

## **Sheldon, 14, young performer**

Sheldon joined our Hebden Bridge drama workshop in April, when his mum signed him and his sister up. Sheldon has 5 siblings, and is a young carer, as both his mum and a sibling have long term health issues.

Sheldon enjoyed acting at primary school and loved being in Lion King in year 6, playing the antagonist, Scar. But over three years in secondary school he's not had a chance to act again. He hasn't got the roles he has gone for at school, including acting whilst doing one of his favourite things – drumming – in the school's production of School of Rock. He says he lacked confidence paying drums in front of people. Sheldon didn't know that, via Young Carers, his mum had signed him (and his older sister) up to one of Hebden Bridge Arts' drama workshops as a way to keep them busy during the school holidays: he was told that day he was going to the workshop that afternoon, and he and his sister would be picked up by a Young Carers' support worker. He didn't know what to expect.

The drama workshop was nerve wracking because Sheldon had not done any acting for a few years. He only knew a couple of people in the room - his sister Summer and another girl - but didn't know what he was going to be doing. When the group was split into threes, to make and perform a story via a large paper puppet, he was matched with two people he'd never met before, who were age 16 and 11. Meeting Libby and Alex in that session, and working so well as a puppeteering team, changed things for Sheldon. At the end of the workshop they were all given information about putting themselves forward to be in a professional production and Sheldon made a pact with new mates Alex and Libby to sign up to do it, to see if they could all be in the play together.

Sheldon signed up to be considered as a youth community cast member straight away, with support from his mum. A month later rehearsals started, but after the first session he did not want to do it anymore. He says the session was 'awkward', and he did not think he'd get a role in the production, which he describes as 'a confidence thing'. "I'd never done puppeteering in life before. But I decided to come back to the second rehearsal, as mum said 'you can quit if you want, but this is a big opportunity.'" Sheldon need not have worried about his part, as he was awarded one of the two main puppeteering roles for the youth cast members, as Brian the goat, starring alongside the two professional actors in a long scene, a role for which he received a lot of praise, bringing the goat puppet to life, and playing him for laughs.

Sheldon really like the acting and puppeteering once he got into it and getting to know the other young people in the cast has been his favourite part. He has kept in touch with Alishia, a similar age to him, and youngest cast member Atticus, with whom he got lifts to rehearsals and performances.

Being in the production has helped with Sheldon's confidence and also helped him with his drumming, which is his passion. He describes previously being very self-conscious when drumming, so the whole experience of being in a professional production has really helped him break down the mental barrier he had about performing in front of other people. Another positive outcome is that Sheldon has been awarded a scholarship place at a local drama school, enjoying weekly classes at no cost to the family. He is looking forward to having a role in this year's pantomime in Halifax as a result. Atticus' family will once more support Sheldon with lifts to and from the drama workshops. He's feeling excited about his future participating in drama classes and enjoying performing.