



BEEE Creative CIC

*Connecting People to Opportunities*

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# Dance Re:Ignite

## An evaluation for BEEE Creative

by Kirsten Hutton



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## Executive Summary

### Project overview

The Dance Re:Ignite project was a framework of participatory and training activities and celebrations designed to enhance and develop dance practice and infrastructure of provision for 55+ year olds in Hertfordshire. It ran a series of practical workshops for participants, a pilot for an annual festival for dance for older people, training workshops for practitioners, a commissioned film working with animation artists, and presentation of live performance and the film at the annual Dance Ignite Festival.

### Aims

Dance Re:Ignite had four overarching aims:

1. To address challenges around social and cultural isolation for older adults
2. Dance practitioners to develop their practice to collaborate with participants to contribute to the creative process.
3. To explore the feasibility of delivering an annual festival with community groups creating artistic work, including the needs and wants of participants, practitioners and partners.
4. To develop a Hertfordshire Dance Practitioners network, connecting with practitioners, participants and partners

### Headline Findings

- The project achieved its aims to enable participants to engage in a collaborative artistic process, to support practitioners to collaborate creatively with their participants, to test and explore the feasibility of holding an annual festival and the creation of a network for dance practitioners in Hertfordshire
- Dance Re:Ignite is projected to have reached over 5500 audience and participants
- There is a strong foundation from support from participants, practitioners and partners for this work to continue
- The aim to address to challenges around social and cultural isolation for older adults was partially achieved due to the demographics and engagement profile of the participant group

### Recommendations

- Consider ways to increase engagement with more vulnerable, 'not yet' engaged older people
- Make provision for potential barriers to participation when allocating resources.
- Explore the feasibility of opening the offer to a wider range of age groups.
- Develop a sustainable and clear offer for the offer of the Practitioner Network, that utilises support from partners and practitioners

## Introduction

The Dance Re:Ignite project was a framework of participatory and training activities and celebrations designed to enhance and develop dance practice and infrastructure of provision for 55+ year olds in Hertfordshire. It was driven by the belief in the positive impact dance engagement has on people's lives and the project's ethos was underpinned by the idea that contributing to an artistic product increases confidence, self-esteem and pride.

The project ran a series of practical workshops for participants, a pilot for an annual festival for dance for older people, training workshops for practitioners, a commissioned film working with animation artists, and presentation of live performance and the film at the annual Dance Ignite Festival.

## Aims

Dance Re:Ignite had four overarching aims:

1. To address challenges around social and cultural isolation for older adults, taking dance for older people beyond a weekly physical activity for it to become a more collaborative artistic process.
2. To enable the dance practitioners to develop their practice to collaborate with participants to contribute to the creative process.
3. To explore the feasibility of delivering an annual festival with community groups creating artistic work, including the needs and wants of participants, practitioners and partners.
4. To develop a dance network for practitioners in Hertfordshire, that will provide support and links to other practitioners, partners and participants.

## Headline Findings

- The project achieved its aims to enable participants to engage in a collaborative artistic process, to support practitioners to collaborate creatively with their participants, to test and explore the feasibility of holding an annual festival and the creation of a network for dance practitioners in Hertfordshire
- The aim to address to challenges around social and cultural isolation for older adults was approached, however due to the demographics of the participant group, there were fewer challenges to address
- Consideration could be given to including more resources for removing barriers to participation, and increase engagement with more vulnerable, 'not yet' engaged older people that would reduce social and cultural isolation further
- Dance Re:Ignite is projected to have reached over 5500 audience and participants
- There is a strong foundation from support from participants, practitioners and partners for this work to continue

## Summary of Outcomes

Project outcomes were identified, that should they be achieved would support the project achieving its aims. It is possible to break the project framework into four interwoven strands, each with their own outcomes.

### Participants

- Learn new skills, both in dance and technology
- Increase feelings of wellbeing through:
  - participating in creative dance workshops and having ownership of the artistic output
  - having a platform to display their creativity through the film and festivals
  - making further connections with participants from other groups

### Practitioners

- Learn new skills during the training days/skills sharing workshops
- Evaluate their practice to consider how they can collaborate creatively with participants
- Become part of a Hertfordshire Dance Practitioners network

### Partners/Stakeholders

- Reflect on the partnership and lessons learned in this type of work and understand how they may support the ongoing support and development of this work

### Network

- A network of Dance Practitioners/Artists and delivery partners will be established. The project will learn the appetite for a network and how it will be maintained

## Evaluation Tools

Qualitative and quantitative data from participants, partners/stakeholders and practitioners has been triangulated and has been used to assess the projected outcomes. A range of simple tools, outlined below, were used to capture evidence to measure the outcomes.

- Baseline surveys of participants taking part in the animation workshops
- Baseline surveys of practitioners with groups taking part in the animation workshops and festival
- Surveys of dance practitioners who take part in the training workshops
- Surveys of participants at the Dance Re:Ignite Festival
- Interviews with selected participants at workshop days
- Interviews with partners
- Interviews with practitioners with groups taking part in the animation workshops
- Interview with Animation Artists
- Evaluator observations from Dance Re:Ignite Festival, Practitioner training workshop and Animation workshop day

## Measures of Success

Outcomes	Indicators of Success	Measures of Success	Reference
<b>Participants</b>			
Participants learn new skills, particularly during the training days/skills sharing workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants demonstrate new skills in sessions, at Dance Re:Ignite Festival and Animators' workshops</li> <li>• Attendance records at sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported and Dance Practitioner reported increases</li> <li>• Comparison of baseline and follow up responses.</li> </ul>	pp11-13 <i>Fig.3</i>
Participants will increase feelings of wellbeing through participating in creative dance workshops and having ownership of the artistic output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular attendance at sessions</li> <li>• Demonstration of increased willingness to express themselves, contribute and collaborate during sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported and practitioner reported increases, comparison of baseline and follow up data</li> <li>• Attendance records at sessions</li> </ul>	pp13-16 <i>Figs.2, 4, 5, 6, 7</i>
Participants will increase feelings of wellbeing by being given a platform to display their creativity and artistic output through the film and festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and participation at Dance Re:Ingite Festival and workshops with Animators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported and practitioner reported increases, comparison of baseline and follow up data</li> </ul>	pp16-17 <i>Figs. 8, 9</i>
Participants will increase feelings of wellbeing making further connections with participants from other groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and participation at Dance Re:Ingite Festival and workshops with Animators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported and practitioner reported increases, comparison of baseline and follow up data</li> <li>• Attendance at Festival and workshops</li> <li>• Majority of participants agree to be on a database to hear about more opportunities in the county</li> </ul>	pp17-19 <i>Figs. 10, 11</i>

Outcomes	Indicators of Success	Measures of Success	Reference
<b>Practitioners</b>			
Practitioners will learn new skills, particularly during the training days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills demonstrated during training day and used during sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at training day</li> <li>• Practitioners can discuss/demonstrate new skills</li> </ul>	pp19-20
Practitioners will evaluate their practice to consider how, and if, they want to collaborate creatively with their participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners plan strategies for their sessions and implement those strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioner self-reflection and participant observations</li> </ul>	pp20-21
Practitioners will become part of a Hertfordshire Dance Practitioners network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining the network and making active use of the network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioner feedback</li> </ul>	pp21-22 <i>Fig.12</i>
<b>Partners/Stakeholders</b>			
Partners will reflect on the partnership and lessons learned in this type of work and understand how they may support the ongoing support and development of this work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners/Stakeholders express desire to continue the work</li> <li>• Partners/Stakeholders indicate how they can support the development of the work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner/Stakeholder reflection and feedback</li> <li>• Partner/Stakeholder continued support</li> </ul>	pp22-23
<b>Network</b>			
The Project will gauge the appetite for a dance network of providers, partners and participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High proportion of Practitioners and partners indicate desire for a network to be established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network established</li> <li>• Digital platform for the network established</li> </ul>	pp23-24
The Project will assess how the network would be maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of network by Practitioners and partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on network and ongoing requirements</li> </ul>	p26

## Project Team

Project Manager - Carrie Washington, BEEE Creative

Animation Artists - Kim Noce and Shaun Clark, Mew Lab

## Practitioners

The practitioners who deliver dance provision in Hertfordshire come from a variety of backgrounds. In this evaluation those delivering the dance workshops will be referred to as Dance Practitioners, as some do not identify as artist. Groups and practitioners involved in the festival and animation workshops were:

Let's Dance - Old Town Hall - Louise White

Love to Dance (Watford and Rickmansworth) - Saracens, Rebecca Benford

Dance for Parkinsons - University of Hertfordshire - Meryl Kiddier

New Connections - Watford Museum - Louise Chiabolotti

## Partners

Herts Sports Partnership

Watford Borough Council (Watford Museum)

Dacorum Borough Council (Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead)

University of Hertfordshire (UH Arts)

Saracens Sports Foundation

Creative Hertfordshire

## Participant Demographics

Participants can be split into two groups:

**Regular Participants:** those who had regular interaction with the project

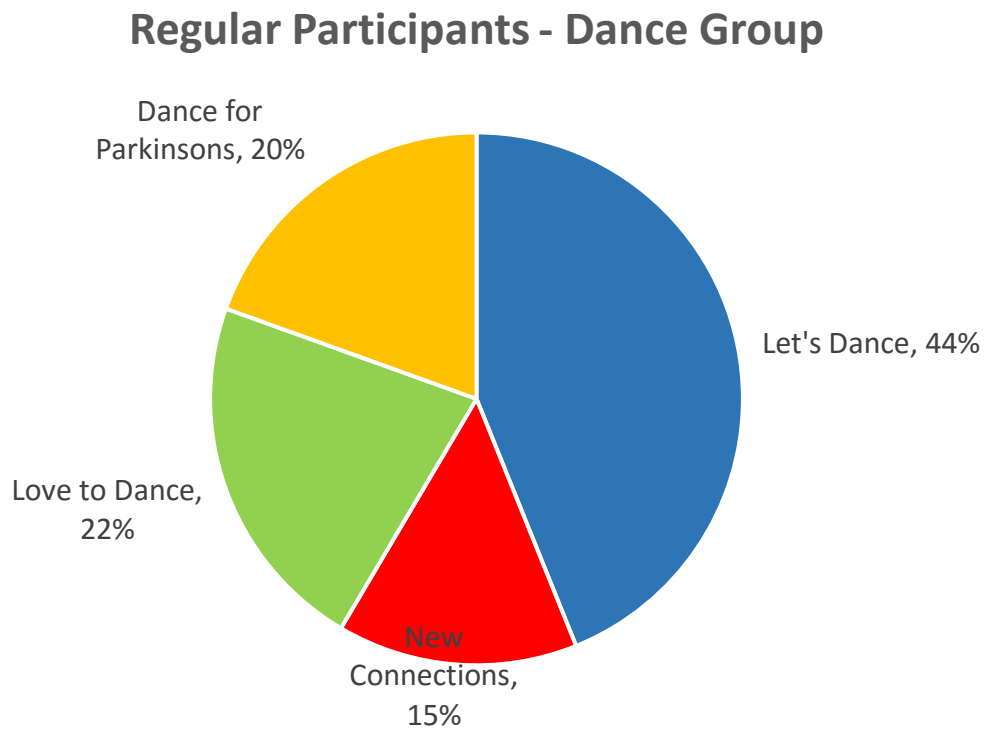
**Festival Participants:** those who attended the Dance Re:Ignite Festival day (this includes some of those from group 1) and provided feedback about the day.

### **Regular Participants** (41 responses)

- The ages of respondents ranged between 58 - 84 with highest percentage (10%) aged 67
- Participants have been attending their groups from between 6 months to 3 years
- Just over half (24) said they do not participate in any other groups
- The other respondents participate in other dance type activities including ballroom, latin, zumba, circle dancing, jazzercise etc
- Most popular reason for participating was to improve fitness - 90%, followed by Enjoyment 88%, Learn new skills 81% etc
- Other reasons included: Come as a carer, keep brain active, improve balance etc



Fig. 1



#### Festival Participants (53 responses)

- 90% of respondents attend a regular dance group (this includes groups like Zumba)
  - When asked why they attended the most popular responses included:
    - I came with a group - 82%
    - Learn new skills, See others perform - 53%
    - Came to perform - 37%
    - Meet new people - 26%
- Majority of respondents felt the organisation of the day, the workshops and lunch were excellent or good
- Many felt that opportunities to meet new people and opportunities to hear about other opportunities were good or excellent
- Other feedback included the need for tea/coffee on arrival, the desire for more of this kind of event, that they enjoyed the day
- 30 respondents asked to be added to the mailing list

## Outputs

### Dance and digital network engagement:

- 5 days of workshops, led by professional Animator with 4 groups of 55+ year olds
- 3 training days/skills sharing workshops for practitioners

### Dance and digital presentation:

- Pilot Dance Re:Ignite festival; day of practical workshops, networking, sharing of work by 55+ year olds dance groups
- Group performances at Dance Ignite Festival<sup>1</sup>
- Creation of 5 minute animation film – Togetherness
- Creation of additional film of the Dance Re:Ignite Festival day <https://vimeo.com/210311694>
- International presentation of Togetherness at dance, film & animations festivals<sup>2</sup>

### Dance and digital profile:

- A network of 20 practitioners has been established
- Current partners such as Herts Sports Partnership, UH Arts, Old Town Hall and Saracens have committed to being part of the development of Dance Re:Ignite
- New dance groups have indicated interest in being part of the network of partners
- A database of participants established to keep them informed of ongoing activities and developments. It includes those who have participated in the different strands of Dance Re:Ignite, plus those who have expressed interest in finding out more

## Attendance and Audiences

- Dance Re:Ignite Festival participants – 119
- Dance Re:Ignite Audience - 129
- Training day workshops
  - Diane Amans training – 14
  - Dance for Parkinsons (online) – 10
  - Dance for Parkinsons – 10
  - Green Candle training – 10
- Mew Lab Animation participants - 47
- Dance Ignite Festival audience – 327
- Online presence/network – 368 (at time of writing)
- Online trailer for Togetherness views - 3832
- Presentation of Togetherness at other festivals audience<sup>3</sup> – 1000
- Presentation of Togetherness at People Dancing International Conference in October 2017
- Panel member to discuss the project and older people dancing at the People Dancing International Conference in October 2107

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<sup>1</sup> Three of the dance groups performed at the event. Originally, they were just to perform at the Dance Re:Ignite Festival but the groups wished for a further opportunity to perform.

<sup>2</sup> Details are to be confirmed. Togetherness is being submitted for screenings over the next year.

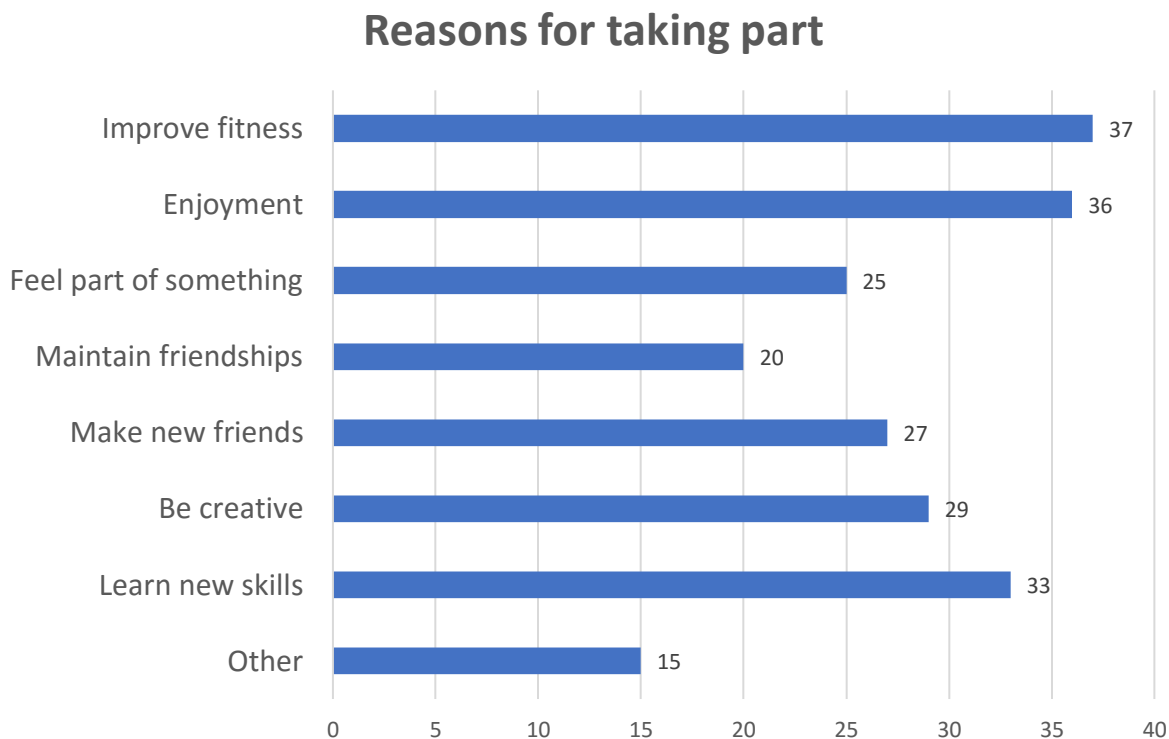
<sup>3</sup> This is the anticipated audience based on the film being presented at 20 different festivals with approximately 50 audience each

## Outcomes

### Participants

The regular participants who took part in the animation workshops and performed at the festivals were asked their reasons for attending their groups (Fig.2). There were 41 respondents, with the top responses including: improve fitness, enjoyment, learn new skills and, be creative.

**Fig.2**

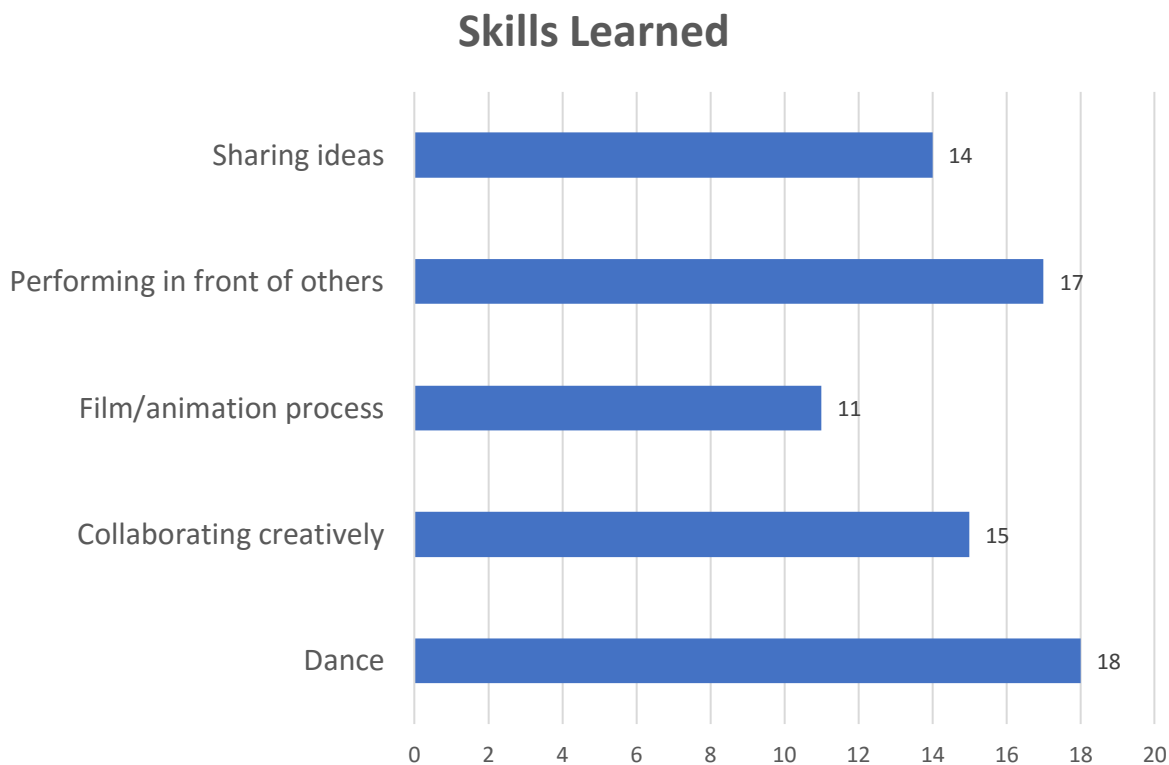


### Learn new skills, both in dance and technology

This outcome relates to both those participants who attended the Dance Re:Ignite Festival and the participants in the groups who took part in the animation workshops and Dance Ignite Festival showcase.

In the baseline questionnaires, 33 of the 41 respondents, who took part in the animation workshops, indicated they took part in their dance groups to learn new skills. Participants from each of the four groups were also asked to complete a follow up questionnaire. Due to the timing of the end their termly sessions only 2 groups - Let's Dance and Love to Dance - returned the questionnaires, with a total of 20 responses. Despite having a smaller number return their responses, all respondents indicated that they had learned new skills while participating in the project. (Fig.3)

Fig.3



The participants were asked if they had increased skills in dance, collaborating creatively, film/animation, performing in front of each other and sharing ideas. All but two participants felt they had increased their dance skills. All but three felt they'd increased skills in performing in front of others and 15 participants felt they had increased their skills in creative collaboration. One participant also wrote that they felt they had increased their ability to concentrate.

When asked what they enjoyed about the project some referred to learning and skills development.

*'Meeting different dance groups and learning different techniques, filming and stage procedures.'*

*'Learning new things with new people.'*

*'Testing myself - proving I can learn new dance routines.'*

Kim Noce from MewLab made observations about the participants during the animation workshops. She felt that the participants in those workshops learned about the animation process and gained experience in being on a film shoot. *They were all introduced to the technique and skills of creating an animation and how controlled and systematic the art form is. The participants also gained experience of being on a shoot with lighting and film recording and learnt about the way animation is captured and photographed.* She thought the experience the participants were given developed their understanding of animation as an art form. *We also feel it widened the participants' knowledge of animation which can sometimes still be limited to conventional cartoons and this project certainly widened the spectrum of how animation can be used to capture the movement of dance and the body.*

During the animation filming the participants were given the opportunity to suggest movements and ideas, which were incorporated into the film process. Kim felt this collaborative approach enabled the participants to develop their skills. *The observational and idea generation skills started to grow as the project developed and we also saw investigational skills and coordination skills improve and flourish as the project was embraced further.*

The workshops at the Dance Re:ignite Festival were well received and participants liked the variety of workshops offered. When asked for their reasons for attending the day, 27 of the 51 respondents indicated they wanted to learn new skills. Participants were also asked for feedback about their experience and some specifically referred to enjoying the opportunity to develop their skills and experience.

*'Enjoyed trying out new skills. A good experience.'*

*'Good chance to see and explore new types of dance.'*

*'Thank you all for this well organised, interesting day with opportunity to learn new techniques for dance with older people. Learning something new e.g. Simone, Pop it, Hip Hop, props to gives new ideas to support dance.'*

Rebecca from Love to Dance felt her group had learned new skills. *Definitely. Some have never choreographed before... Helping with their memories. They are meeting together and practicing outside of class.*

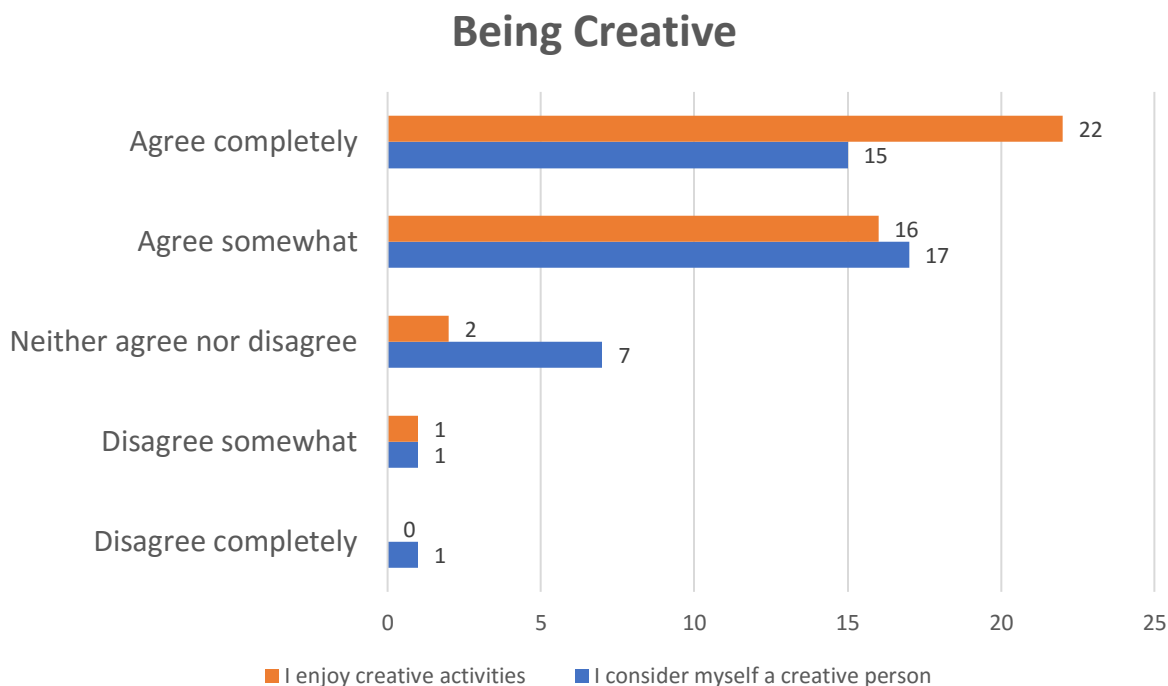
Increase feelings of wellbeing: having ownership of the artistic output

This outcome is focused on the regular participants from the four groups. In the baseline questionnaires 29 of the 41 respondents indicated that being creative was a key reason for taking part (Fig.2).

Three of the four groups who were tracked deliver workshops that collaborate creatively with their participants to develop dances and choreography, with Let's Dance and New Connections having this as a key element of the delivery. Love to Dance, run by the Saracens Sports Foundation operates dance groups across the county. The practitioners are all taught the same choreography they then teach their participants. This model offers a more prescriptive experience of dance, with its focus on fitness and activity, rather than creativity. Therefore, some of the participants were already creating artistic output collaboratively, while others were experiencing it for the first time.

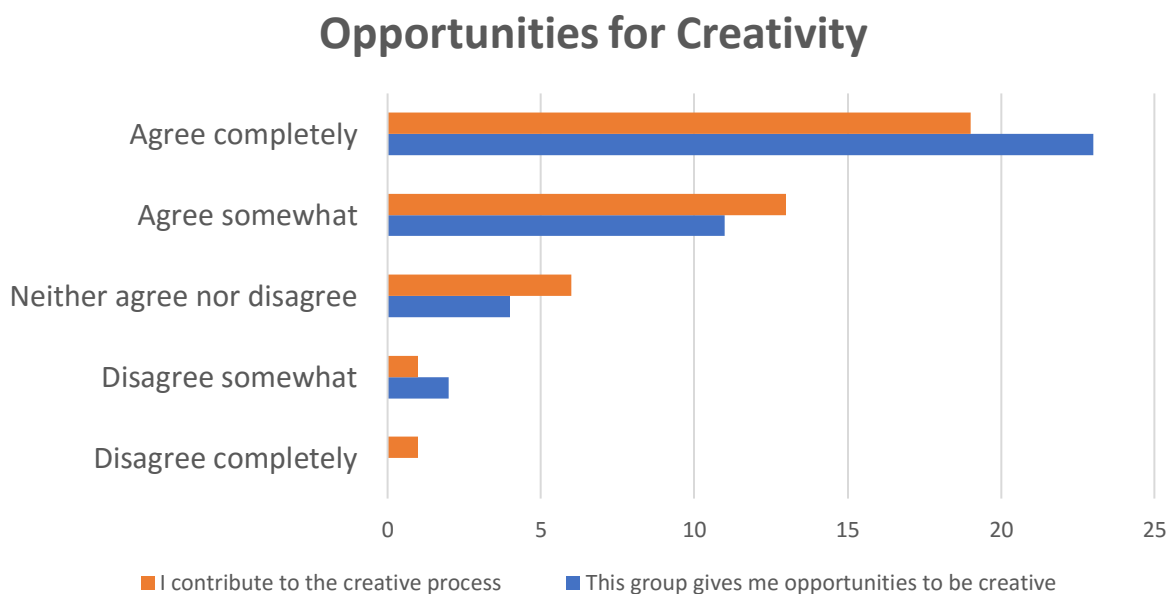
At the start of the project, participants were asked how creative they felt and the opportunities the workshops gave them to be creative (Fig.4). The majority of respondents said they agreed that they enjoy creative activities, with slightly fewer indicating that they felt they were creative themselves.

**Fig.4**



Participants were also asked if they felt they were given opportunities to be creative within their group (Fig.5). Most of the respondents felt they were given opportunities to contribute to the creative process. Most agreed completely or somewhat agreed that they contributed to the creative process, with 3 indicating that they contributed very little or not at all.

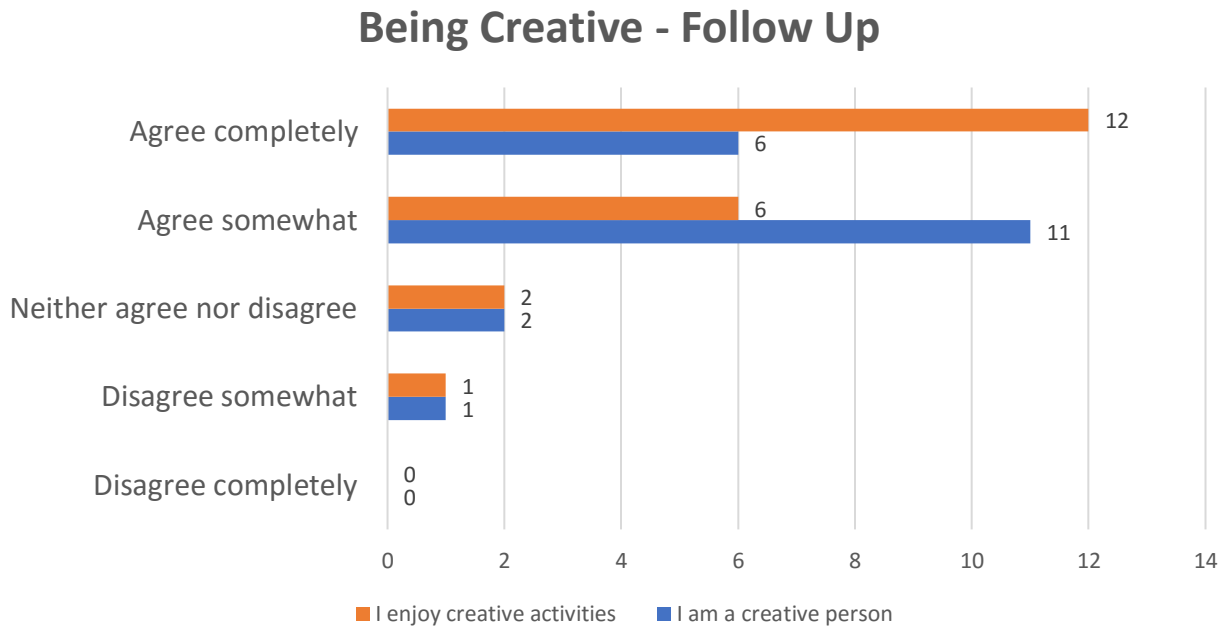
**Fig.5**



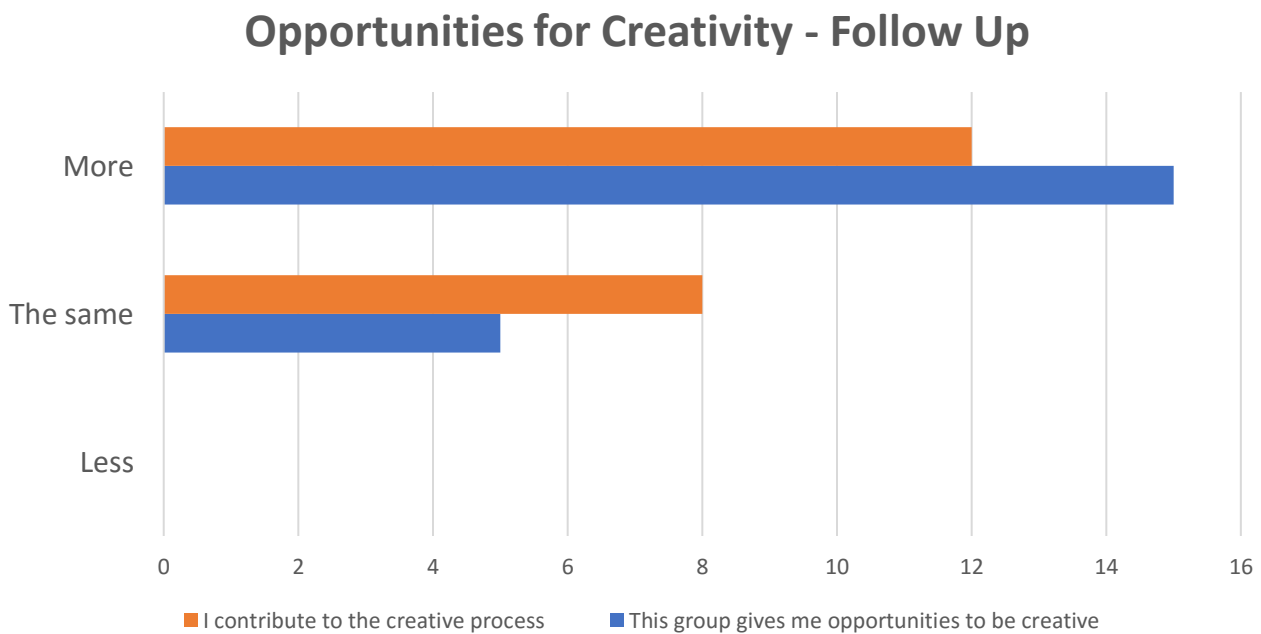
In the follow up questionnaires, participants were asked these questions again, in relation to their participation in the project (Fig.6). While there were fewer respondents, for those that responded, more agreed with feeling that they were creative and enjoyed creativity. Participants were also

asked if they felt whether they had more, or less opportunities for creativity. A clear majority indicated they did and over half indicated they now contribute more to the creative process (Fig.7).

**Fig.6**



**Fig.7**



When asked how they felt about being creative, the responses were positive, particularly for the Love to Dance members, who were given new opportunities to create their own choreography to perform.

Some of the participants felt that being creative was what they enjoyed most about the project.

*I have enjoyed being able to express myself through dance*

*[I have enjoyed] being creative, I have only done prescribed dancing up until now*

*I really enjoyed being part of a creative group*

*Most of our dance and exercise is prescribed. I realise I can think outside the box (be creative). It's been 'ooh' it's alright. It's been really good. I never thought of myself as creative.*

It should be noted that while most of the respondents indicated they enjoyed being creative, some preferred the prescriptive nature of their dance sessions.

Increase feelings of wellbeing: platform to display creativity through the film and festivals

The participants were asked about how confident they felt about performing in front of others at the start of the project (Fig.8). Just over half felt very confident performing in front of others in the group, with a slight drop in those responses when asked about confidence performing in front of friends and family, and those they don't know. In the follow up questionnaires they were asked if, due to taking part in the project, if they had experienced a change in their confidence (Fig.9). There was an increase in all three areas of those who responded, although one responded that they felt less confident performing in front of friends and family.

**Fig.8**

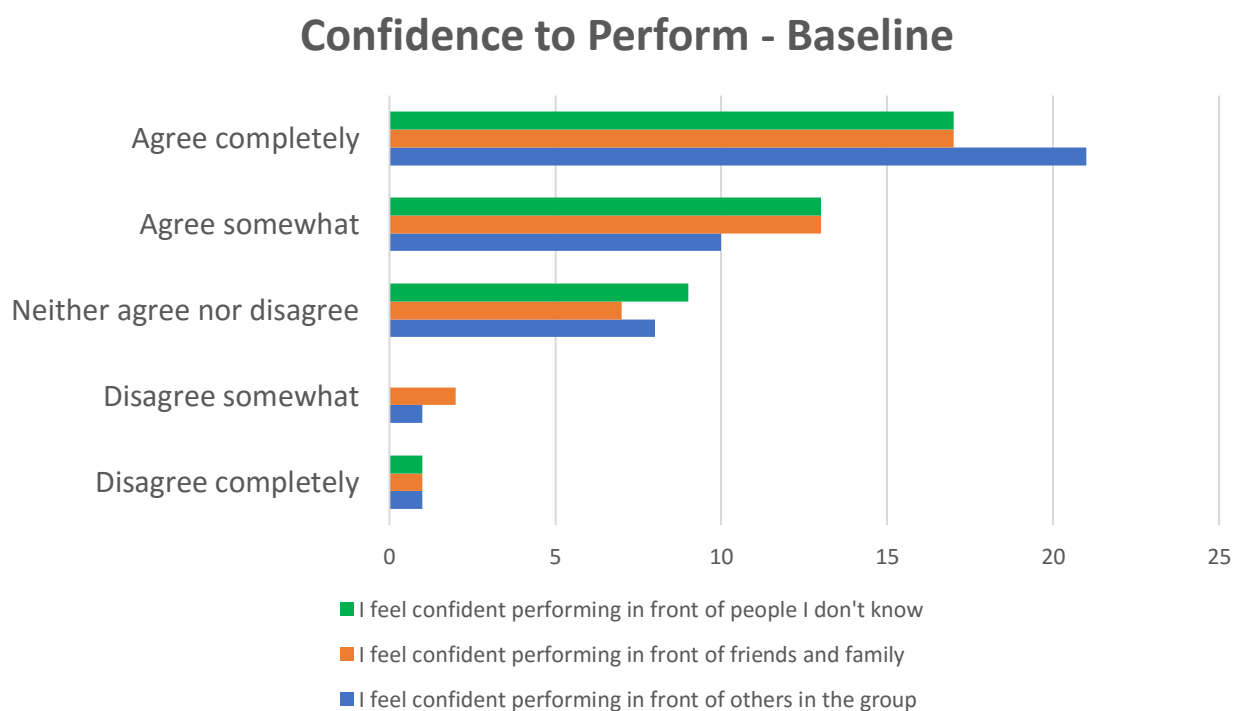
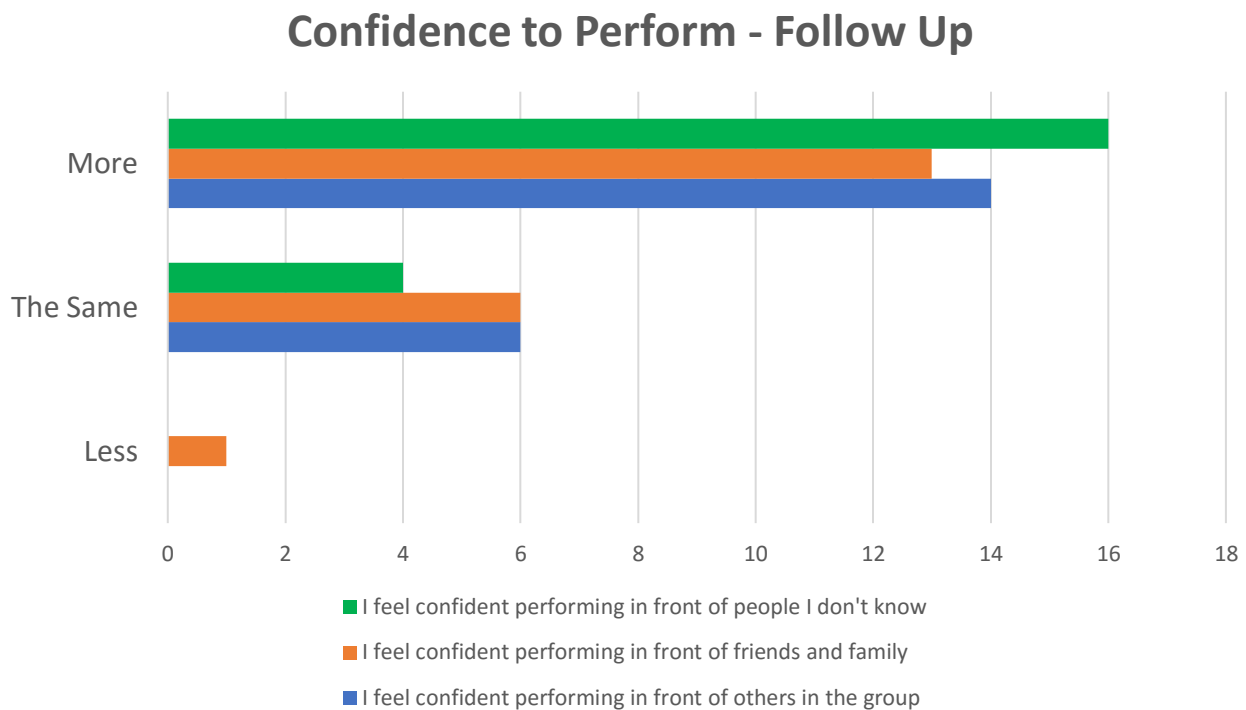




Fig.9



The participants felt more confident about performing and felt better about themselves. Rebecca from Love to Dance, was asked what she had observed the impact of creative collaboration had on the participants: [The participants are] *a lot more confident. They own the choreography.* When talking about their preparation for the Dance Ignite Festival she said: *Their confidence is really improving and they are doing things they didn't they could do before.*

Louise from Let's Dance felt that participation in the Festival had a positive impact. *They were on a real high, felt relevant and connected.* She felt the opportunity to connect with others also increased their confidence. *I think this has given them huge confidence to know that there are other groups out there.*

Increase feelings of wellbeing: making connections with other groups

The Participants were asked in the baseline questionnaires whether they had opportunities to meet with other dance groups (Fig.10) and this was again followed up at the end of the project (Fig.11). While just over half responded that they already felt they had opportunities to meet people from other groups, almost all of those who responded to the follow up questionnaire felt they had more opportunities to meet people from other groups as a result of the project.

Fig.10

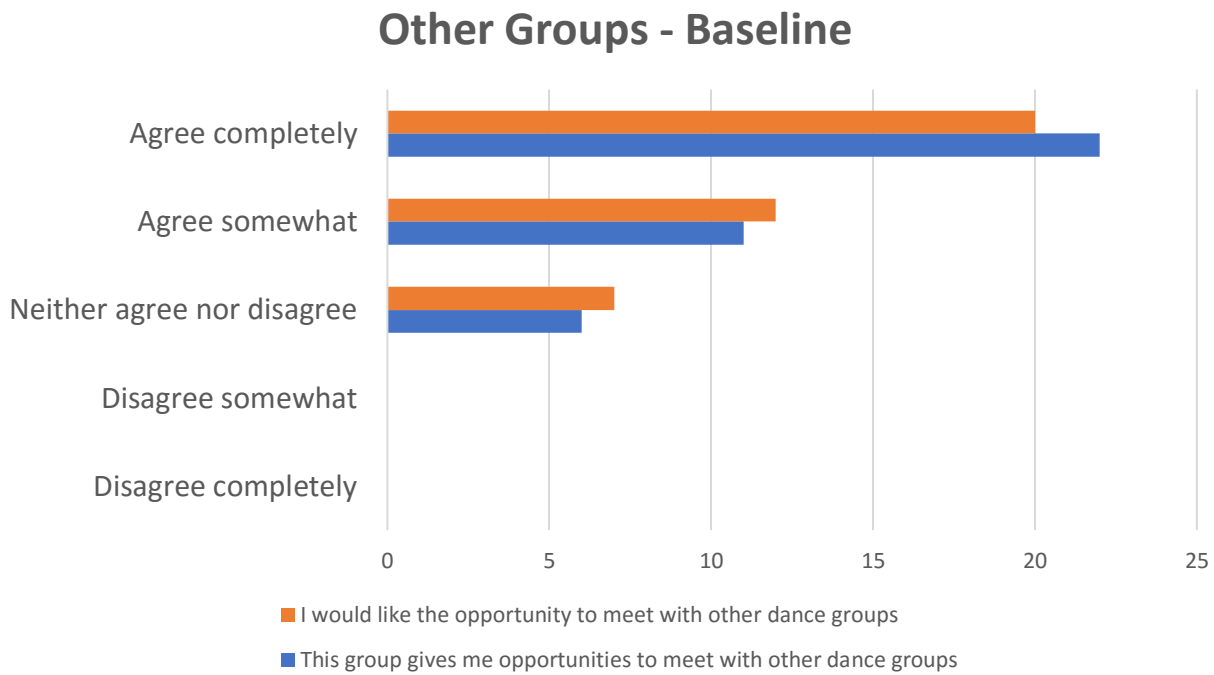
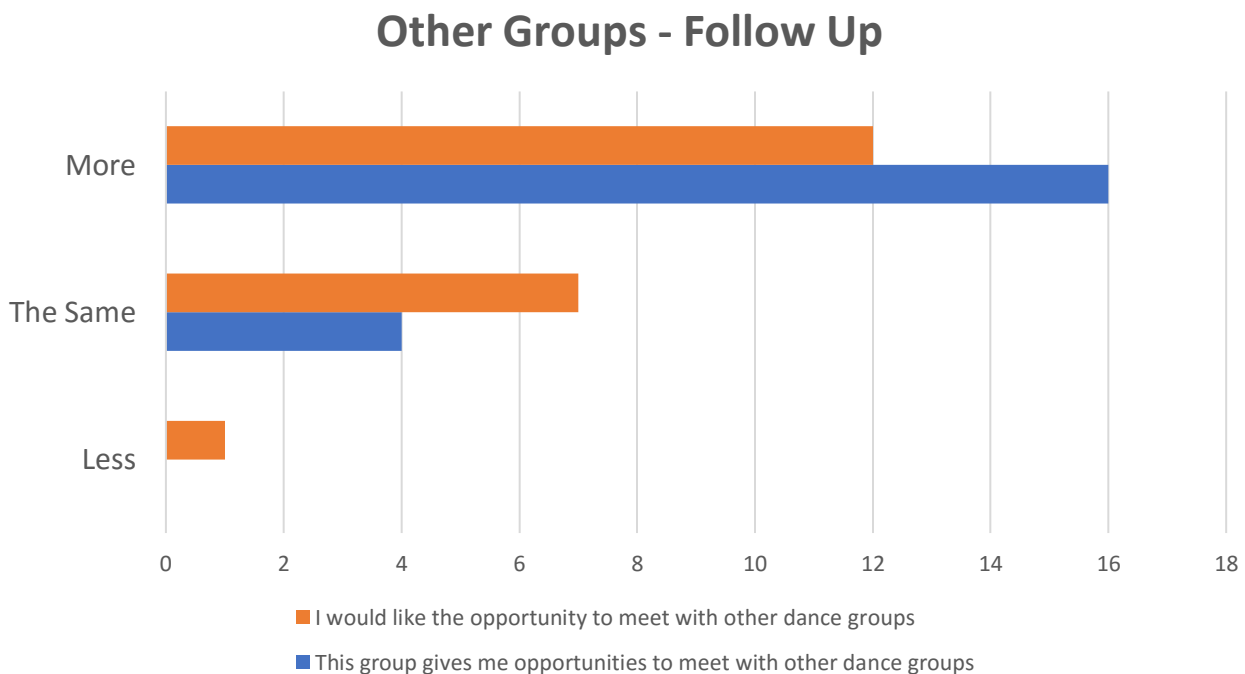


Fig.11



The participants who responded, felt that this had a positive impact on them and for some it was one of the best elements of the project.

Some of the participants felt meeting others was a highlight of the project for them

*I enjoyed meeting other groups and working together collaboratively. Having fun together.*

Laura from New Connections felt that the Festival gave her group the opportunity to connect with others. *The group made connections with others during the workshops and in the backstage. She did feel that this could have been developed further, with more time given to intergroup activities and opportunities for them to see more of each other's work. I feel this is something they were looking forward to and perhaps something that could be further developed. They were sorry not to be able to see all the performances of other older groups.*

Conversely Rebecca felt that her group did not want to connect with others, which she thought may be due to the length of time the group has been running. She did feel however that the Festival, and project overall helped them connect with each other within their groups and strengthen friendships. *They are still in the process of consolidated their friendships in the group. The Festival day enabled them to consolidate their friendships in the group. It's only been going 18months. It gave them a chance to get to know each other better.*

## Practitioners

The practitioners working with the four key groups were asked to complete baseline questionnaires and a follow up interview. Practitioners who just attended the training workshops were asked to complete a baseline and follow up questionnaire.

Of the four groups, only three practitioners completed the questionnaire and took part in the interviews. They were: Louise White - Let's Dance, Rebecca Benford - Love to Dance and Laura Chiabolotti - New Connections.

The practitioners who responded to the questionnaires came from a variety of backgrounds, with experience ranging from extensive working with older people to some still in tertiary education.

Learn new skills, particularly during the training days/skills sharing workshops

In the interviews with practitioners and the responses from the training day questionnaires indicate that the practitioners learned new skills. For some it was learning ideas about how to adapt their work, to be more inclusive.

*I learned how to initiate dance for those who are seated and was given ideas of initiating dance in older people and others. Rebecca*

*For me it was the... tailored exercises for people with Parkinson's, understanding the condition and how Dance/movement can be used in such a beneficial way and the detail in that. Louise*

*I feel the training about Dance and Dementia offered by Green Candle has given me a great range of ideas that can be used in a variety of inclusive settings. Training day participant*

The practitioners also felt they learned skills that they could add to their personal 'arsenal' of activities, as well as enabling them to consider new approaches.

*Some of the activities that Diane was doing are equally suitable for older people and children. Also, appropriate for carers, good to have things that will engage everyone.* Rebecca

A desire from many of the practitioners was for more activities like the training days, to facilitate ongoing learning and practice sharing: *I would like more networking events, more training and advice.*

Evaluate their practice regarding creative collaboration with participants

Of the practitioners who were working with the key groups, both Louise and Laura conduct their sessions with a focus on collaborative creativity, while Rebecca leads her sessions based on predetermined choreography provided by Saracens. Louise and Laura both felt that they were already collaborating creatively with their participants. However, this project has been a different way of working for Rebecca, who at the start of the project responded to the baseline questions that being creative was not an aim for the group, and that she rarely collaborated with the participants on creating their own choreography. This project gave her more opportunity to collaborate with the participants. *The Saracens format is very structured. It was great having the opportunity to perform a piece at the Gordon Craig, did a workshop with the group and workshopped the idea with the group. Most of that has been choreographed by the group.* The Saracens structure is not set up for creative dance, participants did meet outside those sessions to work creatively on their dance for the Dance Ignite performance. Rebecca felt that this project gave her more opportunities to consider options for creative dance. *I wasn't sure how much she could change from Saracens structure. After doing Diane's [Amans] workshop, it feels like I could go back to Saracens to say that they need to change the structure for working with people with a set structure.*

The practitioners who attended the training workshops were asked about their practice, with 16 responses. When asked about their aims for their groups, being creative was a key aim for 11 of the respondents. When asked about how much they collaborate with their groups, 3 responded that they create collaboratively with participants all the time, while 7 responded that they teach prepared choreography all the time.

In the follow up questionnaire, half of the respondents said they collaborate with participants to produce artistic outputs, and facilitate participants to contribute to choreography more than they did before the training. One respondent said they taught less prepared choreography because of the training.

The practitioners were asked what they thought about the workshops and whether they intend to use the learning in their work with older people. All the responses were positive and indicated their intention to incorporate the learning, or provided examples that they already had used some of the skills they had learned.

*'I found it useful hearing about practical experience of the dance leaders and other participants. Knowledge sharing and checking one's own against that and reflecting on what it means for you and the people you work with.'*

*'I have used very large balloons! How useful they can be! And how people enjoy them! Incorporating and assimilating the various knowledge and skills I have designed with my MA and KRA training and how they all mix and match and support each other and opportunity which I am now putting into practice.'*

*'I feel the training about Dance and Dementia offered by Green Candle has given me a great range of ideas that can be used in a variety of inclusive settings.'*

*'The use of different props and creativity has allowed my participants to explore and be expressive in Dance.'*

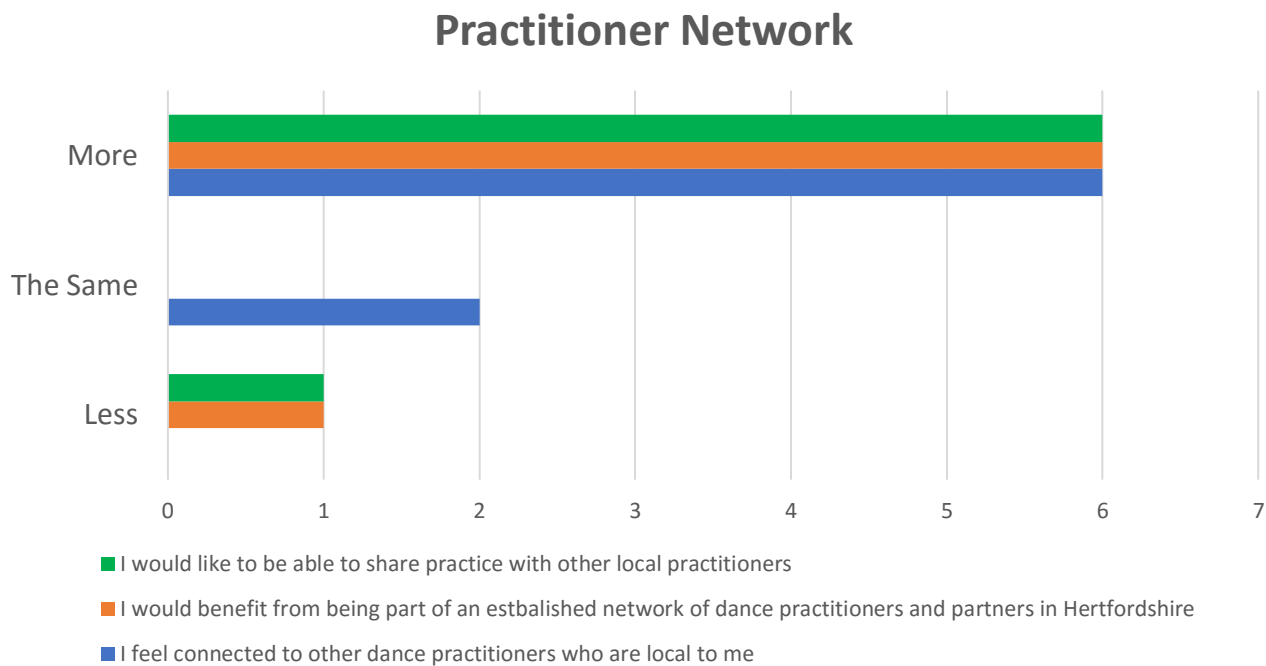
Become part of a Hertfordshire Dance Practitioners network

All the practitioners indicated an interest and desire to become part of a county wide dance practitioners network. They were asked if they already belonged to a network. Of those who responded 8 said they were not part of a network. The other responses included national or education based networks, with just 2 referencing networks that were specific to Hertfordshire.

The practitioners from the key groups indicated that they had started to connect with each other. *Not a formal network has started yet but connections were made.* (Rebecca) They also felt they would be willing to share ideas and skills. *It [a practitioner network] could support me in developing my skills by working alongside others. I would be very happy to offer work shadowing / volunteering experience / hands on experience - in planning and delivery.* (Louise) They all felt that being part of a network would reduce feeling isolated as freelancers and practitioners. *Working as a freelance dance artist I've often felt isolated in my work and I believe that a network could contrast this feeling. It is an invaluable process to share skills with likeminded people creating links and opportunities to research, share and discuss issues related to our practice.* (Laura)

Practitioners who took part in the training days were also asked if they would like to be part of a network of practitioners, with almost all indicating they have more desire to be part of a network. Most of the practitioners also felt more connected to other dance practitioners local to them, after the training. (Fig.12)

Fig.12



All but one of the practitioners said they would like to be part of a network, that offered more training, workshops and could act as a practice and advice sharing forum. One response to the question on what they would like the network to do was: *Networking, advice on practice, how to find funding, how much to charge (what are we worth?)*

At each of the training sessions the practitioners were asked if they were interested in being part of a network. The responses indicate there is a need for a Hertfordshire network and for it to develop. It appears from the follow up questionnaire there is more of a demand for a network than before the training began.

## Partners

Reflect on the partnership and the future development of this work

Partners associated with the dance groups were interviewed for their feedback. They were:  
 Melissa Alexander and Faye Sarron – UH Arts, University of Hertfordshire (Dance for Parkinsons)  
 Clare Bellchambers – Saracens Sports Foundation (Love to Dance)  
 Annie Smith – Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead (Let's Dance)

The partners were asked about their reasons for being involved. All three felt it would be beneficial for participants and their organisations. Clare from Saracens focused on the benefits to participants and practitioners: *It was good to be able to offer something different for our participants. They like trying different things. It was good for our coaches for their development.* Melissa from UH Arts also focussed on the participants; the opportunity to develop skills and work with other professional artists: *It seemed like a really great opportunity for our Dance For Parkinsons*

*participants to have the chance to test other forms of movement and dance activity in a safe environment with like-minded people. They also really liked the idea of working with Mew lab.*

Annie from the Old Town Hall also cited the participants as a reason: *We found from their previous experience in other activities of Big Dance and Herts Heroines an unexpected outcome was retention. It's not just the classes alone but other opportunities.* However, she also stressed the importance of working partnership: *That's become increasingly important for arts orgs due to funding cuts. It was really important for us to work with other partners in Hertfordshire.* She also observed that this project was an opportunity to work in real partnership, rather than seeing the others as competition: *We were working in isolation but were aware of other people working and this was about seeing them as partners rather than a threat/competition.* She also explained the importance of partnership projects like this on organisations like the Old Town Hall. The success of Let's Dance reassures the Councillors... In the last two years, our increase in partners has made a big difference to our members.

The partners were asked about their role in this project. Both Melissa and Annie would have liked a little more opportunity for contact.

*It would have been nice to participate in more of the development meeting for the project with the other partners, I am aware there was a de-brief on the project, but I sadly was not available to attend this. (Melissa)*

*It would have been useful to have an extra meeting, to hear feedback from everyone. The first one was so useful to meet the others... One at a mid-point. (Annie)*

All three said they would like to participate in a project like this again, in a similar capacity, offering similar levels of support including space in kind, marketing support, and practitioner support.

## Network

It was the intention of the project to gauge the appetite for a network of practitioners and participants. There was an almost unanimous response from practitioners wanting a network in Hertfordshire. As a result of this project, a network has developed, made up of practitioners with diverse dance backgrounds.

*A network of 20 artists has developed out of the project. The unexpected element is the broad background of the artists - music, sport, private dance sector, therapy, drama, students and dancers. A core group of 7 attended all the sessions. Carrie*

There is now consideration being given to how the network will function and what it will offer to its members. Some suggestions from practitioners on what they would like it do include:

- More networking of artists
- Having facilitated studio space to 'play' and develop workshop ideas together.
- Explore incorporating more swapping artists / sharing / meet ups between groups

The project has created new and unanticipated partnerships with both local and nationally recognised artists and organisations. Herts Sports Partnership intend to continue to support the project, and UH Arts want to provide more support for future Festival day. The Old Town Hall and Saracens have also indicated their desire to continue to be part of the project. Carrie reports that additional 55+ groups have approached BEEE Creative to be part of future developments. In addition, Green Candle Dance, Danielle Teale (and Dance for Parkinson's Network UK/People Dancing) and Diane Amans have all indicated a wish to continue working with the project.

While a network for participants has not happened, with participants seemingly preferring to stay within their dance groups, a database of participants has been created, that allows for information sharing. When asked about the intention of setting up a group of digital volunteers to support a participant network Carrie responded: *Members of different groups have been engaging with Facebook and there has been sharing of information by email but I think the problem is that they are all specifically connected to their own group rather than 'Dance Re:Ignite'.*

There has been wider spread sharing of event and dance group information. For example, a member of the Saracens group requested support for getting a friend of theirs involved with the Dance for Parkinsons work. Additionally, dance social events held by Saracens have been opened to other groups.

## Learning and Discoveries

While not directly linked to the outcomes identified for this evaluation, it is important to record areas of learning that can be explored and where appropriate, applied to the further development of Dance Re:Ignite.

### *Festival Organisation*

There was feedback from both practitioners and participants about the organisation of the Festival day. The majority of the feedback was extremely positive, however there are some points to consider:

- The Festival was a good opportunity to meet other groups and see what they do (Participant, Practitioner and Partner feedback)
- The range of dance sessions was well received (Participant and Partner feedback)
- Spending time in the animation information session felt like it was at the expense of participating in another (more interesting) workshop (Participant feedback)
- Offer tea/coffee on arrival (Participant feedback)
- Transport was a barrier for some and prevented them from attending (Partner feedback)
- Suggested £5 charge for the Festival to allow resource to be spent in other areas such as enabling more vulnerable groups to participate, or supporting transport to and from the venue (Partner feedback)



### *Age Range*

It was observed at the screening of Togetherness at the Dance Ignite Festival that there was an age gap between the younger dancers – primary and secondary school aged – and the dancers from 55+ groups. It was observed that Dance Re:Ignite may be a vehicle to address those gaps. Specific feedback from partners included:

- There is a gap in provision for 45 – 55 year olds (those still working), who may feel too old for regular provision but are not old enough for 55+ provision
- The project engaged those already active and engaged in dance provision, further investigation into engaging older people who are not engaged could be undertaken. This could include working with care homes and sheltered housing, and budgeting for transport, to support this
- There is potential that elements of the project could support cross-generational work

### *Artists – Commissions and Training*

Feedback about the artists delivering training, and workshops at the Dance Re:Ignite Festival was given. All the older dance participants enjoyed the workshops led by Diane Amans and Simone Sistarelli at the Festival. The partners and practitioners thought a future training workshop could include Diane Amans' work on tailored first aid and safe practice.

### *Film*

Partners and practitioners observed that the film was a positive way to include reluctant/less active groups and individuals.

## Conclusion

Overall, the aims of Dance Re:Ignite have been achieved. It was a complex project with multiple strands, each with their own outcomes. Where outcomes have not been achieved, such as recruitment of digital volunteers, has been due to recognising how the participants interact within their own groups and communicate. It is possible to conclude from this evaluation that there is a desire to continue this work, by practitioners, participants and partners and that foundations are now in place for this work to develop.

## Recommendations

This was an ambitious project. There is the intention to develop the work, to continue to hold more festival days and to engage more participants, practitioners and partners. There are 4 recommendations for consideration, that can be made from this evaluation.

- Explore the feasibility of opening the offer to a wider range of age groups. This may take form in several ways, such as partners forming new groups, inviting a wider age range to the festival days or working with already formed younger groups in a cross-generational collaboration.
- Explore the feasibility of expanding the offer to 'not-yet' engaged participants, such as those who are residents in sheltered accommodation. This would require developing partnerships with housing associations and care homes. There is increasing evidence of the impact on wellbeing participating in dance has for older people. Some of the partners currently involved in the project have experience working with this demographic.
- Make provision to overcome potential barriers to participation when allocating resources. Feedback from this year highlighted that some participants were not able to take part in the Festival due to lack of access to affordable and accessible transport. As the project develops and the reach widens, this will become increasingly prevalent. In addition, should the project begin to include more vulnerable older people from sheltered accommodation, they will require more support to attend events beyond their residences.
- Develop the offer of the Practitioner Network, so that it has a clear offer, can be sustainably managed and utilises an appropriate digital communication platform. This could include exploring how partners may support the network through reciprocal marketing and offering space in kind for workshops, as well as practitioners offering advice and practice sharing.

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