it was good advice."

"It was excellent. I feel privileged to have received such wisdom, enthusiasm and experience, very inspiring."

"Jane and Catherine were a fabulous duo, each proving author and editor perspectives in turn. Jane's actor improv exercises were really helpful and novel way to figure out character etc. that I hadn't come across before!"

"Really enjoyable and helpful."

"Very informative with great writing exercises."

"Fantastic workshop. Inspired me to reboot my writing."

"I've just started writing and have no idea where to go. This was a really informative and positive workshop."

"Inspiring delivery - energetic and engaging!"

"I feel more confident in my idea and planning my story"

"It was so much more than I hoped for. There was a lovely creative and supportive atmosphere. I was preparing for there being much more people, but I really appreciated it wasn't an overwhelming big group."

"It was excellent. I feel privileged to have received such wisdom, enthusiasm and experience, very inspiring."

"Very enjoyable. Lovely, enthusiastic and encouraging mentor"

"Lovely session! More please!"

Appendix D: Anonymous feedback from writing group attendees

"There were some good suggestions and open feedback from the whole group."

"This was a brilliant event to take part in; really enjoyed it."

"Enjoyed this but went too fast. Looking forward to next one."

"I liked listening to different writers."

"I learnt a lot from my critique peers, from their work and from their suggestions on how to improve my own manuscripts."

"Lots of great advice and views about PB writing, honest feedback that is priceless, and also reading other's manuscripts with an eye to critique has given me a better understanding of the whole process."

"The writing group keeps me writing."

"I like that it's a small group (only 3) and that we have very different styles. We have experimented with the frequency of the groups and realise about once a month is better than fortnightly. We are learning as we go along."

Appendix E: Anonymous feedback from networking event attendees

"Really nice to meet everyone in real life and having the hour before professionals attended to mingle without stress was good ... Good catering. Good location. The matched meetings felt very smoothly run."

"The location was excellent, very easy to get to and find. I also liked the layout of the room with the tables for the matches and a separate cafe area to chat and have some refreshments."

"Great vibes, really warm (emotionally) atmosphere, very encouraging and inspiring."

"I thought all the preparation in sharing the sample writing and matching us was brilliant. We knew what to expect and what was expected of us. CLPE is such an incredible space. The speeches before were informative and encouraging. It all helped it feel really worthwhile from an involvement point of view."

"Such a relaxed, positive vibe. Great venue, felt very welcome and supported, and this was a really nice way of meeting agents without having to 'schmooze' and approach them cold. What an incredible opportunity, I feel privileged to have been a part of it. Thank you."

"Loved the venue and the size, in terms of numbers. The number and length of 121 sessions was good too."

"I liked the printout of the professionals but I didn't have enough time to research the professionals. However, I totally understand why it could only have been given last minute ... The design and organisation was great as well as the location and having an open cafe was great. I needed the drinks and a breather from time to time. I was blown away by your generosity, professionalism and the quality of the event (the structure, the number of meetings, etc.)."

"Great location. Thankful that travel costs reimbursed. Lovely to meet other mentees. Allotted time with professionals worked well."

"The venue was perfect and immediately put me at ease. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to everyone before the "main" event, meeting other mentees and their mentors, authors, as well as the organisers of the event. This familiar start (talking to everyone in a casual setting regarding writing and our novels) was good preparation for the one-on-one discussions with the industry professionals and suddenly these interviews did not seem so daunting. I loved hearing Nazima Pathan's experience as a Megaphone Mentee and going forward. The one-on-one discussions were invaluable and I received some great feedback (both positive and constructive). I thought the whole event was fantastic!"

"The preparation prior to the event was really helpful, especially the online meeting where we had chance to meet with other mentees. The actual venue was great and easy to find, although it was a bit of a long journey from Scotland. Everything seemed to have been well thought out and everyone's needs taken into consideration. Having specified time with agents/editors was a good idea."

"Loved the venue and the number of attendees."

"The venue, matches were really good and opportunity to meet others/fellow mentees."

"The format, the matching process and the meetings worked really well. The location was more than fitting - it was lovely being surrounded by so many books! Giving us an opportunity to bypass the querying letter stage and meet with an agent was invaluable."

"I thought it was a great way to network, get the opportunity to speak with industry professionals."

"I really enjoyed it – I thought it was such a great format – and I hope it helped all the mentees feel more confident about the next steps of the process going forward."

"Thank you so much for inviting me along last night. What a fabulous evening! I thought the mentees were delightful and it was such a lovely, bookish venue. The number of people was just right too – not too many to be daunting but enough for a really wonderful atmosphere."

"It was great to catch up with lots of industry people and so interesting to meet all the many talented up and coming authors. I really enjoyed the three 1-2-1s and passed on my card to a couple of writers from the anthology, so who knows what the future may hold!"

"Thank you so much for hard work you put into the event today. I really enjoyed myself. I think my favourite part was meeting my mentor in person - the extra support from her really helped with the meetings."

"Once again, thank you so much for organising yesterday and the mentorship in general, honestly it was an amazing experience! All of the people I met with yesterday seemed really interested and I said I would email them through the draft soon."

"I was really happy with my matches, the editors were great."

"Thank you so much for putting on such a great event on Wednesday! It was lovely to meet you, the other mentees and my mentor in person and there was a real buzz in the room(s). The 1:1s were so well-organised too and it was great to get to chat with agents and editors. I think my diet was 90% cupcakes that day (which is definitely not a complaint)."

"I wanted to say thanks so much for organising the event, it was so lovely to meet the other mentees, my mentor and the agents/editors. It was a really helpful event. The agents I met and a couple of others I spoke to requested material so hoping there might be some interest."

"The event was brilliant! Thank you so much for organising and making it such a relaxed and welcoming environment to meet the industry professionals. I really enjoyed hanging out with the mentees, the mentors, and meeting the organisers in person too! I'm so glad to be a part of the Megaphone community and I'm honoured to be a mentee! The workshops are fantastic, offering great insights and advice on the industry. I feel well-prepared for the next steps... and more confident too! Thank you so much for your hard work, it really is invaluable."

"WELL DONE for organising such a fantastic event last month and thank you for including me in the line-up. Such a lovely, enjoyable, seamlessly organised event – great to see industry support as demonstrated by the fantastic turn-out, and, most importantly, to meet the talented mentees."