

Business Enterprise Education & Employment (BEEE) Ltd

Connecting People to Opportunities

Museums in Motion

An Evaluation for BEEE Creative



make
amplify



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Museums in Motion - An Evaluation for BEEE Creative

Executive Summary

Introduction

Museums in Motion was a series of community dance and technology participation projects that took place between May and October 2016. It was devised and managed by Carrie Washington (BEEE Creative) with artistic direction by make:AMPLIFY. Taking place at Royston, Stevenage and Watford Museums, the project worked with three groups of young people aged 4 – 18 years old and their families. Each museum had a three-day creative process resulting in an audio-visual installation. The project arose from the belief in the positive impact arts engagement can have on participants. It was funded by Arts Council England, Hertfordshire Music Service, Watford Borough Council and Public Health Hertfordshire.

Outcomes

The aim of Museums in Motion was to inspire communities to engage; making connections with other people and heritage through technology and dance. It wanted the participants to engage with creative activity and respond to heritage creatively, as well as to develop confidence, learn new skills and have increased feelings of well-being. It was anticipated that this project would lay the foundations for future dance and heritage work in Hertfordshire.

Headline Findings

- The project achieved its aim of running workshops in three museum venues across Hertfordshire
- The feedback and responses from all participants has been extremely positive
- Participants self-reported increases in confidence, in a range of areas and circumstances
- Participants were able to identify and demonstrate new skills they had learned
- Participants indicated they would be more likely to engage with museums/cultural venues again
- Museum staff re-engaged with their collections in new and different ways
- The project model is adaptable and worked with three very different participant groups

Recommendations

- Participants felt ownership of the project, this is central to future versions of this project
- Develop a clear project narrative for recruitment
- Target specific participant groups
- Limit the age range of participants in each group
- Conduct the workshops when the museums are closed to the public
- Explore the possibility of increasing the length of the project

The films can be found at: <https://vimeo.com/174022482> (Stevenage)
<https://vimeo.com/174021973> (Watford)
<https://vimeo.com/181306253> (Royston)

Introduction

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Each museum had a three-day creative process resulting in an audio-visual installation. The project started with the concept of ‘what’s inside your phone’, and then explored the collections of the museums to see what objects and technology used to fulfil those functions. This exploration provided the stimulus for creating the dance/movement responses. Technology was then used again to capture and present those responses.

Each group had a private view launch for the installation that acted as a celebration of the work, and an opportunity for the participants to reconnect. The final installation launch invited all of the participants, from each museum to come together to celebrate the project. Each participant was given a CD of their film, as a memento of their participation.

The project arose from the belief in the positive impact arts engagement can have on participants. It wanted to explore how contributing to a performance can promote a greater sense of well-being. As it aimed to explore this belief with participants who had little experience in dance, or engagement with museums, the project utilised technology as tool to engage those participants. The project wanted to use technology to engage as well as to present dance in a way to give inexperienced performers a high quality artistic output, but without the anxiety associated with participating in live performance.

Headline Findings

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Summary of Outcomes

The aim of Museums in Motion was to inspire communities to engage; making connections with other people and heritage through technology and dance. The following are the agreed outcomes for the project. It was anticipated that Participants would:

- Engage with creative activity that they may not have had access to before
- Be inspired and motivated to express creative responses to heritage
- Develop confidence to collaborate in the creative process
- Learn new skills using dance and technology, in both dance and social outcomes
- Be more likely to engage with heritage/creative spaces
- Have increased feelings of well-being

Evaluation Tools

A number of activities, outlined below, were undertaken to carry out the evaluation:

- Baseline surveys of all participants (separate baseline surveys were created for children under 6, young people, and adults)
- Follow up surveys (separate follow up surveys were created for children under 6, young people, and adults)
- Daily post-it note feedback, gauging participants' feelings at the start and end of the day
- Observation forms completed by the Project Team (Project Manager and Artists)
- Evaluator observation of some of the sessions
- Interviews with participants
- Interviews with Museum staff
- Interview with Artists
- Attendance at an Installation Launch event
- Interview with parents at Installation Launch

Measures of Success

The following table (Fig. 1) was agreed in advance of the commencement of the project and outlines how the outcomes will be measured. It should be noted that due to the nature of the project, much of the evaluation is based on self-reported, verbal feedback.

Fig. 1

Output	Outcomes	Measures of Success
Recruitment of targeted groups to participate in the project Free access to workshops	Participants will engage with creative activity that they may not have had access to before	Participants attend the workshops
Participation in three-day workshops	Participants will be inspired and motivated to express creative responses to heritage	Self-reported feelings of creativity and being inspired Participants report they enjoyed the activity Observations by practitioners
Participation in three-day workshops Attendance at, and contribution to installation	Participants will develop confidence to collaborate in the creative process	Participants report that they feel more confident Observations by practitioners about participants' confidence and collaboration
Participation in three-day workshops	Participants will learn new skills using dance and technology, in both dance and social outcomes	Participants report they have learned skills Observations by practitioners
Participation in three-day workshop Attendance and contribution to installation	Participants will be more likely to engage with heritage/creative spaces	Participants report an increase in confidence of attending heritage/creative spaces Participants indicate they would be more likely to attend heritage/creative spaces
Participation in three-day workshops Attendance at and contribution to installation	Participants have increased feelings of well-being	Participants report increased feelings of well-being, at the end of the three day workshops and at the installation Observations by practitioners

Project Team

Project Manager - Carrie Washington (BEEE Creative)

Jen Irons - Dance Artist Facilitator (make:AMPLIFY)

Zach Walker - Audio Visual Artist Facilitator (make:AMPLIFY)

Stewie Baxter – Musician, Sound Artist

Museum Staff

Watford Museum - Laura Horn

Stevenage Museum - Jo Ward

Royston Museum - Jenny Oxley

Participants

Each museum worked with a different target group:

Watford Museum - Young Carers, predominantly from Watford

Stevenage Museum - Home Schooled Children and Families

Royston Museum - Families

Note: Royston Museum intended to work in partnership with a local children's centre, enabling them to reach families who had not accessed the museum before. Due to external factors this did not happen, therefore families were targeted via schools and their existing participant groups.

Participation

Each museum group consisted of between 10 - 13 people. Most people attended all three days but the sessions were flexible enough to accommodate those who were unable to participate for the entirety of the project.

- Watford Museum's project took place 29th - 31st May
 - 10 participants took part, with all but two attending all three days
 - 2 participants attended two of the three days.
 - 9 participants completed the baseline and follow up surveys
- Stevenage Museum's project took place 13th - 15th June
 - 12 participants took part, including one who was 7 months old
 - 8 participants took part for the three days, with the others taking part for one or two days.
 - 4 young people and 2 adults completed the baseline and follow up surveys
- Royston Museum's project took place 8th - 10th August
 - 13 participants took part
 - 10 participated for the entirety of the project
 - 6 young people and 1 adult completed the baseline and follow up surveys

Demographics

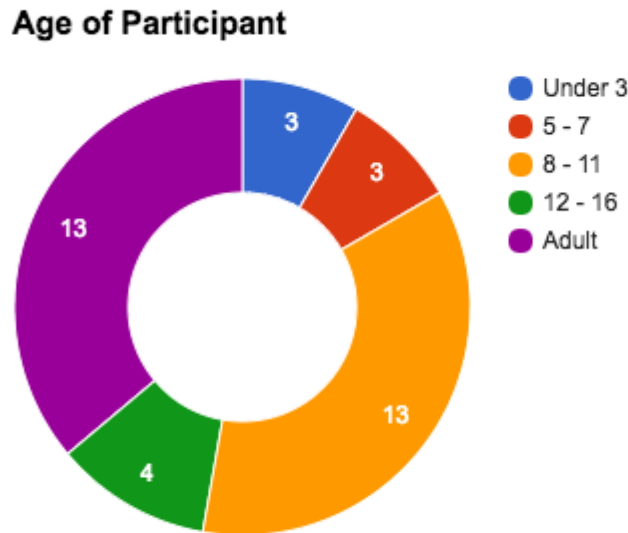
The ethnicity of the participants is as follows:

White British - 76%

Mixed (White/Black Caribbean) - 13%
Asian Bangladeshi - 3%
Black Caribbean - 6%

The project engaged 36 participants in total. The age of participants is as follows (Fig. 2):

Fig. 2



Audience at launch and other events

Each launch event included participants, their families and friends, as well as stakeholders. The number of attendees at each event was:

Watford - 36
Stevenage - 32
Royston - 20

The film produced at Stevenage Museum was also shown at Dance Ignite, held at the Gordon Craig Theatre, to an audience of 339.

The visitors at each museum who saw the installation were:

Watford - 1386
Stevenage - 3652

Royston – Estimated visitors: 750. At time of writing the installation is still ongoing.

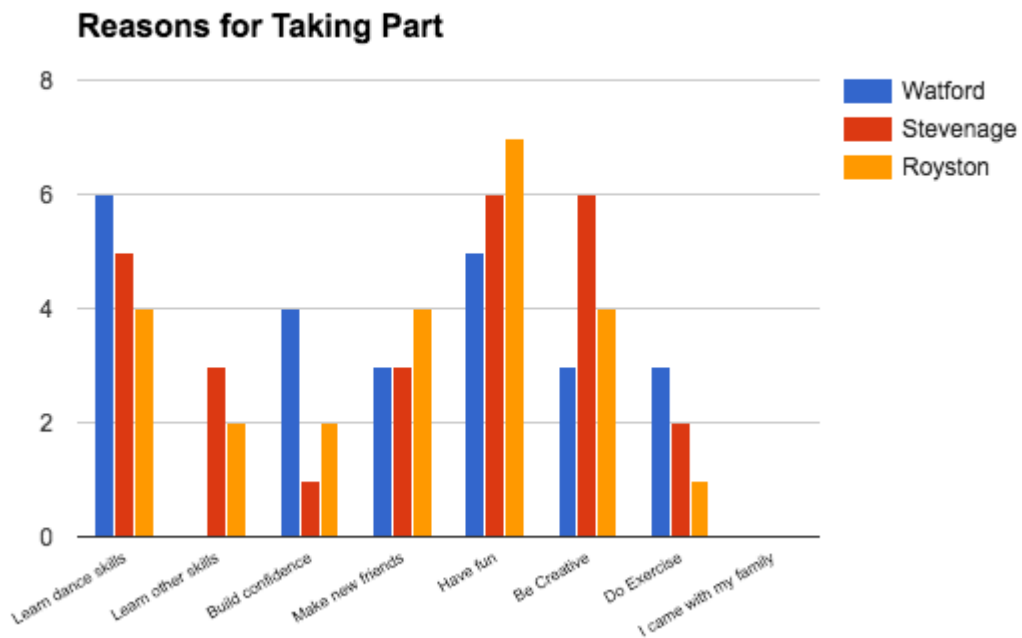
The films were made public online and at the time of writing have received 139 hits.

The films can be found at: <https://vimeo.com/174022482> (Stevenage)
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Reasons for doing the project

The participants were asked why they wanted to take part in the project (Fig. 3). While the responses showed similarities, such as most of the participants doing the project to have fun, there were some variations. For example, none of the Watford participants gave the reason to learn other new skills, but more participants than any other group indicated a desire to increase confidence. The responses correlate with self-identified characteristics of the different groups. A number of the Watford group had identified that they wanted to increase their confidence. The majority also had a strong interest in dance. The Stevenage group, who identified as having good levels of confidence, were more interested in being creative. The Royston group, who were not part of a targeted group, primarily wanted to participate, to have fun.

Fig. 3



The adults were also asked if they wanted to do the project so that their child could learn new skills and develop confidence. All of the adults who responded indicated this as a reason for taking part.

Outcomes

Different groups were targeted for each museum. Therefore, while comparisons can be made between the groups, their specific backgrounds and needs have been taken into consideration.

Engage with creative activity that participants may not have had access to before

To get her out of bed in the morning you have to turn on the hose. With this project, she was a like a greyhound out of the trap. (Parent of a Watford Participant)

All of the young people indicated they had access to some arts subjects at school. Three participants in total had engaged with a similar project like this, with a further five having participated in regular arts activities outside formal schooling.

Due to the diversity of the target groups, each group had different levels of access to this type of creative activity. For example, the home schooled group regularly visit museums and other cultural venues, whereas some of the young carers had far less experience. Each of the groups demonstrated high levels of creative engagement with the project, that was clear from the observations of the Project Team, the survey feedback and the interviews with the participants.

The Watford participants appeared to experience the biggest change with their engagement during the project. At the start of the project they were described as *shy* and *quiet*, with one participant saying that she hated dance and film and that she was forced to attend by her mother. When interviewed, others admitted to being ambivalent about the project at the start and would have dropped out if they did not enjoy it. As the project progressed, the participants' engagement increased. They were observed using their free time to continue to create, including the participant who 'hates dance'. Carrie observed: *At every opportunity today, in gaps at the end of breaks, all the dancers were going back into the gallery space and trying out their own moves.*

The parents of the home schooled children in Stevenage valued their opportunity to participate. One parent said they had little opportunity to engage in creative projects as participants, not just observers of their children. One parent said: *It is one of the nicest projects that we've done. I can't think of a project in 5 years, we've participated in together as equals. All the other projects have been supporting him to participate in the workshop.*

Be inspired and motivated to express creative responses to heritage

I've been inspired to do a project with photography at the museum from what I've learned from Zach. (Stevenage Parent)

Creative responses to heritage took place at each of the venues, indicating that this outcome has been met. However, it is felt by the Project Team that while each group did respond to the heritage it was not always captured or represented in the final film output.

It was observed by museum staff and members of the Project Team that centring the theme of the project around technology, provided an accessible entry point for the participants to then explore the museum collections in relation to that theme. Jo Ward from Stevenage Museum said: *Looking at the mobile phone and then things from the past was a hook into seeing the collection. I thought that was a big strength.*

Each group had had different levels of engagement with their museum. For example, the home schooled group, were regular visitors to Stevenage Museum, whereas the Young Carers group had little experience of Watford Museum. All of the participants at Royston had been to that museum before. Therefore, their responses to the collections were different. For example, participants in Stevenage felt that they were able to see the collection in a new way. *When I've come here before I couldn't be bothered to read about the exhibits and their history and find out about them. It has made me see that you can look at the objects and appreciate the objects. Before I saw museum objects as a thing you look at. Now I know you can think about what sound they make, you can feel their texture, you don't just have to look at them.* A parent from Stevenage said: *I really liked that it was in a space that I knew when I was growing up. It was nice to be connected to something that was local and has personal importance, part of my family's history.*

Royston Museum brought out their teaching collection, so that the participants were able to have tactile engagement with the objects. Carrie described a participant creative response to this: *There was a lovely moment of a dad with his three and five year olds and Grandma talking about older computers, looking at where leads plug in, talking about tapes and cassettes. This led to a creative representation of this movement 'tangled leads'.*

While the groups did express creative responses to heritage, it was not uniform and it was not always explicit.

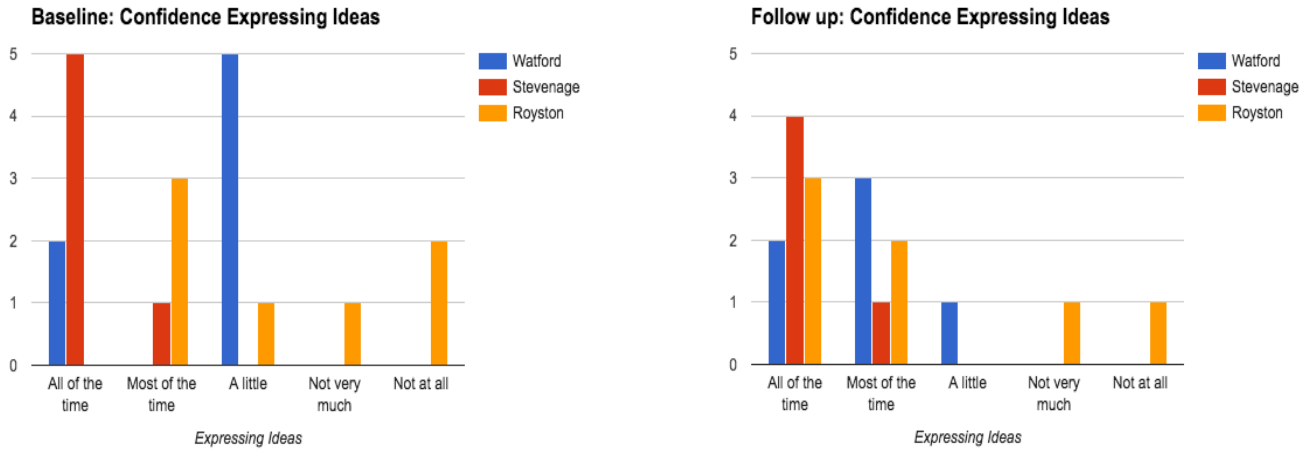
Develop confidence to collaborate in the creative process

It was so good to be able to play out our own creativity, with our children. (Stevenage parent)

Observations of participants and their feedback indicate that this outcome has been met, in Watford and Stevenage and partially met in Royston. Due to the differing nature of the groups and their backgrounds, some of the groups had indicated that they were already confident in collaborating creatively. This is particularly the case for the Stevenage group who knew each other before the project and are used to working in this way.

The participants were asked before and after the project how confident they felt at expressing their ideas. Fig. 4 below demonstrate that while there was little change in the Stevenage participants, who already felt very confident, Royston and Watford show that participants' confidence in expressing their ideas did improve.

Fig. 4



Observations by the Project Team also support this. For example, on the first day in Watford Jen observed the group was *very quiet to start* with Carrie also observing *two of the girls were painfully shy during the morning*. This is contrasted with observations at the end of the project Jen observed *there is a lot more discussion between each individual with more discussion about concepts, in depth discussion and suggestions for working with ideas*.

It was felt by the Project Team that this outcome was not achieved as successfully at Royston. While there was some collaboration, due to the group dynamic and large age range, many of the activities needed to be adapted and simplified which limited the scope for creative collaboration. Zach observed: *This group needed the simplest tasks and the most support so there was a limited amount of independent thought and creativity*.

Learn new skills using dance and technology, in both dance and social outcomes

They have been given a gift a new skill and creativity, with that it has empowered them. (Stevenage parent)

Each participant was asked at the end of the project if they had enjoyed learning new things. All of the participants responded that they had enjoyed learning new things all of the time or most of the time.

Dance and Technology

The skills the sessions covered included dance terminology, choreographic tools, camera techniques, understanding projection and sound design. Using these skills, the participants created their own movement pieces, filmed their peers and helped direct the projections.

It was clear from the observations and interviews that the participants had learned new skills, both in dance and film.

Jen and Zach's teaching approach helped to facilitate this. *We break it down into manageable blocks that aren't technical. We are starting to use the same language to describe dynamics of movement and film making. For example, low, medium, high. It's language for them, not experts.*

The participants also felt that they had learned new skills. In Royston one participant said: *I learned so many things like levels, different angles, filming and different ways of using the camera.* In Watford one participant responded: *I really enjoyed working with the phones and projection. I learned new terminology like close up and tilt.* A Stevenage participant said: *I learned new vocabulary about filming.* Another Stevenage participant said: *I feel like I have learned a lot more about film making. I think I have learned more about that now.*

Using accessible technology was also considered important in the project, so that the participants could continue to develop their new skills once the project had finished. Zach said: *Using technology that they can replicate and use themselves is really important as they can carry on doing it after the project has finished.* One of the Watford participants did go on to apply the skills she had learned in a film project at her school.

Communication, leadership and confidence

In addition to learning skills in dance and technology, the project supported the development of communication, leadership and teamwork skills for some of the participants. I observed at each of the museums the participants taking charge of elements of filming, choreography and projection. Where participants showed an interest in a particular area, they were encouraged to pursue it.

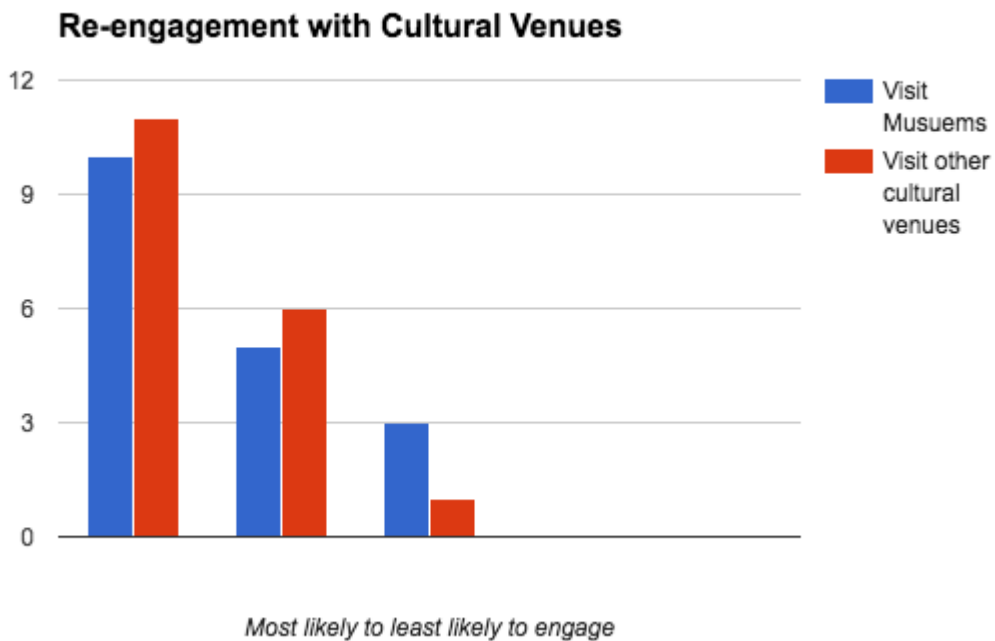
It was observed that the Watford group had the most development in terms of confidence and communication. Jen said: *The largest change so far has been Watford with confidence levels from day one to day three. How they related to each other and how they voiced their ideas. There was no apology for voicing their ideas by day three.* Whereas it was felt that the Stevenage group, who had already identified as being confident were able to develop their film and dance skills. Jen said: *They were much more interested in the skills development and were much better able to discuss their own skills development.*

Be more likely to engage with heritage/creative spaces

I liked that in the museum there were things to learn about. This project was special because there was more to learn about than just dancing. (Watford Participant)

The participants were asked at the start of the project whether they had visited their museum, or any other museum before, with most indicating that they had, with some having more regular contact than others. In the follow up surveys the participants were asked if they thought they would visit their museum, or other museums, as a result of the project. They were also asked on a scale of 1 – 5 if they were likely to engage with other cultural venues as a result of the project. (Fig. 5) The majority felt strongly that they would re-engage with their museum, as well as other cultural venues.

Fig. 5



The high proportion of desire to re-engage could be due to the positive response all participants had to the project. Carrie observed of the Watford participants: *A huge leap in engagement with the space - running around like they owned it!*

The museum staff felt that the project helped to change perceptions about their museums. Laura from Watford Museum said: *We like to show the public that we are different kind of museum. We like to be seen as open minded and innovative. When the young people talk about the project with their friends they will talk about it as a different place, not a dark, scary, boring place.* Jenny from Royston Museum felt the project had a wider impact on the public: *It's raised the profile of the museum. People didn't know we were doing arts and heritage projects.*

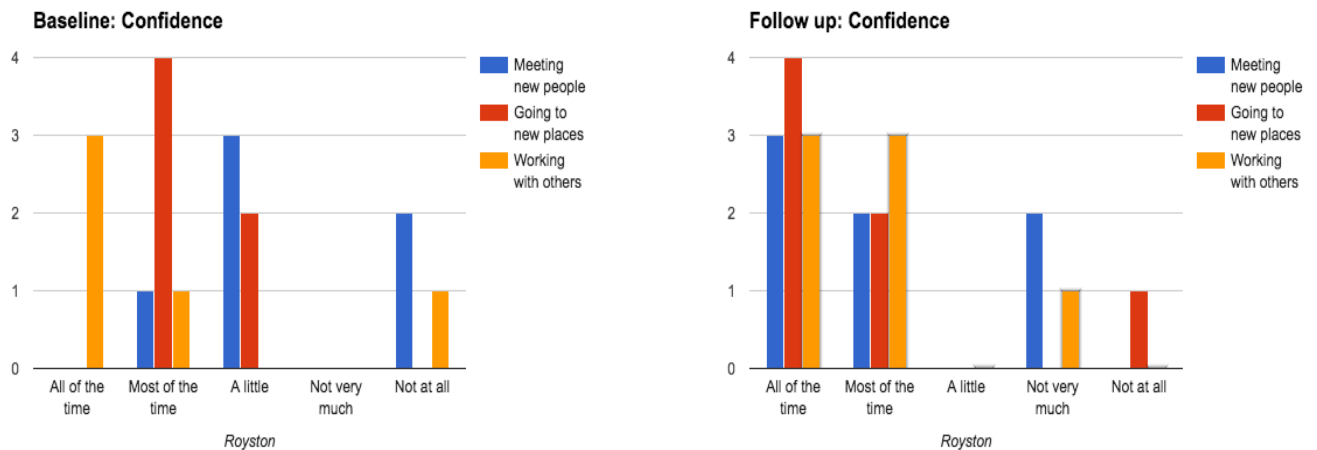
Have increased feelings of well-being

It has been a really joyful experience (Watford Participant)

At the start of the project the participants were asked about how happy, active and healthy they felt. They were asked this again at the end of the project. The respondents largely felt happy, active and healthy at the start of the project, with little change in the follow up surveys.

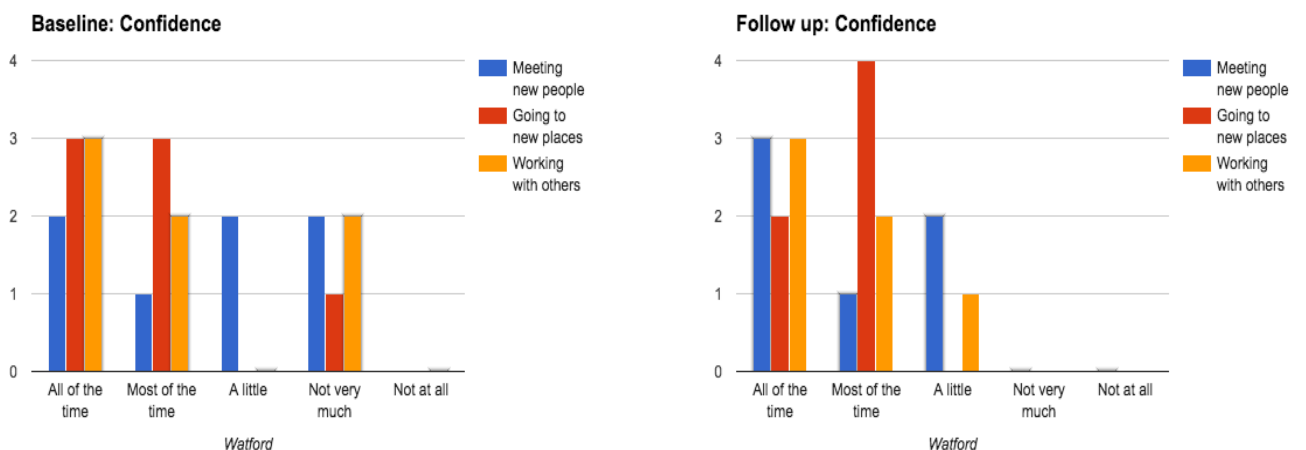
The participants were also asked about how confident they felt meeting new people, working with others and going to new places. While the participants at Stevenage indicated high confidence levels throughout the project, there were more significant changes for the groups at Watford and Royston from the start of the project than at the end. (Figs. 6 and 7)

Fig. 6



The Royston participants indicated a general improvement in confidence in all three areas, apart from one response in the follow up that shows one participant felt less confident going to new places. Self-reported confidence in both meeting new people and working with others saw the largest increase.

Fig. 7



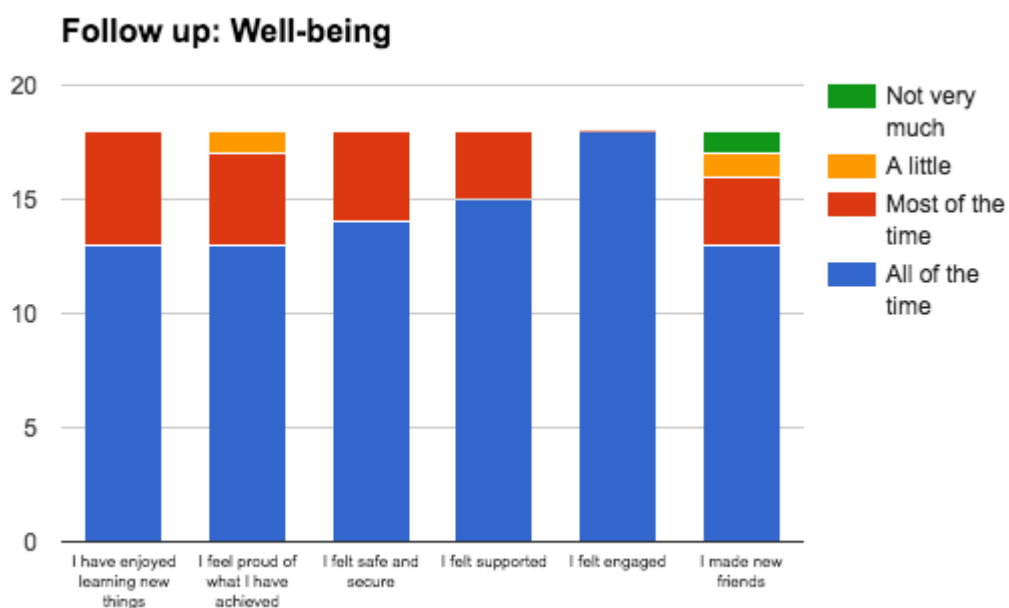
The Watford participants showed improvement in confidence in all three areas. Self-reported confidence in going to new places saw the biggest increase, with all participants indicating the follow up survey either feeling confident ‘all of the time’ or ‘most of the time’.

One participant from Watford said: *My confidence has grown a lot. At first I didn’t want to start. I was scared because I didn’t know that many others. When I got there, I was scared. I have really built up my confidence, we got to really know each other and got to talk to everyone. Then I forgot about being shy.*

Laura Green, who works for Carers in Hertfordshire and supported some of the participants at Watford said: *It was lovely to see the young women using their body in a free/uninhibited way.* At the launch event for Watford, some of the participants’ parents discussed the continued impact of the project. One participant had gone on to make a film at school, another had started doing contemporary dance and another had come third in a dance competition.

The participants were also asked at the end of the project how taking part in the project made them feel (Fig. 8). They were asked if they enjoyed learning new things, if they felt proud of their achievements, if they felt safe and secure, if they felt supported, if they felt engaged and if they had made new friends. The majority of responses from all participants for each question was ‘all of the time’. There were two areas where participants responded with ‘a little’ or ‘not very much’. Participants from Stevenage already knew each other so there was less scope for them to meet new people.

Fig. 8



In their interviews the participants were also asked about well-being. All of the participants felt they had benefited from taking part, with some giving further detail:

I get to work with the kids again. I am retired teacher. I retired in 2001 and didn't have any connection with children so coming back to this, it is fulfilling. (A grandparent, taking part with her grandchildren at Royston)

I felt really included in this project. When we were doing the dances I felt like I was being a big help towards it. (A young person at Stevenage)

When you get to my age the opportunities to join in with something like this are very minimal. It was lovely to be able to be part of things. I was really invited in and felt valued and that made a difference to me. (Stevenage parent)

Unexpected Outcome - Impact on Museums

Reconnecting with their Collections

In my interviews with staff from each museum, all of them stated that the project had made them look at their collections afresh. Laura from Watford said: *Seeing the film has made me look at the collection differently. It has given the collection new life for me.* Jo from Stevenage echoed this: *Looking at mobile phone and things from the past...I thought that was a big strength. It has made me look at things differently. You take things for granted being in the museum every day, it gives you a refresh of what you've got in the collection.*

Skills Development

Jo and Laura also said that their involvement enabled them to develop their skills. For Jo, this was project management. She felt that the way the project was delivered enabled her to see best practice in delivering a participatory project of this nature: *It was interesting to watch how Carrie structured the project, with the evaluation, artists and photographer. I will apply some of the learning from Carrie's methods to our own future projects.* For Laura, who is also a dance practitioner herself, she felt she developed her practice in that area by observing Jen: *It had influence on my practice as a dance practitioner to enable the participants to lead far more and give them far more responsibility.*

Changing Perceptions

Jenny at Royston felt that the project had helped in starting to change the perceptions of what a museum should be and do with some of their long standing volunteers, who hold a more traditional view of the function of museums. *This changed the volunteers' perception of how you use collections. They are very traditional. The museum is going to become more hands on and interactive. This is another way of moving them on another step. It's not just things in glass cases.*

Conclusion and Recommendations

Museums in Motion has achieved its intended outcomes. Its participants at each venue enjoyed taking part, felt they had learned new skills and felt that it had made them more confident in a range of areas and circumstances. As the project took place in three different venues, with three different target groups, this project has demonstrated its ability to be replicated and adapted to suit the needs of the venue and group, without impacting on its core values or aims.

As a result of this evaluation, the following recommendations for the future life of this project have been made.

Ensure participants continue to feel they have agency of the work

The museum staff, and some of the participants referenced that Jen and Zach's facilitation gave them feelings of ownership and agency of the project. It is clear that their methodology was a key success factor in the project and would be a necessary component to future projects.

Develop a clear project narrative for recruitment

Both museums and participants required more detail and understanding of the project. For some it felt like they were *taking a leap of faith* as they did not quite understand the project. It is recommended that the films and photographs be used to support the recruitment and advertising for the project in future. Some of the museums felt that the timescale limited their ability to recruit for participants. Some of the parents felt they found out about it too late and that this would have been a reason for other participants not being able to take part.

Target specific participant groups

Consideration of the participant groups is important. The project achieved some of its outcomes to a greater degree at Watford and Stevenage, due to the specific groups they worked with. Working with targeted groups will also enable the project to be adapted to cater specifically to the needs and experience of those groups.

Limit the age range of participants in each group

Consideration should also be given to the age range of participants. At Royston it was felt that the range was too broad (4 - 70+) to be able to cater for the range of needs, skills and understanding of the group.

Conduct the workshops when the museums are closed to the public

At some of the museums, some of the workshop days took place while the museum was open, which had an impact on being able to deliver some of the technology elements, as well as possibly on the general public's visitor experience. It is recommended that the project takes place on days where the museums are closed.

Explore the possibility of increasing the length of the project

If possible, it is recommended that the project takes place over a longer period, such as five days. This has come from participant feedback and observations from the Project Team.

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September, 2016