

# IMPACT REPORT

## 2020-2023

# BIG SIS



We are a social enterprise giving girls and non-binary children the tools and support to have great relationships with themselves and others.

We do this through delivering relational workshops and programmes in schools and in the community, by equipping parents, youth workers and teachers with training and resources around all aspects of growing up.



# CONTENTS

<b>Why we are here.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How we started.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>So far we have.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Vision.mission.aims.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What we deliver.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our beneficiaries.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Our values.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Impact:children &amp; young people....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Impact:schools.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Impact:mentors.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Our approach.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Our partners &amp; funders.....</b>	<b>28</b>





# WHY WE ARE HERE

## Girls are facing a crisis

Body image issues, eating disorders and self-harm are on the rise

Teenage girls in the UK have the lowest happiness levels in Europe

Violence against women and girls is on the rise in Plymouth

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on mental health

In our community work we've noticed that the biggest crisis of confidence occurs between Year 5 and Year 7, as the transition from primary school to secondary school is substantial and highly impacts the child's life. We provide additional focused support for girls and non-binary children during this important transition.

## HOW WE STARTED

Friedel Fink - *Relationships and Sex Educator for Young People* - brought her work to the UK after being inspired by the Menstrual Education Programmes included in many Australian primary schools. Through working as a certified facilitator for *A Celebration Day for Girls*™ and seeing health and well-being included within curricula, her passion for bringing the same opportunities to girls in the UK became the priority. Big Sis was set up in 2020 and has grown into a collective of holistically-minded educators, facilitators and mentors, each passionate to support and empower young people.



# SO FAR WE HAVE...

March 2020-June 2023

...worked with **151 adolescent girls** and non-binary children.

...delivered programmes in **6 schools**, worked with **10 community organisations and youth centres** in Devon & Cornwall.

...trained **14 women** as BIG SIS mentors with **40+ hours** of training and provided **placement for 6**.

...worked with **25 children consistently** over a period of many months.

...worked with **55 parents and carers** to improve quality of care for their adolescent girls.

# VISION.MISSION.AIMS

## OUR VISION

A world of empowered young people living lives of integrity, strength and equality embedded in a caring community.

## OUR MISSION

We are supporting girls and non-binary children on their journey of growing up by providing empowering relational programmes and resources that foster well-being, emotional intelligence, body confidence, and build mental health from the inside out.

## OUR AIMS

1. To create and deliver engaging and relational programmes for children and young people
2. To deliver quality RSHE in schools
3. To deliver training for professionals to improve their confidence, skills and therefor quality of care for young people.
4. To create modern and inclusive resources for children and young people within their abilities



# WHAT WE DELIVER



**RSHE & PSHE programmes  
for schools**



**Empowerment  
Workshops:  
for youth settings**



**Girls Clubs  
in the community**



**Training**

**Girl Mentoring Programme  
(6 and 12 weeks)**

**Body Image & Online  
Life Curriculum**

**Bespoke RSHE workshops**

**Girl Mentoring Programme  
(6 and 12 weeks)**

**Bespoke workshops**

**Confidence Clubs**

**Mother-Daughter Groups**

**Mentor Training Course**

**Training and consultancy  
for professionals working  
with children and youth**

**New:  
Training for teaching staff**

# WHAT WE DELIVER

## TOPICS IN OUR COMMUNITY WORK:

Self-esteem  
&  
confidence

Feelings  
& emotions

Dreams &  
ambitions

Puberty  
changes

Menstrual  
cycles

Body image  
& media

Relationships  
friendships  
family

Boundaries  
& consent  
& bodily  
autonomy

Gender  
& identity

## IN OUR SCHOOL WORK:

We deliver all of the topics on the left AND additionally

Intimacy  
& sex

Pornography

Sexual  
health

Pleasure &  
masturbation

# OUR BENEFICIARIES

## Girls and non-binary children

Total number we worked with **151**

SEND children and children with additional needs **38**

LGBTQIA+ gender diverse children **20**

## Young people (all genders)

Total children we have worked with in mixed groups **100**

## Our mentors (women 18-30)

**14** mentors trained

**3** are mothers with adolescent girls aged 9-12

**10** are students in fields of study like: psychology, mental health nursing, criminology, fine arts, psychotherapy and counselling.

**4** have moved on to full-time employment working with young people, or in the education and mental health sector.



# OUR VALUES

## Compassion and Kindness

We meet people where they are - emotionally, physically and mentally. We practice deep listening, empathy and share information in gentle and approachable ways. We cultivate these qualities and apply them in personal and professional practices and conversations.

## We do Real Talk

We believe having continuous open and honest conversations with young people about growing up - their physical and emotional changes and their mental health - is key in supporting their natural connection with themselves and others.

## We Respect

Everyone deserves to be respected for the unique person that they are. Personal decisions and boundaries are encouraged and honoured. We deeply value personal integrity and we actively encourage its development in our work!

## We are creative

We have found young people learn best in an organic and playful way and take in the information best whilst having fun. We develop new ways of interacting, experiment with informal group settings, play games and other interactive activities. We nurture skills that foster connection to self and others.

## Accessibility / Inclusivity

We believe everyone should have access to holistic fact-based information about their bodies including menstrual cycle education. This is core to informed decision-making and reproductive choices.

## Sustainability

We promote practices that are kind to the planet and support the individual in creating longlasting change in themselves and their environment.



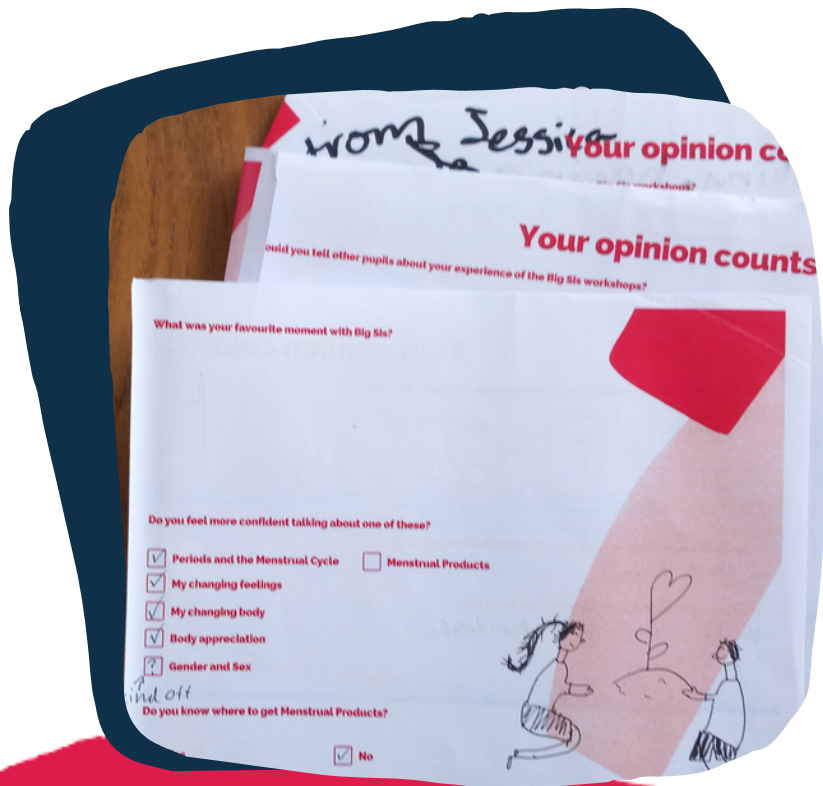
# **IMPACT:** **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

# IMPACT: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Evaluations of our programmes show the positive effect they have on children's self-confidence, emotional awareness, body knowledge, body image and mental health. We evaluate our programmes through self-assessments and observations during sessions, as well as conversations with our mentors, our staff, and the teachers and carers we work with.

## We find that participants:

- feel encouraged to share their feelings, ask questions and build deep relationships with their mentors
- experience increased confidence and are more likely to ask for help
- appreciate and want to have a space to talk and ask questions about their changing bodies
- change their attitudes and behaviours towards their bodies
- create deeper bonds with each other
- appreciate a dedicated space just for girls
- absorb the knowledge by playing and engaging creatively
- learn practical skills to use at home and throughout their lives
- are motivated to positively impact each other's lives and grow into role models in their communities
- Minority groups feel seen in their experiences and identities



# IMPACT: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

**Participants feel encouraged to share their feelings, ask questions and build deep relationships with their mentors**

"I could tell them anything and they would be open."

"It is inspiring and helps you overcome worries."

"I liked being able to express my feelings."

"I had more than an amazing experience and I am exquisitely sad for them to go. Every second I enjoyed with them. They make you feel comfortable and make you feel like a family."

"I enjoyed being able to talk about feelings."

"It felt good to know that I could tell them stuff and know that they wouldn't judge me."

## **Our mentors say:**

"We saw that the girls have developed so much confidence and trust in us and it meant that they can ask questions that were worrying them."

**Participants experience increased confidence and are more likely to ask for help**

"It helps you boost your confidence a lot."

"You have helped me to become more confident. Thank you."

"I can talk to my mum and sister about puberty now."

"I can tell others now if something is wrong."

"I taught my brother about puberty."

"They would answer each others questions."

# IMPACT: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

## Participants appreciate and want to have a space to talk and ask questions about their changing bodies

"They teach about periods and everything a year 6 gal needs to know about their body."

"I enjoyed learning about myself."

"I learned all about periods."

"It felt good to know what will happen in your body."

"I learned that it's ok to talk about the yukky stuff."

"It was a great opportunity to learn."

"They taught us so much that I will never forget."

## Participants change their attitudes and behaviours towards their bodies

### Our mentors say:

"I've been seeing the change in the young girls' attitudes toward themselves."

"They became more aware of their strengths."

"It was a privilege to see these 11 year olds in Plymouth who have learnt that they are amazing and that their bodies are a source of power rather than shame."

"During my time facilitating the workshops with the girls I have seen a dramatic change in their attitudes toward themselves, their bodies, and their menstrual cycle. During the very first workshop, the girls were timid, not wanting to contribute much to the sessions and not asking any questions. As the duration of the programme went on it became clear just how much they wanted to learn and how open they were to this."

# IMPACT: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

## Participants create deeper bonds with each other

"I liked being with all my friends and making new ones too."

"I made new friends."

"I could spend time with my friends."

"Making friends with people that usually weren't my friends."

"Big Sis has become like best friends, like family."

## Our mentors say:

"They became close with one another despite being in different year 6 classes. They all looked after each other and it felt like there was real sisterhood amongst them."

"They were all desperate to stay in touch with each other after the programme had finished."

"They all loved the sessions but we left them knowing they would be there for one another when the sessions ended. On the last day one of the girls was leaving the school and she bought her camera and they were all taking lovely group photos - you would not have known at the start of the workshops that some of them hadn't known each other."

## Participants appreciate a dedicated space just for girls

"Self-positive and no boys."

"Can we have a weekly Big Sis Saturday Club just for girls?!"

"I want to get a time with just girls."

"I didn't mind sharing what I normally wouldn't."

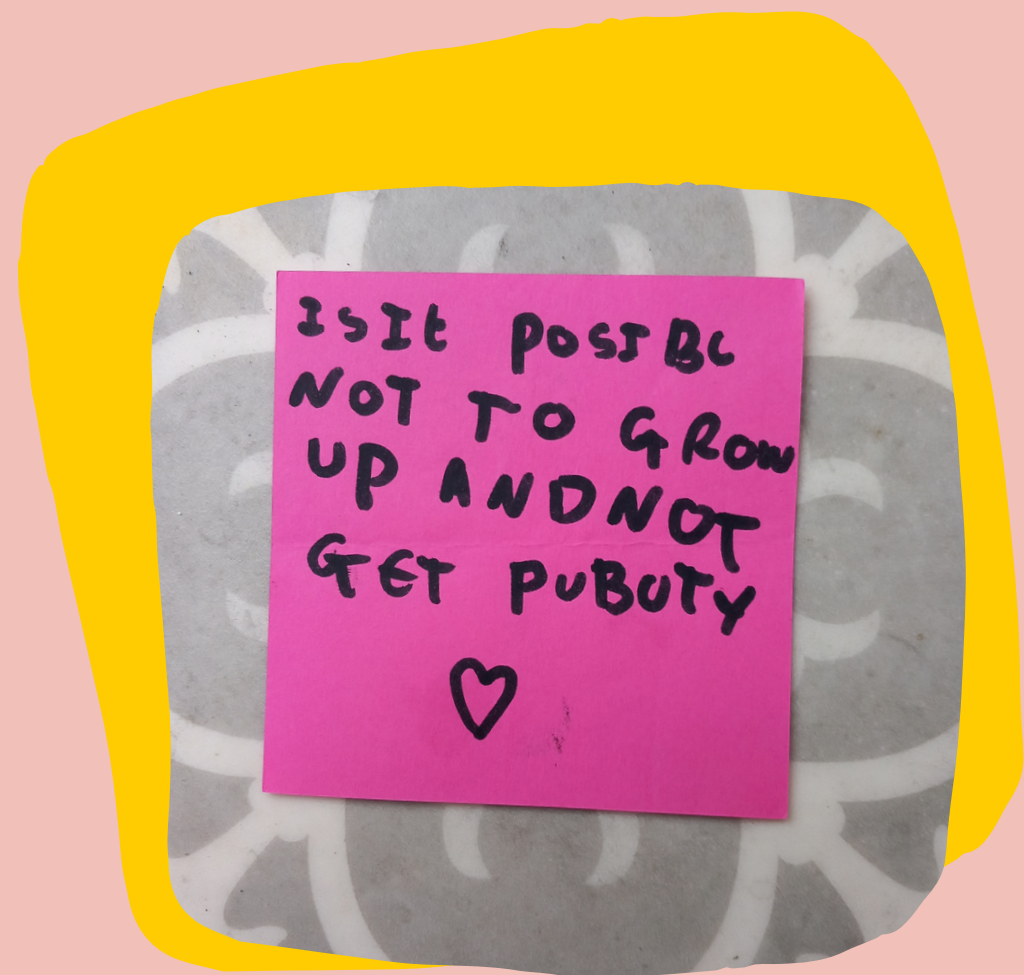
"I felt safe to share my thoughts."

# CASE STUDY

## Isla

**Familiarity helped  
her open up**

Isla's mum sent us a message one day enquiring about our programmes. Her mum was telling us about her daughter's autism, selective mutism and low confidence levels. Isla joined our 12 week *Girl Mentoring Programme* in a community venue with 6 other girls her age, and with her mum sitting on the side. In the first 2 workshops Isla was cuddly with her mum and wouldn't leave her side. Isla wouldn't participate in the games, nor speak during sharing rounds, instead she would attentively watch from the side. As the workshops progressed, Isla developed a familiarity with the group, which eventually allowed her to enter into the circle, hear her peers questions and struggles, and even share her own opinions out loud. She would have fun and laugh during games and crafts, clearly showing



she was opening up. Isla would naturally gravitate to her mum as an anchor and familiar person but also found her confidence in the group, and developed a trusting relationship with her mentor. The small group setting and growing familiarity of the group facilitated Isla's development and we were so happy to see her coming back to our monthly *Confidence Clubs* after the 12 week programme was completed.

# IMPACT: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

## Participants absorb the knowledge by playing and engaging creatively

"It was great because we had fun but it is also great for learning about girls."

"I like to laugh with them."

"The leaders are lovely, kind and funny."

"It was one of my best experiences."

"I enjoyed the games."

## Minority groups feel seen in their experiences and identities



### SEND EXPERIENCE

"They made it easy for us to understand."

"Thank you for helping me with my anxiety."



### LGBTQIA+ EXPERIENCE

- children felt acknowledged in their identities
- one child came out to us regarding their sexuality

### Our mentors say:

"The validation we gave of their pronouns meant that we gained their trust massively, and massively empowered and validated them as a result."



# IMPACT: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

## Participants learn practical skills to use at home and throughout their lives

"I learned to make a journal and write about my feelings."

"I liked that we had group agreements and repeated them each time."

"They taught us so much that I will never forget."

"I will track my periods when I get them."

"When I start my period I might make a pack with things I'll need, just in case."

## Participants are motivated to positively impact other's lives and grow into role models in their communities

"When I am older I want to be a BIG SIS to someone younger."

### Our mentors say:

"I am gonna teach my cousin about everything that we have learned."

"By the end of the programme all of the girls were so much more confident in themselves and in speaking about the more sensitive topics; even disclosing to us that they had helped friends when they started their periods."

"I am certain that one day I will challenge gender stereotypes."

# CASE STUDY

## Bea

**School struggles  
and anxiety to joy**

Bea joined our 6 week *Girl Mentoring Programme* in a community venue. She was 11 and we knew from our registration sheet that she had diagnosed ADHD and anxiety disorder. English was also her second language and her family migrated to the UK from Eastern Europe. Bea was so shy and barely spoke or participated in the games. After a short while, she got to know to the group and would contribute her experiences and knowledge. She let her mentors know she was struggling in school due to her ADHD, and was in danger of exclusion. Bea especially warmed to her mentor, who was also someone that immigrated to the UK. The group helped her cope better with school, gave her permission to be



different and discover her strengths which increased her confidence. It was clear from Bea's body language and increased openness in sharing that she felt so much more comfortable in herself. Bea left the 6 week programme telling us "Thank you for helping me with my anxiety."

# IMPACT:SCHOOLS

**100%**  
of schools  
described  
communication  
with us regarding  
incidents and  
disclosures as  
**VERY POSITIVE**

**75%**  
of our programme  
contributed to the  
**RSHE CURRICULUM**  
topics for schools

**100%**  
of teachers  
described the  
pupils' experience  
of the workshops  
as **EXCELLENT**

## Teachers said:

"The Big Sis curriculum content complemented and substituted RSHE learning in our school."

"The programme enabled a confidential space for sharing that is otherwise hard to establish in a class setting as part of the curriculum."

"Children had an outlet to discuss issues in a safe space."

"Big Sis facilitators were very professional and developed strong, positive relationships with the girls quickly."

"Workshops were fun and interactive."

"We appreciated that girls could be part of a group where they can all relate to each others' problems and questions."



# IMPACT:MENTORS

# IMPACT: Mentors

We measured the impact that our 6 day Mentor Training Course had on each of our mentors by collecting feedback after each session they facilitated and through a final self-evaluation.

Our staff also used observation, interviews, and informal chats during both the mentor-training and mentor-led workshops to monitor outcomes.

## We find that mentors:

- increase their knowledge about their body, mind and emotions
- experience a space to relate to their peers experiences and feelings, and create deeper bonds with each other
- improve their own mental health
- appreciate our training and teaching approach
- grow in confidence and gain employability skills
- feel inspired to pursue careers that are in line with their values and interests
- who are also mothers feel positive effects on their parenting



## Mentors increase their knowledge about their body, mind and emotions

"The information that we were taught changed the way I track my own cycle and allowed me to gain a better and clearer understanding of my own body."

"I have gained a better awareness of my own emotions."



## Mentors experience a space to relate to their peers experiences and feelings, and create deeper bonds with each other

"The simple check-ins and outs allowed me to listen to how my fellow mentors were feeling and made me realise that they felt similar to me and were all excited but anxious to start delivering the workshops to the girls."

"I will take away all of the amazing memories that I have made, including meeting other mentors and gaining new friends from the experience."

"I have made friends for life, we meet out of Big Sis. Especially the relationship I have developed with my co-facilitator. Some of us moved in together."

"A big take away is the feeling of being part of a wonderful team/community with a shared passion to help and care for others."

"I made new friends and memories that I won't ever forget."

## Mentors improve their own mental health

"I am much calmer and patient as a result of the mentoring."

"Big Sis has given me positivity that I feel now in my daily life."

"Before I had 0 experience and was very nervous, now my confidence is sky high."

"I have found the work amazing and it made me realise how children /people can benefit from the knowledge I have gained in life."

## Mentors appreciate our training and teaching approach

"The training contained games each session so did the in-person training; I found this particularly beneficial to myself as I can be quite shy when first meeting people."

"Each training day started and ended with a check-in and a check-out, this was particularly useful for me as I sometimes find it hard to relax and remain peaceful"

"Big Sis not only cares about delivering information to young girls but also cares deeply about their volunteer mentors."

"These people helped me massively in overcoming challenges that I have struggled with for years."

"I always had someone to talk to if anything was worrying me."

"Working with kids was a huge learning curve for me. I already felt fairly confident in the topics, but applying it to kids in a group setting was a huge learning curve."

"The personal growth that the training allowed me to go through would not have been possible without the calming and comforting nature that all of the trainers provided in their sessions and followed up afterward with reassuring and kind messages."

## Mentors grow in confidence and gain employability skills

"I feel more confident in my ability to deliver presentations to my classmates and feel less anxious about the thought of doing it during my future career."

"Completing my university placement with Big Sis has allowed me to gain valuable experience working with young children that I need to further my studies and work towards getting the job I want in the future."

"It really helped me build up my confidence in working with young people and with organisation and time management skills to as we had to stick to a plan and execute it on time."

"I was able to challenge myself whilst delivering the workshops as my co-facilitator stepped back several times to let me take the lead. This enabled me to work on my public speaking and leadership skills."

"Due to struggling with public speaking before the training it was quite a scary experience for me, I was quite anxious, however Big Sis have built such a non-judgemental and safe space in which I feel secure to build on my public speaking skills and I have come out so much more confident."

"I believe Big Sis was a step into where I am now in terms of my career. I think it helped me get my new job which has then pushed me on to my new mentoring role which is about to start. I have learnt skills to co facilitate rather than just lead. It has taught me the art of silence and thinking before I offer comment sometimes to allow others to speak who are not so confident in coming forward."

"I feel I have developed my communication skills in general and with people of all ages and also learned how to successfully co-facilitate."

"Big Sis has allowed me to work on my public speaking skills alongside gaining many others, such as teamwork, leadership, and organisation."

"It's opened doors professionally and personally and I feel honoured to have been part of such a powerful and important movement.."

"I have learned to always consider safeguarding."





## Mentors feel inspired to pursue careers that are in line with their personal values and interests

"The placement confirmed that I would like a career in female empowerment."

"I definitely have a desired interest to work with young people."

"Not everyone is not as lucky as I am to have a supportive family, to have had a supportive environment to grow up in. It has taught me that we all need to give back and to help others."

## Mentors who are also mothers felt positive effects on their parenting

"I practiced the workshops with my daughter and it was a lovely bonding experience. We now speak openly about periods and bodies in the house and I hope some of our girls would have gone home and done the same with their mums."

"It opened my eyes to being a young girl again and understanding all the feelings and emotions that come with that time of life "

"This has 100% helped me as a mother. You have given me some amazing advice and it has helped me see my children (2 girls) in a different way. I feel better equipped to help them both through puberty. "

"It has made me a better mother. More prepared and more aware."

# CASE STUDY

## Sarah

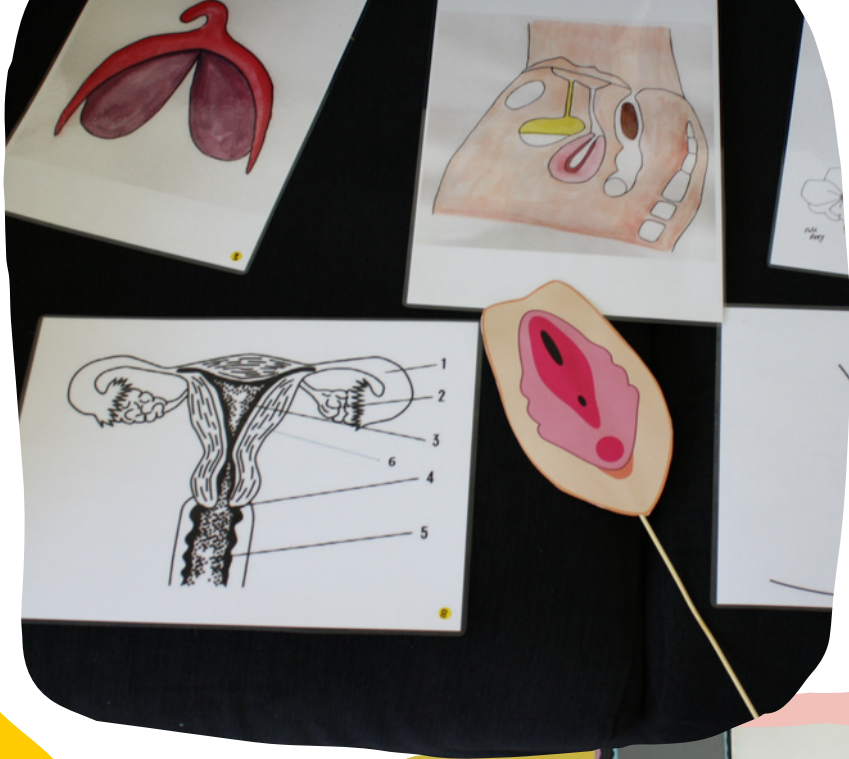
### Braving anxiety with a strength-based approach

Sarah, 18, studied Criminology at Marjon University and trained with us to become a Big Sis Mentor. She had severe anxiety which expressed itself in sometimes not being able to leave the house and struggling with public speaking. We were keen to take her on as a trainee due to her warm demeanor, passion for the cause and exceptional safeguarding knowledge. Before the training she was extremely anxious about delivering the workshops.

Throughout the 6 day intensive *Mentor Training Course* we experienced her open up more and more and find her unique strengths in delivering workshops. Sarah was supported by our strength-based training approach, a welcoming group of like-minded trainees, and the encouragement and guidance of her own personal Big Sis coach. As a result, she worked through some of her challenges and learned techniques that helped her anxiety, and built her voice as a facilitator: *"Whilst delivering the workshops my co-facilitator stepped back several times to let me take the lead. This enabled me to work on my public speaking and leadership skills."*



Sarah completed the workshops with a feeling of personal and professional growth having built strong relationships with the adolescent girls. Sarah is an example that proves that sometimes one needs to find themselves in the right context to thrive and that empowerment comes from knowing one's own strengths and feeling safe to express them. Building on that creates confidence. Sarah is a calm and powerful lead facilitator and girls benefit greatly from her role modeling.



# OUR APPROACH



## We are creative

We have found young people learn best whilst engaging in creativity and play. We use games, theatre activities, craft and other relational approaches to nurture learning in a fun and inclusive way. This fosters emotional intelligence, and builds better connection to oneself and others.

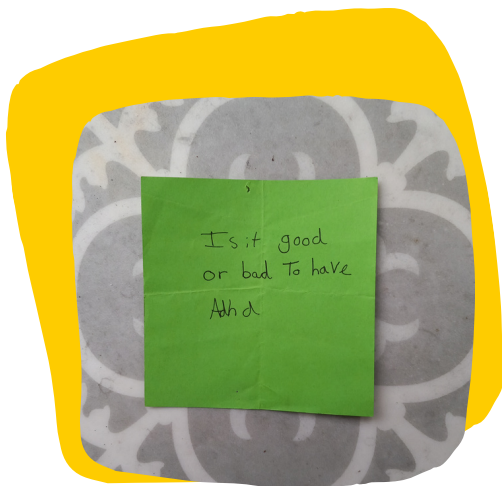


## Our work is relational

The individuals in the group are our special focus: **Everybody matters!** To make sure we can tend to each individual, we work in small groups. This also enables the participation of neuro-divergent children, individuals with poor mental health and those with other additional needs.

## Participation

Participation and giving everyone a voice creates a circle of affirmation and confidence. Our workshop experiences are co-created by our mentors, the children and the parents. Participation also means giving everyone access to contribute in their own unique way.

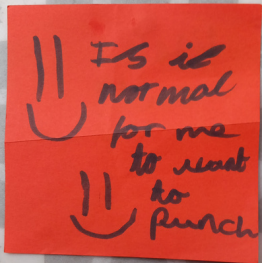


## We teach emotional intelligence & life skills

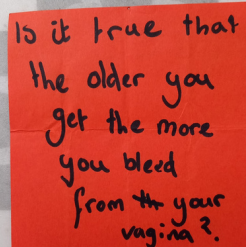
Our toolkit includes check-in tools, council circle and non-violent communication. Young people learn practical skills and tools that they can practice in our workshops and carry with them for life.

## Anonymous Questions & Answers

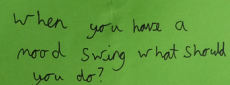
Or as we call it: *THE TREASURE CHEST ACTIVITY*, is used throughout our workshops and programmes. It enables young people to ask specific questions about the content which our dedicated mentors answers. This helps us to design future workshops and follow-up workshops, and keep the content relevant to the young people we work with.



Is it normal for me to react to punch



Is it true that the older you get the more you bleed from the vagina?



When you have a mood swing what should you do?

# OUR PARTNERS

Since our CIC was setup in 2020 we have established and strengthened partnerships with local education and youth providers, community hubs and the council.

## School partnerships



## Community partners and supporters



# Past funders



Devon & Cornwall Police



Supported using public funding by



ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



school for social entrepreneurs



LLOYDS BANK



Pre/puberty is a crucial time in a young person's life that needs to be supported.

**This is what we believe.**

**This is what we deliver.**

**Would you like to learn more about our programmes or work with us?**

**Contact: [hello@big-sis.co](mailto:hello@big-sis.co)**

**Web: [www.big-sis.co](http://www.big-sis.co)**



© Big Sis CIC 2023