



BEEE CREATIVE

Dance connections in Herts & Beds

#TAG

An Evaluation for BEEE Creative

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Executive Summary

Overview

#TAG was an intergenerational dance programme taking place in three Hertfordshire Districts: Dacorum, Three Rivers, and Watford. It was a featured contribution by those Districts/Boroughs to Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 (HYOC). It explored 'play', gathering related stories across generations and cultures, exploring and presenting them through dance with the local communities in public spaces.

Covid-19

During the early stages of the project the country was placed in lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in the planned activity for this project to be reworked and/or delayed. Much of the activity was adapted to move online. It was anticipated the move to online would have some benefits, such as potentially increasing the reach of the project and enabling greater participation across some of the strands, it was a concern that it would also create barriers for some people to take part. This project did not have the resources to attempt to address this barrier, but it aimed to use this as an opportunity.

Aims

BEEE Creative's mission is to connect people to opportunities and challenge barriers to access to dance. #TAG aimed to support this mission by promoting a sense of belonging through dance and storytelling. In line with HYOC's objectives #TAG aimed to enable access and participation to new audiences and foster new partnerships and ways of working for the future. It aimed to celebrate creativity in the community and home. It was hoped #TAG would be the catalyst for the creation of a shared dance strategy for the three participating Districts/Boroughs.

Headlines

- The project had to make significant adaptations in response to the social restrictions imposed due to Covid-19. This entailed moving most of the planned delivery online, including workshops and the final celebration event. Despite this most of the project's outcomes were achieved.
- The adaptations enabled BEEE Creative and partners to explore new ways of working that will inform future project planning and delivery. This includes a better understanding of how and why participants engage online. It enabled exploration of how this removes – and presents – barriers to participation.
- Anticipated reach to new audiences was not achieved. However, it did exceed anticipated reach numbers, and deepen engagement and strengthen relationships with those already engaging with BEEE Creative. Conversely, it did reach some new participants who were unlikely to have taken part had it not been for the restrictions of Covid-19.
- Factors for successful partnership working between the three Local Authority partners were identified, which can be factored into planning for future projects
- The project did support BEEE Creative's aim to develop dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire, through its successful mentoring programme, training webinar series, and Local Authority partnership.

Recommendations

Practitioner Training: Explore a range of training options that included a blended online/live offer. A mixed approach in both depth of content and method of engagement could be explored.

Online Training: A practical recommendation to ensure a uniform standard of quality from presenters would be to provide a more specific brief regarding presenting tools and methods. There was a mix of quality of presentations and it may be that some of the presenters would benefit from support in this area.

Mentoring: If possible, consider lengthening the mentoring timescale so that some longitudinal work may be factored in.

Blended Offer: Significant learning about who accesses an online offer and how they access has been undertaken through this project. It is recommended that this learning, alongside that of other projects is synthesised to develop a blended delivery strategy that could be applied across BEEE Creative's work.

Introduction

#TAG was an intergenerational dance programme taking place in three Hertfordshire Boroughs and Districts: Dacorum, Three Rivers, and Watford. It was a featured contribution by those Districts/Boroughs to Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 (HYOC). It explored 'play', gathering related stories across generations and cultures, exploring and presenting them through dance with the local communities in public spaces. Initially it aimed to experiment with digital resources as a tool to provide legacy. It was hoped that this work would enable the creation of a shared strategy for dance across the districts that has future potential to roll out across the county.

Covid-19

During the early stages of the project the country was placed in lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant severe disruption to planned activity as people were required to stay at home, businesses closed, and Local Authorities had to focus attention on responding to the pandemic. This resulted in the planned activity for this project to be reworked and/or delayed. Much of the activity was adapted to move online. These changes have been outlined in [Covid-19 Adaptations](#)

It was anticipated the move to online would have some benefits, such as potentially increasing the reach of the project and enabling greater participation across some of the strands, it was a concern that it would also create barriers for some people to take part. Digital poverty and access to digital technology continues to be a barrier. This project did not have the resources to attempt to address this, but it aimed to use this as an opportunity to assess the extent of any barriers presented as a result of having to move some of the activity online.

Aims and Outcomes

BEEE Creative's mission is to connect people to opportunities and challenge barriers to access to dance. #TAG aimed to support this mission by promoting a sense of belonging through dance and storytelling. In line with HYOC's objectives #TAG aimed to enable access and participation to new audiences and foster new partnerships and ways of working for the future. It aimed to celebrate creativity in the community and home. It was hoped #TAG would be the catalyst for the creation of a shared dance strategy for the three participating Districts/Boroughs.

To assess if the aim above has been met the outcomes below were identified. However, due to the significant adaptations of the project, some of the outcomes listed have not been able to be assessed. The detail of this impact is outlined in [Methodology](#).

Audiences

- 75% audience and participants will come from targeted areas/groups
- 50% audience indicate they would like future access to dance
- Audiences identify increased connection to their community

Participants

- Participants indicate they would like to take part in future dance projects
- Participants identify increased connection and belonging to their community

Practitioners

- Practitioners will develop their practice
- Practitioners will identify increase in confidence
- Practitioners will make new professional connections

Partners

- New cross-sector partnerships are developed, and existing partnerships strengthened
- A model of cross-district working for devising and delivering dance is developed

Covid-19 Adaptations

The impact of Covid-19 on the delivery of this project has been significant. The planned delivery from face to face interventions had to be adapted so that the majority of the outputs could be conducted online. The aim was to ensure the continued delivery of the outcomes, even if the activity significant adaptation. At the time of writing, due to the time lag caused by the pandemic, the Alexa strand was still being delivered.

Intended Strands	Delivered Strands
<p>Seek and Hide: A multi-sensory performance, using a material gathered from a series of dance, animation and augmented reality workshops with community groups. It will explore empathy through play, creating a conversation with communities. The performance will combine professional and participatory elements.</p>	<p>Seek and Hide: The live performance changed to a pre-recorded performance. As a film, it will be sent to animation festivals which was not part of the original intention. The live community workshops were delivered online; both animation and dance workshops. Two, 6-week screenings of TAG and Seek and Hide took place. This only happened as the films were created instead of live content. This has increased the audience reach of the project. The augmented reality element was unable to take place due as the workshops did not take place on site.</p>
<p>District Whispers: Led by Casson and Friends, this is a school project that links 3 schools together digitally to co-create a performance piece. Choreography will be developed through playing with the way information is passed and interpreted.</p>	<p>Alexa: BEEE Creative were unable to take work into schools due to Covid-19 restrictions. Therefore, this strand was reworked and BEEE Creative invested in being part of Tim Casson's new Alexa project which encourages people to get dancing at home via the Alexa technology. Tim will be going in to three schools to trial the app. It is an opportunity for young people to contribute their ideas and be part of the research and development of the next stage of the Alexa project.</p>
<p>TAG2020 Dance Film: A community dance film, working with multiple neighbourhood areas in each district.</p>	<p>TAG2020 Dance Film: A community dance film - was delivered via Zoom and 'street' based activity (maintaining social distancing). No augmented reality could be included as although there was some live elements, due to social distancing and not being on site, this could not happen.</p>
<p>Intergenerational Dance & Music Collaboration: A performance that will include older adults and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities with artists from Silverbirch Dance Company and Hertfordshire Music Service. Initially with a film output but potential for a live version at a later point.</p>	<p>Intergenerational Dance & Music Collaboration: the commission still took place but as a film project rather than a live performance. As a result, there was no live music, but two film makers were used instead.</p>
<p>Photographic Exhibition: To capture the stories of the local communities 20 photographs of Hertfordshire people dancing will be exhibited online</p>	<p>Photographic exhibition: was delayed and has been reworked so it is not of the project process anymore but revisiting material and people instead. The</p>

	exhibition will be online and then in venues in 2021 when they reopen to the public
Documentary Film: Short films on each strand of activity will be combined at project conclusion to share beyond the life of the project	Documentary Film: This went ahead as planned
#TAG Showcase: Public presentation of all commissioned work	#TAG Showcase: With Watersmeet Theatre closed and social distancing restrictions and capacity restrictions a public presentation was not possible. Instead, an online finale weekend took place that included: workshops, performances, talks and an online gallery exhibition.
Oral History Collection: Stories about play will be collected from all the community groups engaged in the project, with a focus on different cultures and generations	Oral History Collection: this took place but with stories collected via zoom. As a result, a podcast has been made as an additional element of this strand.
Mentoring: Artists and admin team will be given mentoring opportunities. For example, top level choreographers for local practitioners and local practitioners mentor emerging practitioners	Mentoring: has continued as planned
Training: A range of seminar events on best practice will be delivered. This will include a conference day for schools with Motionhouse Dance Company.	Training for artists: The conference for teachers happened in March as planned but the seminars were delivered as webinars instead. Online delivery allowed the creation of a more varied programme with practitioners and trainers from further afield.

Links to Project Outputs

- Play: <https://vimeo.com/458942050>
- #TAG Dance Film: <https://vimeo.com/437226110>
- #TAG finale: <https://vimeo.com/490661158>
- Oral Histories: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/heritage-hub/oralhistoryarchive/beee-creative>
- Seek and Hide introduction live broadcast: <https://vimeo.com/462150345>
- Seek and Hide community film: <https://vimeo.com/476598443>
- Seek and Hide Taster Performance <https://hidebecauseiwantyouofindme.wordpress.com/2020/09/26/live-taster-performance-and-dance-workshop-with-anna-spink/>
- Seek and Hide Masterclass <https://hidebecauseiwantyouofindme.wordpress.com/2020/07/04/master-class-and-taster-session/>
- Online Exhibition: <https://beee-gallery.vercel.app>

Please note, the professional Seek and Hide film cannot be made available at this time as it is being submitted to international festivals. The links above can be accessed in the gallery until the end of February 2021. The gallery link will no longer work beyond that date, but the digital project outputs will continue to be available via the individual links above.

Headline Findings

- The project had to make significant adaptations to all of its strands of delivery in response to the social restrictions imposed due to Covid-19. In practice this entailed moving most of the planned delivery online, including workshops and the final celebration event. Despite this most of the project's outcomes were achieved.
- The project adaptations enabled BEEE Creative and partners to explore new ways of working that will inform future project planning and delivery. This includes better understanding who accesses online activities and how they prefer to engage. It has also enabled further exploration of where this removes and presents barriers to participation.
- The project did not achieve its anticipated reach to new audiences, due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19. However, it did exceed its original anticipated reach numbers, and engage with participants who have deepened and strengthened their relationship to BEEE Creative. Conversely, it did reach some new participants who were unlikely to have taken part had it not been for the restrictions of Covid-19.
- Factors for successful partnership working between the three Local Authority partners were identified, which can be factored into planning for future projects
- The project did support BEEE Creative's aim to develop dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire, through its successful mentoring programme and training webinar series. The Local Authority partners were also able to identify their next steps to develop dance in their localities.

Methodology

A series of tools were designed to evaluate the project against its original outcomes and activities. As a result of the adaptations that were made throughout the project, some these tools have become obsolete. Due to the nature of participation for participants, much of the usual format of conducting baseline and follow up activities was not possible. Therefore, the focus of the evaluation has shifted more on the impact on practitioner and infrastructure development, and development of BEEE Creative with regards to developing its online offer that is as accessible as possible and retains a high-quality participant experience and artistic output.

A wellbeing evaluation of activity associated with HYOC, commissioned by Hertfordshire Public Health, was aligned with this project. It was intended that wellbeing outcomes associated with the Seek and Hide strand would be addressed via this evaluation. At the time of writing, due to the delays and adaptations to other projects associated with HYOC as a result of Covid-19, this evaluation had not yet been completed. Some data was made available. However, the adaptations to the delivery model has resulted in sample sizes too small to make conclusions regarding the wellbeing outcomes.

The original planned evaluation activities intended to make use of quantitative data to report on the outputs and outcomes around participation and reach. It aimed to use a formative, qualitative approach to assess the impact the project has on skills and learning, connection, and wellbeing. Due to the adaptations to the project some of the above has not been possible. Therefore, the evaluation has focussed on artist/practitioner and partner feedback, providing anecdotal feedback on participant outcomes in addition to insight into practitioner development, with some direct participant feedback. A detailed breakdown of the project outcomes and associated evaluation activities conducted can be found in [Appendix A – Outcomes Matrix](#) and [Appendix B – Methodology](#).

Outputs

At the time of writing the following outputs of the project had been recorded:

Seek and Hide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 online workshops • 4 performances • 1 pre-recorded watch party • 2 x 6 week screenings of Seek and Hide • 66 participants • 311 audience 	TAG2020 Dance Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 film produced • 14 online and socially distanced workshops • 249 participants • 948 audience 	Oral History Collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 oral histories collected • 16 participants (includes University of Hertfordshire Oral History team)
Documentary Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 film produced 	#TAG Showcase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 online events • 39 participants • 154 audience 	Intergenerational Dance & Music Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 workshops • 34 participants • Audience 170
Mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 mentoring sessions • 5 mentees • 6 mentors(?) 	Training for artists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 training events • 135 participants/attendees 	Alexa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 workshops • 3 schools • 92 participants

Numbers at a glance

Artists/ creatives	51
Participants	650
Audience (live)	83
Audience (broadcast, online, in writing)	21034
Other staff	48.5
New products	15
Number of performances/exhibition days	63
Total	21944.5

The above figures account for all activity delivered to date. Due to having to pause the work there are still four events yet to take place that will increase the overall numbers reached. There are still three elements of the project to be delivered where the audience reach will be increased:

Photographic Exhibition: there will be 18 weeks of the photograph exhibition, at three different venues

Seek and Hide: the film is being submitted to international dance and film festivals

Alexa: the Alexa project will become publicly available with more participants taking part

Project Partners

Project Team	Partners
Carrie Washington – Project Lead Hannah Delaney – Project Administration	Dacorum Borough Council Three Rivers Borough Council Watford Borough Council University of Hertfordshire, School of Humanities Hertfordshire County Dance Teachers Association

Participants

The people who took part in this project ranged in age from children to 80+. The participants were drawn from those who engage in other BEEE Creative activities, as well as those who are new to BEEE Creative. The focus was on reaching participants who are residents in Hertfordshire Boroughs of Dacorum, Three Rivers, and Watford.

The adaptations needed to be made to respond to the Covid-19 restrictions has meant that the reach of participants has not been what was intended. Initially the focus was on reaching new audiences and developing community partnerships with community groups. This was not possible due to the necessary adaptations, with Carrie stating: *The biggest shift due to Covid-19 that type of relationship building requires face to face and connecting with community organisations.*

Therefore, the work was refocused on working with those who were already connecting with BEEE Creative and to use it as an opportunity to develop how those participants connect with BEEE Creative. Carrie stated: *The main shift has been from not reaching new audiences to developing our current audiences.*



What Happened

The bulk of this evaluation focusses on the artist development, and partnership strands. In addition, audience and participant feedback has been analysed where collected. However, due to the challenges in gathering this data, this is limited. The evaluation also explores the learning from the project with regard to digital discoveries and the development of dance infrastructure in Dacorum, Three Rivers, and Watford. For clarity, it will be structured by outcome, rather than strand, as multiple strands contribute to each outcome.

Audiences

The project engaged with participants and audience, with a total attendance of 21758. A large number of those engagements (20956) were either as online audience, or town centre audience where it is not possible to ascertain where those audiences were from. However, of those participants and audience who engaged more directly with the activity (802 engagements) 80% came from the three partner districts, with the following breakdown:

- Dacorum: 28%
- Three Rivers: 27%
- Watford: 25%
- Other: 20%

BEEE Creative was disappointed not to be able to reach as many new participants as originally hoped as the project needed to adapt its focus. It therefore refocussed its efforts on strengthening its relationships with existing participants. It was felt that there had been a positive impact in spite of the changes. Carrie stated: *The knock-on effect is that we have a real core of participants who are invested in trying new ways of working, trying new things, being creators and creatives.*

It was challenging to conduct feedback activities with audience due to the nature of the engagement so very few responses were collected from the different events. Where feedback was taken, participants were keen to take part in future similar dance activities. They were asked how they would like to engage, with four options: entirely online, blended – mostly online, blended – mostly live, completely live. The responses from participants indicate that they would be enthusiastic to join in with all of the above formats.

Reasons were given as to why they would wish to engage again. The respondents felt pride at taking part

- *The whole enterprise has been a great experience resulting in a joyful film*
- *I loved every minute of it and had lots of fun, looking forward to the other projects*
- *I take pride in having been a participant in this project*

It was not possible to gauge responses from audience due to the nature of the engagement. Therefore, it is not possible to ascertain if audiences felt an increased connection to their community. However, participants have provided anecdotal feedback to that effect. For example: *I've heard nothing but positive feedback from friends who've seen the video.*

#TAG has achieved its intended outcome of reaching 75% participants and audience from the three target Boroughs. While it is not possible to conclusively ascertain if it has achieved the outcomes of 50% audience indicating they would like future access to dance, and they felt increased connection to community, the sample of feedback taken indicates a positive response to the work.

Participants

The participants on this project ranged from young children to older adults. For the Seek and Hide strand, additional evaluation activities were planned to align with the HYOC wellbeing evaluation. These were conducted by their evaluation lead, with some of the findings below. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the engagement and the relatively small numbers of participants for this strand, the sample size is too small to provide significant conclusions.

Of those participants who did provide feedback they indicated they would like to take part in future projects.

- *The whole enterprise has been a great experience resulting in a joyful film which merits multiple viewings as you see something slightly different each time.*

Again, it is not possible to conclude if participants felt increased connection to their communities. However, from the small sample received, those respondents did indicate an increased feeling of community connection.

- *Seeing other people having fun, laughing and being a bit mad...It was also nice listening to other peoples ideas.*
- *I think the end result is a film that celebrates the diversity of family life and communities, the beauty to be found in our surroundings and nature, and I think it shows we can be joyous, creative and energetic in spite of social restrictions imposed by lockdown.*

There were some unexpected outcomes for those who took part. One participant stated how taking part had reassured their family, further afield, of their wellbeing.

- *Seeing me in the films produced has been reassuring to my family around the world that I am fine - they have appreciated it*

The schools strand of planned activity, District Whispers, had to be re-evaluated as schools were not in a position to support the delivery in its original format. BEEE Creative, still working with Casson and Friends, partnered with them on the development of a new project that aimed to test the development of dance interaction with the Amazon Alexa. It was planned for this work to go into schools or dance schools in each of the partner districts. While participating schools had been confirmed, at the time of writing only one school had taken part. The other two schools had to postpone due to other circumstances and the third lockdown.

The school students that did take part – Potten End – were asked a simple baseline and follow up question during their workshop. Two workshops took place, with a total of 52 students. Of those:

- 41 did not take part in dance outside of school
- 31 had an Amazon Alexa at home
- 15 would like to do more dance activity at home
- 17 would like to use a dance based skills app at home with family and friends

This indicates that there may be some further interest in using this technology in this way. However, it is not possible to understand this conclusively with the current sample size.

Practitioners

Development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire is a strategic priority for BEEE Creative. Development opportunities for dance practitioners was a significant strand of #TAG. There were three key elements to the practitioner development strand: Motionhouse workshop for CDTA teachers, practitioner training workshops (webinars), and practitioner mentoring.

Teacher workshop with Motionhouse

BEEE Creative recognises that the development of dance teachers in schools in Hertfordshire is a key element to the development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire. The Motionhouse workshop took place just before the first lockdown in March 2020, therefore it was a live experience. The teachers worked with Motionhouse for a day, exploring their practice. It was also a networking opportunity for the teachers.

The teachers who took part in the day ranged from Primary to Secondary students. A feedback tool was designed for this work, however as Motionhouse required the teachers to use their feedback forms, these have been used instead to avoid asking the teachers to complete two separate forms. It should be noted that while 21 forms were returned, only 17 were legible.

The teachers were asked a series of questions about how they felt about the day, and if it met their expectations. While they were not asked specifically if they felt they had learned new skills or if they felt they had developed their practice, it is possible to ascertain this from responses to the open questions they were asked.

All the responses were extremely positive, where they felt they had learned useful skills that they could pass on to their students.

Examples of their comments include:

- *I am dance trained and I still learned lots about Primary dance*
- *It provided ways into choreography/creative work with KS1 and 2*
- *I now have more confidence teaching contact dance and will be doing so*

All of the teachers felt they were able to take away new techniques that they could apply to their teaching and would benefit their students.



Practitioner Training Workshops

BEEE Creative had intended to run a series of seminar workshops for dance practitioners in Hertfordshire, on a range of topics. These were converted to webinar format in response to lockdown. The webinars were on a range of topics and included case studies from experienced dance practitioners and other experts.

The topics for the webinars were:

- An Introduction to Social Prescribing for Dance Practitioners in Hertfordshire
- Creative Case for Diversity
- Barriers to Participation
- Mental Health Awareness
- Dementia Awareness
- Developing access to dance in Hertfordshire

The attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of all of the sessions. In total, 7 questionnaires were completed. The most popular webinar and one the respondents found most useful (5) was the Introduction to Social Prescribing. Some of the comments regarding this included:

- *I didn't know much about this before [social prescribing]. I could also see how my practice could fit into this and how to go about having some dialogue with agencies.*
- *They were all useful. Particularly the social prescribing one as I am currently working on social prescription projects.*

The attendees were asked to consider how the webinars may have helped their practice and were asked a series of questions on this. All attendees strongly agreed, or agreed somewhat to the following statements:

1. The webinars have helped me to reflect on my practice
2. The webinars have helped me to develop my practice
3. I feel confident in applying the learning from the webinars to my practice
4. I feel more confident as a practitioner

The responses to the final two questions were more mixed, with some neither agreeing nor disagreeing, or disagreeing.

1. I feel more connected to other dance professionals in Hertfordshire
2. I will make use of my new connections

This correlates with comments from some respondents where they indicated they had benefited from the webinars, but were unable to network or make connections, due to the webinar format.

- *It would have been useful to have been able to chat with other participants*

The format of the webinars was considered and the attendees were asked their opinions on the format of having an expert present the information, with experienced practitioners sharing case studies of work relating to the topic. Most of the respondents felt that this was a good approach.

- *It was good to hear from those applying it in practice, their learning and experiences*
- *Very useful and valuable in extending the message of the presentations to applied settings.*

Where there were comments that they did not find the format useful referred to specific topics that were less relevant for the respondent, or they did not enjoy a particular presentation.

BEEE Creative aims to continue offering training and development opportunities to practitioners in Hertfordshire. The attendees were asked follow-up questions about future training opportunities in terms of areas they would like support, the format and length of the training, and how they would like to take part in training.

Responses to the question about future training topics can be grouped into three different themes:

1. Project management – developing, planning, and fundraising for projects
2. Access – methods for outreach, identifying and removing barriers
3. Inclusion – particularly working with people with disabilities, working with older people

The attendees were asked if they would be interested in, and benefit from, a more in-depth training programme. Most of the respondents felt this would be of interest to them, with the majority making similar suggestions on the format that included a mix of webinars and longer practical day training sessions.

- *Having a series of webinars as an introduction and then more in-depth training either face-to-face or online but with more interaction.*
- *Spread out over a longer period of time as part of a CPD programme.*

Some respondents wanted more opportunity to connect with the other practitioners. One suggestion included making use of online break out groups.

- *Not necessarily more sessions, but maybe longer sessions with more in-depth information and more connection with other participants.*

Whereas another respondent took this idea further and suggested using the learning to inform peer-supervision groups.

- *Possibly having an intense face-to-face whole day of training and then a follow-up training online to feedback and share with each other how what we have integrated what we have learned in our practice. Nearly as peer-supervision groups: having a training day and then multiple come back sessions to reflect and together interrogate what does and doesn't work.*

Some respondents thought it was a good idea, but they felt they would not be able to fit in longer, more in-depth training.

- *I liked the one-off sessions as they were easy to fit into your day. More in-depth sessions would be useful but difficult to fit into a working day!*

As this programme was delivered entirely online the attendees were asked how they might want to participate in future training programmes, when the option of meeting in person is available again. They were given four options ranging from entirely online to entirely face to face. Interestingly, all respondents indicated they would be extremely likely to engage if it was entirely online, however, only 1 indicated they would be extremely likely to engage in entirely live training.

In summary, the webinars were successful in achieving their outcome of supporting the skills development of the practitioners, but less so in providing networking opportunities. There were tangible benefits to entirely delivering online. These included removing the barrier of travel; Hertfordshire is a big county and travel time within it can be considerable, and expensive. Additionally, due to the removal of travel restrictions, BEEE Creative was able to diversify the range of artists and experts it used to deliver the sessions. It is unlikely that it would have been able to access the breadth of expertise to attend the sessions in person due to time, travel and therefore budget restrictions.

The notable downside for this work is that it is more challenging to make connections with other practitioners. Due to the size of Hertfordshire, practitioners can work in isolation; so that peer support becomes an important factor in the development of dance infrastructure.

It is evident that future training and development opportunities should be built around a mixed model of live and online opportunities. There is appetite for longer and more in-depth training. It is recommended that a process is created to ensure a uniform standard of quality of all presentations is maintained.

Mentoring

The mentoring strand was open to both emerging and more experienced practitioners. In total 6 practitioners were matched with mentors. To gauge their starting point, their applications were used as a baseline as these outlined their experience to date, their identified areas for development, and expectations from mentoring. Follow up interviews were conducted with 5 of the practitioners to ascertain if they felt they were able to develop their practice and their next steps.

The approach was individualised to each mentored practitioner, as each was at a different stage in their development and had identified different needs. Some had specific mentors in mind who were approached, while others worked with mentors identified with BEEE Creative. Examples of mentoring included:

- Support to develop artistic practice
- Support in writing funding applications, in particular to Arts Council England
- Support in diversifying skill sets, such as considering project development, producing, and diversifying who they work with

Developing Practice

All of the mentored practitioners interviewed agreed that the mentoring developed their practice. While some felt the mentoring had a greater impact on their practice than others, each identified areas where the mentoring has supported their development, regardless of the stage of their career.

For all of them they felt the mentoring had given them the ideas and tools move forward with their development. For example, Practitioner A worked with mentors Moving Memory Dance and Babylon Arts to support her reflect on her work, decide her direction and develop a business plan. She said of the mentoring: *It's impacted hugely. I can start to see a way to get to that space...I have evaded this work for a long time and it's forced me to look at myself and look at things in a more strategic way. Moving away from me delivering to what can I achieve in the position I have created, and how can I do all of those things.*

Practitioner B was paired with Full House Theatre's Artistic Director, Harriet Hardie, who supported her making an application to Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Fund. She felt the mentoring had enabled her to develop her strategic thinking for her business and the project. She said: *She [Harriet] broke down what our longer-term goals are. My role is artistic director but I do so much other stuff. It helped me to think what's important about the choreography I make and defining my role within the company.*

Practitioner C also worked with Moving Memory Dance, and dance artist Laura Chiabolotti as she wanted to expand her practice working with older people, and her inclusive practice. She felt the mentoring had both helped her to develop her strategic thinking. *I have got inspiration on a creative level and on a strategic level.* Additionally, she felt experience had enabled her to reflect on her approach, and where she might develop and take risks. *Listening to Sian [Moving Memory Dance] who gets her dancers to deliver, I can get my dancers to deliver. There are perfectly capable leaders in the group to deliver. It's encouraged me to let go a bit...They would bring new things.* This also occurred in her work with Laura. *We are similar in our reactive approach; I feed off what people bring me in the sessions. I didn't know why I was doing it. She has helped me what the benefits of that approach is and the downfalls. When you do something for a long time you stop questioning why you do it.*

Developing Confidence

Developing the confidence of the practitioners is a key component to the development of dance infrastructure. The mentored practitioners were asked if they felt they had increased their confidence as a result of taking part in the mentoring programme. All of them felt they had, and again the ways they felt their confidence had increased was individual to them and where they were in their careers. For example, some of the more emerging practitioners felt their confidence as practitioners in general increased.

The mentoring had a significant impact on Practitioner D's confidence. She was paired with Tim Casson of Casson and Friends who supported her to submit an application to Arts Council England's Developing Your Practice Fund. When she began the mentoring, she did not think she would 'qualify' to apply. *I had this idea that I wanted to get some funding, and could we get do a mock application and he turned around and said I think we should do a real one. I felt sick with horror.* However, her confidence was buoyed through her work with Tim because she saw him as an established and respected Dance Artist who was working with her as an equal. *Tim called me a dance artist. I really am! I didn't come out of dance college; I didn't train professionally. I just really started because I was teaching dance and then did a two-year distance dance qualification. I feel like I have built it up differently to others who have been through the formal route who I think are proper artists. To hear someone like Tim calling me a dance artist. It makes me think I am.*

Practitioner D's increased confidence has enabled her to consider opportunities that she had previously assumed were not available to her. *There was a call out from the Place to ask choreographers and thought I could apply but I didn't in the end [due to timing]. I just felt like I could do anything.*

Practitioner E had a slightly different experience. She worked in an administrative capacity (as well as a practitioner) for BEEE Creative, in addition to her mentoring with StopGap. The experience with BEEE Creative, while a paid opportunity also acted as a mentoring experience for her. She felt that through this work she had developed her confidence to consider applying for the mentoring, and to request working

with StopGap. Both her experience with BEEE Creative and StopGap have given her the confidence to consider what might be the next step beyond being a dancer and dance practitioner. *The amazing experience I have had through TAG has helped me realise that I don't want to go looking for more performance dance opportunities and therefore using this experience to develop the organisational skills to take on more project management and producing roles.*

For Practitioner A, a more experienced dance practitioner, who feels confident in delivering her work and her practice, she felt she had increased her confidence in business development. *The business side, organisational development etc; I feel out of my comfort zone and lack confidence. I didn't go to university or do a degree. The process is helping to build my confidence in the business development side.*

New Professional Connections

Due to the individualised approach of the mentoring, there was less scope in the process to enable the development of professional connections. Some practitioners felt they were able to make further connections, some felt they did not. For example, Practitioner E chose StopGap as she has moved into the area where they work and wanted an opportunity for them to get to know her. *I do feel I have made more connections. Most importantly I have made connections with the Producer and General Manager of StopGap. They know who I am now.*

For other practitioners, apart from feeling more connected to their mentors, they did not feel they had further opportunity to connect with others in this strand of work (although they had in other strands).

- *I don't feel more connected. It was useful having Harriet. I could email her and feel more connected her work. I am not sure I would go to her outside the mentoring because I wouldn't want to waste her time.* (Practitioner B)
- *Not so much yet. With him [Tim Casson] yes. He did give me contacts but haven't connected yet.* (Practitioner D)

What's next

The mentored practitioners were asked what their next steps were, as a result of the mentoring. All of the practitioners felt that the mentoring had enabled them to reflect on their work and where they wanted to take it next. For some it is about developing the sustainability of their work through business and skill development:

- *It's developed that realisation that I want something more stable for my career. I still want to be surrounded by Dance but develop myself as an artist in a new place and offering my energy to what I am doing in Hertfordshire.* (Practitioner E)
- *I have a clear plan going forward from a delivery person to a more strategic role allowing others to deliver.* (Practitioner A)

For other practitioners, they spoke more about the next steps in terms of their development. Practitioner D, for example, feels she needs more support from Tim. *In my project application I have put in money to keep Tim as my mentor.* For Practitioner C she can see how she can use the experience to develop her work with her established groups. *I have big ideas for [current projects]. Having the mentoring and experience of working with film, there's an appetite for me to grow my freelance work. Having that artist support network has been really prevalent for me.*

All of the practitioners were extremely positive about their experience and felt the individualised approach was highly effective. Most felt they would have liked it to continue a little longer, so that some of their work could have been guided more to fruition, however they understood the limitations of timing of the funding. It is clear that the mentoring strand has achieved the intended outcomes of the project, with likely longer term positive impact.

Partners

BEEE Creative aims to support the development of Dance through a number of strategies. In addition to developing dance infrastructure by supporting dance practitioners, it also aimed to use this project to test Local Authority partnership approaches that had potential to be replicated or expanded. Hertfordshire is made up of 10 districts. This project worked in partnership with three neighbouring Districts: Dacorum, Three Rivers, and Watford. The partner Districts each contributed to funding the project and providing some capacity support through its Arts and Community Officers. Where this project differed from other Local Authority funded projects was that the Arts Officers had a strong role in co-design of the project.

The Arts and Community Officers were interviewed at the mid-point of the project, to gauge their reactions to the significant adaptations that were implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and to understand their expectations for the project. This was followed up with interviews near the end of the project, to ascertain if the project had met those expectations.

Impact of Covid-19

Some context should be provided on the impact of Covid-19 on the anticipated outcomes the partners were hoping to achieve. In addition to developing and strengthening partnerships and developing a model of cross-district working the partners aimed to use this project as a means to reach community groups who may not have been engaging. The necessary adaptations to Covid-19 did have an impact on these outcomes, which were outlined by the partners. It should be noted that all partners were extremely positive about the adaptations made in light of the pandemic and felt that BEEE Creative had done everything it could have done in the circumstances.

One area that was highlighted by partners was the reach of the project. They felt due to the online element this did not enable them from being able to reach community groups they had initially intended to reach.

- *Online delivery has impacted engagement and reach was diminished. You weren't able to reach who you wanted to reach. The engagement were the 'usual suspects'; those who already engage. (Dacorum)*
- *A lot of people haven't wanted online activity, they wanted face to face. The artists couldn't always make that happen. (Three Rivers)*



They felt that if they had been able to go out into the community they would have been more successful in getting new people to take part.

- *If I went out to the community the reach might have been different. It takes time but it definitely would have helped increased the reach and reached different people. (Dacorum)*
- *I have felt a bit detached from the project because of the nature of the online delivery. (Three Rivers)*

However, the Arts Development Officer at Watford felt that they had been able to reach new people. She felt this was in part due to the lockdown and some people had more time to take part in the activities.

We've reached new people we haven't reached before. We reached them because they had the time – it was during complete lockdown and people were looking for something to do. People who had never done anything like that before got involved.

All partners felt that the adaptations made did enable them to explore and consider new ways of working that they may not have considered previously. While they would prefer to offer face to face interactions with their artists and participants, the adaptations did demonstrate what was achievable via an online offer and how they might inform their work going forward.

- *It will become another string to my bow to offer a blended approach. Another avenue I would never have explored. It gives you scope to work with more artists and more art forms. You can work with artists from all over the world. You can commission anyone from their front room, enabling participants to try new artforms. (Watford)*
- *The artists have been incredible in how adaptable they have been in taking things online. It is amazing what they have achieved digitally. It's a good back up option for those who can't access a session physically. (Three Rivers)*
- *One thing that has been really positive, those who have engaged, they've certainly learned some new skills. It has definitely enhanced their tech skills, they've filmed themselves, increased their confidence online. (Dacorum)*

Developing and Strengthening Partnerships

The partners all had previous experience of working with each other on different projects, but not the three together. This was the first time they had worked collaboratively on a project of this scale. All of the partners were enthusiastic about the development and strengthening of their partnership working. They felt that a reason for the success of the partnership working was that they had a shared aim.

- *It's worked really well as a partnership as we all had the same end goal. (Three Rivers)*

It was noted that there were a number of benefits to the partnership working. Firstly, it was identified that sharing the project enabled collaboration and learning.

- *I've loved working with the others on a partner project. It's great pulling together and collaborating. It has provided quicker route to support and advice which in turns strengthens our offer. (Dacorum)*
- *Working together on a project has been supportive and hugely beneficial professionally. I hope this is the start of things. (Watford)*

It was also highlighted that working together had strengthened their ability to attract investment to the project, thus enhancing the quality of the work. In this case from Arts Council England, as well as garnering support from Council members.

- *One of the benefits was a strong ACE application for partnership funding and it was seen in a positive light by the Council and the members. (Dacorum)*
- *As an Arts Development Officer feeding back quality Arts projects to the council was really important in advocating for the work. It was something positive and something quality to feedback to the council and emphasize the importance of the work. (Watford)*

The partnerships have been strengthened by this project. There is a desire to work again between the three partners on future projects with BEEE Creative and in other ways. Additionally, the individual officers feel they are better able to approach their District counterparts for advice.

- *I would definitely work with other districts again. There is a strength with coming with a combined approach. Now that we have that relationship, I can go to them for advice and share practice. (Watford)*

Model of Cross-District working

While the intended outputs of the project are different to final outputs, some elements of successful partnership working, that contribute to the development of a model of cross-District working have been identified.

Firstly, the partners acknowledged that their equal status as partners ensured there was a lack of hierarchy, which supported positive collaborative working practice. They felt that one of the reasons for the success of the partnership was that the project delivery was held by a cultural provider – BEEE Creative – thus ensuring all were equal partners in the project.

- *Having an arts organisation leading on it, as opposed to a local authority, it makes it fair for everyone. (Three Rivers)*

The partners also identified that the open and collaborative approach taken by all of the Officers involved supported the positive development of the partnership.

- *It's worked because it's collaborating with other Arts Development Officers. We all work individually and it's just lovely to collaborate with other cultural officers out there, just have those creative conversations. We understand the same barriers as well. (Dacorum)*

It is hoped that there may be future opportunities to develop this model of working, when it may be possible to offer a blended approach and enable further face to face collaboration.

It is clear that a strong partnership model had been developed to deliver this project, one that remained robust despite the significant challenges. However, further testing of the model is required, particularly in areas where there is less arts development infrastructure and support. This would provide an insight into how these projects may be able to support this area of development.

Dance infrastructure development

The partners play a key role in supporting BEEE Creative's aim to develop dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire. The three Districts have differing levels of infrastructure with Watford and Dacorum having established programmes, with high quality practitioners.

For Dacorum and Watford, they felt that the project did support the development of dance infrastructure. Both in terms of how it enabled them to advocate for it to members of their councils as outlined above, as well as the support it gave to their practitioners.

- *Most definitely supported it because it's given Dacorum dance work, the mentoring and training opportunities. Our lead practitioner has been very inspired through this work and is applying it. (Dacorum)*

For Three Rivers, who has a more emerging dance programme, they felt it also supported their next steps of development.

- *There's more work to be done but I feel more equipped to approach that now. I've learned more about what Carrie does and what places might be part of her work. I have more knowledge about how I would approach a dance project in the future. (Three Rivers)*

Each partner had aims for their next steps of development based on the needs of their locality. For example, Watford who has an established dance offer for over 55s and young people is exploring developing an offer for adults under 55. To do this, they have identified they need to train more local dance practitioners.

- *There's nothing for anyone over 18 but then it starts again for the 50+. It would be great to have provision for people like. (Watford)*

Dacorum would like to develop their relationship with the dance organisations and practitioners already operating. While this can be challenging, it is felt that working in partnership with some of these providers is the best way to develop dance infrastructure.

- *It can be challenging with the other dance providers in Dacorum and trying to keep them informed. I don't get a lot back but I am aware of what's going on. I don't know if there's work there to link up but we can't deliver everything. We want to work in partnership. (Dacorum)*

It is evident the #TAG project has supported the development of dance infrastructure in the three districts, through the partnership working and the programme of artists webinars and mentoring. It has also enabled the Districts to better understand their strengths, where there are gaps, and to identify their next steps.



Conclusion

The #TAG project has faced significant challenges in its delivery due to the Covid-19 restrictions of 2020. It should also be noted that these restrictions have varied in severity at different points throughout the year so planned activity had to remain alert and responsive to the ever-changing landscape.

With that context it was not possible to ascertain if certain anticipated outcomes had been met. This specifically relates to audience and participant response to the activity. However, despite the challenges it is clear the project has been able to meet, or work towards meeting its aims of celebrating community, developing dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire, foster new partnerships and ways of working for the future.

The learning from this project, including the unexpected outcomes from moving the majority of delivery online will support the development of future projects like this, as well as inform the delivery of BEEE Creative's strategic priorities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the assumption that BEEE Creative wishes to continue this type of work in the future. They are based on practitioner and partner feedback.

Practitioner Training

Explore a range of training options that included a blended online/live offer. There was a mixed response from artists as to how they could or would engage in a future training offer. A mixed approach in both depth of content and method of engagement could be explored.

Online Training

A practical recommendation to ensure a uniform standard of quality from presenters would be to provide a more specific brief regarding presenting tools and methods. There was a mix of quality of presentations and it may be that some of the presenters would benefit from support in this area.

Mentoring

If possible, consider lengthening the mentoring timescale so that some longitudinal work may be factored in. This would not necessarily require additional time from mentors, but enable a follow up session to provide further guidance.

Blended Offer

Significant learning about who accesses an online offer and how they access has been undertaken through this project. It is recommended that this learning, alongside that of other projects is synthesised to develop a blended delivery strategy that could be applied across BEEE Creative's work.

Appendix A – Outcomes Matrix

Outcomes	Outputs	Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
Commissioning			
Participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants indicate they would like to take part in future dance projects • Participants identify increased connection and belonging to their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film • Online workshops 	Participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identify increased connection to their community • Demonstrate desire to take part in future similar dance projects • Will come from the three participating districts/boroughs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of participant numbers • Monitoring of postcode data • Participant follow up questionnaires • Project outputs
Exhibiting and Presenting			
Audiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% audience and participants will come from targeted areas/groups • 50% audience indicate they would like future access to dance • Audiences identify increased connection to their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film • Exhibition 	Audiences will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify increased connection to their community • Indicate desire to engage with similar work in the future • Have enjoyed engaging with the outputs of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience feedback cards • Monitoring of audience numbers (via analytics) • Monitoring of postcode data from online feedback cards
Stories			
Participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants identify increased connection and belonging to their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral Histories 	Participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify feeling valued and increased connection to community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up questionnaires
Training and Mentoring			
Practitioners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel better connected to other dance practitioners • Learn new skills • Increase confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars • Mentoring activities 	Practitioners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identify increases in confidence • Identify and demonstrate increased connections with other local practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline questionnaires • Follow up questionnaires • Mentor feedback

Outcomes	Outputs	Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify skills learned and developed 	
Partners			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New cross-sector partnerships are developed and existing partnerships strengthened • A model of cross-district working for devising and delivering dance is developed 	All outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners identify how the project has met their priorities • Partners indicate desire to work on similar projects in future • Partners identify successes and learning to be applied to future cross-district partnership projects • Themes of success identified that are scalable to include more partners in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-point questionnaires • Follow up questionnaires/interviews • Partners take part in discussions for future projects and iterations of this work

Appendix B – Evaluation Methodology

Baseline

Tool	Stakeholder	Detail
Interviews/ questionnaires/ application answers	Practitioners (mentoring)	Interviews/questionnaires with practitioners to assess what their expectations of the mentoring and what they see their needs are

Formative/Mid-point

Tool	Stakeholder	Detail
Interviews/ questionnaires	Partners	Interviews/questionnaires with partners to assess what their expectations of the project now are in light of realignment of priorities due to COVID
Monitoring	Participants, Audience	Monitoring of participation and audience numbers and points of access Monitoring of participants – those who self-identify as not being able to take part due to lack of digital access

Follow up

Tool	Stakeholder	Detail
Follow up Questionnaires	Participants across all strands	To assess participation in dance activity before the project, desire to take part in future dance activity, connection to community
Interview	Partners	To assess if the project has supported their priorities To assess desire to support future work like this To assess the success and learning from the cross-district partnership
Questionnaires/ Interviews	Practitioners (Film project)	To assess the successes and challenges of working with the 'at home' groups To understand learning from working online that could be applied to future work To understand the impact of access to digital technology on this way of working
Questionnaires/ Interviews	Practitioners (mentoring)	To assess if expectations have been met To assess if practitioners identify increases in confidence, learning and skills development
Questionnaires	Practitioners (training)	Practitioners will be asked to complete a questionnaire after each webinar, to assess the success/learning of each individual webinar. Additionally, the questionnaires will assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identified learning and skills development • Network development • Self-identified increase in confidence

Feedback	Mentors	Mentors provide feedback on progress and development of their mentees
Online feedback cards	Audience	To assess where audiences are from To assess previous engagement in this type of work To assess desire to engage with work like this in the future To assess enjoyment of engagement
Monitoring	Audience, Participants	Monitoring of audience and participation numbers