

A-MUSE 2.0

An Evaluation for BEEE Creative CIO

By Kirsten Hutton



Dancing With Light

Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Project Aims..... | 3 |
| Headlines | 3 |
| Recommendations | 3 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Aims and Outcomes | 4 |
| Activity Strands | 5 |
| Methodology | 5 |
| Outputs | 6 |
| Reach | 6 |
| Project Partners | 6 |
| Participants | 6 |
| What Happened | 7 |
| Commissions | 7 |
| Wellbeing | 8 |
| Interpreting stories and local history | 10 |
| Increase in engagement - recruitment..... | 11 |
| Online Workshops | 12 |
| Participant Wellbeing – feeling connected (using heritage), feeling less lonely, learning new skills | 12 |
| Barriers identified and removed | 13 |
| Increase online engagements | 14 |
| Wake Up and Dance | 14 |
| Participant Wellbeing – feeling connected (using heritage), feeling less lonely, learning new skills | 14 |
| Barriers to Engagement | 17 |
| Dance for Schools | 18 |
| Expectations..... | 19 |
| Skills – teachers..... | 19 |
| Skills – students..... | 19 |
| Unexpected outcomes | 19 |
| Research and Development | 20 |
| Artistic and Heritage Development..... | 21 |
| Skills Development..... | 22 |
| Internship | 23 |
| Conclusion | 26 |
| Recommendations | 26 |
| Works Cited | 27 |
| List of Tables | 27 |
| List of Figures | 27 |
| Appendix A – Activities Matrix | 28 |
| Appendix B – Key Performance Indicators | 29 |

Executive Summary

Introduction

A-MUSE 2 was an intergenerational dance, animation and photography project in two Hertfordshire towns of Royston and Stevenage. It worked closely with the two museums of those towns, as well as developing an online offer for those experiencing isolation. The project explored local history, and stories with the community participants becoming co-creators of the work for both digital exhibitions.

It aimed to continue BEEE Creative's development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire, with the inclusion of development opportunities for Dance teachers. Further infrastructure development was supported by the inclusion of a paid internship to support new talent into the industry.

Project Aims

This project had three overarching aims:

- To address identified development needs that supports BEEE Creative's longer term strategic priorities
- To continue to support the development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire and beyond
- To increase feelings of wellbeing and connectedness in participants

Headlines

- Despite the challenges of a quickly evolving landscape due to Covid-19 the project was successful in meeting its aims
- BEEE Creative has demonstrated it can be responsive and adaptive to the needs presented by the challenges of Covid-19 and the needs of the participants
- New ways of working have been discovered:
 - Commission strands – the mix of online and live, and connecting participants artists
 - Research and Development strand – mixing the skill and experience level of the artists enabled further development and learning for each involved
- Wake Up and Dance was particularly successful in meeting the aim of increasing wellbeing and connectedness in participants
- By placing participants at the centre of the work BEEE Creative continues to develop an offer that meets the needs of its participants and provides a creative and meaningful experience for them

Recommendations

Wake Up and Dance was extremely successful. It is recommended that if possible, this work is continued, with retention monitored. It is also recommended that the elements of success for this work are applied across other projects, where appropriate.

Community Ambassadors – Advocacy BEEE Creative aims to increase its reach to participants not yet accessing their provision or dance. It is recommended that some participants are approached to support the recruitment to future projects, where they can advocate and describe BEEE Creative's approach.

Community Ambassadors – Marketing BEEE Creative is developing a core group of participants who know and understand its work. It is recommended that BEEE Creative approach those newer members to provide some feedback on its next round of marketing to help recruit new participants.

Cross Sector Partnerships A similar approach is recommended for the development of cross-sector partnerships where participants can be used to advocate for the work and demonstrate it in practice.

Research and Development Model has been successful in exploring new ways to interpret and share local stories, it has proven to be a good model for professional and artistic development. It is recommended that this model is reviewed and refined where there may be more planned development opportunities. Additionally, reviewing the hybrid approach to working may enable a diversification of artist involvement from different backgrounds.

Artist Reflection The artist reflections were useful to gain an insight into the process of the Research and Development. It is recommended that for future similar work the evaluator provides further support for the artists so they can better make use of the reflection diaries to support their learning.

Introduction

A-MUSE 2 was an intergenerational dance, animation and photography project in two Hertfordshire towns of Royston and Stevenage. It worked closely with the two museums of those towns, as well as developing an online offer for those experiencing isolation. It leads on from work delivered by BEEE Creative that continue to be a series of ongoing creative dance workshops for families and their young children, as well as older adults. The project explored local history, and stories with the community participants becoming co-creators of the work for both digital exhibitions.

Additionally, it aimed to continue BEEE Creative's development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire, with the inclusion of development opportunities for Dance teachers. The teachers produced dance films with their students that culminated in a digital dance festival. Further infrastructure development was supported by the inclusion of a paid internship to support new talent into the industry.

Two commissions were the focus of the work:

1. Dance/animation commission
2. Dance/photography commission

The project also aimed to conduct research and development for a future localised tour of the commissioned work to early years and social care settings. BEEE Creative aimed to use this project to support its own development, including developing partnerships with local health, social and education sectors.

Aims and Outcomes

BEEE Creative wants early years children, families and older adults in Hertfordshire to have the opportunity to learn, belong and enjoy life through dance. In previous work, BEEE Creative has identified an ongoing need for interventions that address loneliness and isolation, feeling connected, taking part in physical activity, and learning.

This project had two key overarching aims. Firstly, to build on the learning of previous projects and the recent impact of Covid-19 that supports the development of BEEE Creative. Secondly, to support participants in accessing and benefiting from taking part in creative dance. Its third aim focused on increasing feelings of wellbeing in participants. Below are the project aims and the associated outcomes that have been identified.

Aim: To address identified development needs that supports BEEE Creative's longer term strategic priorities

Outcomes:

1. BEEE Creative will develop its practice in combining dance and other art forms, in museum settings which will:
 - a. Identify new ways interpreting local stories and history
 - b. Increase engagement of more vulnerable individuals
2. BEEE Creative's online offer will continue to be developed and refined, so it becomes a permanent strand of the Creative programme offer
3. Increase online engagements
 - a. By 50% audience engaging in exhibition space
 - b. By 25% participation in online dance activity
4. New cross-sector partnerships will be developed. E.g Community Navigators, GP Practices, Day Centres

Aim: To continue to support the development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire and beyond

Outcomes:

1. Increase skills and confidence of emerging dance practitioners (via the trainees)
2. Increase skills and confidence of a recent graduate to support transition from education to industry
3. Increase understanding of the role of volunteers in BEEE Creative's programme
4. Increase skills of Dance teachers in Hertfordshire

Aim: To increase feelings of wellbeing and connectedness in participants

Outcomes:

1. Participants will maintain or increase levels of physical activity by taking part
2. Participants will learn new skills
3. Barriers to participation will be removed via:
 - a. The mix of the online offer
 - b. Development of new cross-sector partnerships
4. Reducing isolation and loneliness by using arts and heritage activities to increase a sense of togetherness and belonging

Activity Strands

A-MUSE 2.0 comprised of seven strands of activity, designed to support the aims of the project.

In the Beginning: Commission working with Animator Shaun Clark creating a pixilated animation film that explores the history of Royston as depicted on the Royston Tapestry. Dance, animation and storytelling will reimagine the 15 embroidered tapestry scenes. The film will be submitted to international film festivals in Year 1 and a wider range of genre-based showcases in Year 2.

Dancing with Light: Commission working with Photographer Sam Ivin creating a series of images exploring the relationships between human movement and light, using slow shutter speeds and light painting techniques. These will be presented in a series of 20 prints in an exhibition at Stevenage Museum and in an online Exhibition space.

Online Exhibition: Working with a Creative Technologist, develop a newly established online exhibition space and curate five, six-week online exhibitions of BEEE Creative work

Online Dance Delivery: Develop and deliver online dance activity for people selectively shielding for longer periods of time and explore a development of this online offer to wider audiences

Research and Development: Research and Development for a tour of the commissioned work, with workshop package, to take out into the local community. This includes 2 trainee roles and 6 community volunteer roles.

Dance for Schools: 20 schools will be invited to create short films to be presented in an online exhibition. Teacher training for Primary, Secondary and SEN schools will be supported by webinars with Tom Hobden. There will also be a Digital Dance Festival in Summer 2021.

Internship: A paid internship for someone who has graduated from a dance degree in the last 6 months.

Methodology

A range of simple tools was designed to best fit the participants, practitioners and the activities. Qualitative and quantitative data from participants, partners and practitioners was triangulated to provide a narrative of the project and used to assess the projected outcomes. The milestones for this evaluation, and the tools can be found in [Appendix A](#) and Key Performance Indicators can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Outputs

| Activity | Number of sessions | New Products |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Online dance activity | 91 | 1 |
| Royston 'In the Beginning' commission | 62 | 3 |
| Stevenage 'Dancing With Light' commission | 13 | 1 |
| Schools Digital Festival - dance for film | 3 | 9 |
| Online exhibition x 5 | 0 | 5 |
| R&D | 8 | 1 |
| Internship | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 177 | 21 |

Table 1 - Outputs and Activities

Reach

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Artists, creatives and specialists | 19 |
| Participants | 2624 |
| Audience (live) | 23 |
| Audience (online) | 1192 |
| Number of performances or exhibition days | 232 |
| Number of participation sessions | 170 |
| Total | 4260 |

Table 2 - Participant reach

Project Partners

| Project Team | Partners | Artists |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project Lead Intern | Royston Museum Stevenage Museum Hertfordshire County Dance Teachers Association Schools – tbc | Shaun Clark – Animator Sam Ivin – Photographer Tom Hobden – Dance Educationalist Carrie Washington – Dance Artist Hannah Delaney – Dance Artist Christopher Hunt – Creative Technologist R&D Trainees – tbc Teachers |

Table 3 - Project Personnel and Partners

Participants

The project reached a range of different participants, these included:

- Families and early years – Royston and Stevenage Museums
- Older adults – Royston Museum
- Online participants
- Online Audience
- Teachers
- Students
- Intern

What Happened

A-MUSE was developed within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time of its conception the pandemic was still in its early days and the project did not begin until early 2021, after the third national lockdown had been implemented. It is impossible to predict the turns the pandemic would take and the project had to be adapt to unexpected change. Most of the planned activity took place but some elements of the project were not able to be fulfilled due directly to the knock on effects of the pandemic. These will be outlined in further detail throughout this report.

At the time of writing the online gallery had 1,192 visitors. This includes 16% returning visitors and 84% new visitors.

Commissions

In the Beginning

Two pieces of work were commissioned as part of this project. The first was *In the Beginning*, a dance and animation storytelling of 15 scenes of the Royston tapestry. It worked with community participants, from across the country, who met weekly online with dance facilitator Carrie Washington who would introduce them to the tapestry scene. They would create imaginative dance responses to that scene together. After each session, as individuals, the participants would continue to create a short response, film their work, and send it back to BEEE Creative. These films were passed on to Shaun Clark, the animator, to create a short film depicting the scenes from the tapestry, using the movements provided by the participants. The exhibition of the film at Royston Museum was delayed due to Covid-19 but it was made available online. It will be installed in the museum throughout the Autumn of 2021, although at the time of writing it has not been open to the general public because the museum has been closed. It should also be noted that having to adapt the delivery of this piece, BEEE Creative has developed a new model of working that builds connections between participants and artists through a series of introduction and 'meet the maker' style sessions online.

Dancing With Light

A similar premise in design to *In the Beginning*, *Dancing With Light* used dance and movement, along with photography and light to explore the relationship between the two, using Stevenage Museum's collection as inspiration. Participants worked mostly online, with 'homework' set between each session. They were taught some photography skills and how to use a light painting app. They came together for a session at Stevenage Museum for the final workshop. The exhibition of the film at Stevenage Museum was delayed due to Covid-19 but it was made available online. At the time of writing the exhibition has been installed and will be available to view as the museum opens, until the end of October 2021.

A new model of working for this work was evolved. The first online workshops focussed on giving the participants the skills to produce their own photography and the workshops in the museum led to the production of the professional artist images of the participant directed content. The Project Lead stated:

- *We have shifted focus so that a component of what we now do is ensure the commission also provides opportunity for participants to do more of the making themselves.*

In addition to the artistic outputs of the commissions, with *In the Beginning* being entered into international festivals, the focus of this work was on the impact on the participants.

As the desired outcomes for the commissions were the same, the methodology for both of these commissions was similar, with similar baseline and follow up questions. Interviews were conducted for the *In the Beginning* participants. Therefore, some of the responses have been grouped together. Commission specific responses have been separated.

Wellbeing

BEEE Creative understands the benefits engagement in dance activity can have on participants. A number of studies have been undertaken that link engaging in creative activities and its positive impact on wellbeing. A recent report commissioned by the World Health Organisation in 2019 undertook a scoping review of the evidence of the role of arts in improving health and wellbeing and made several policy recommendations. Of Arts improving wellbeing it says: *Arts activities can be considered as complex or multimodal interventions in that they combine multiple different components that are all known to be health promoting.* (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). It further presents a logic model linking arts engagement outcomes to improved health and wellbeing (p.3). Additionally, research published from UCL, commissioned by BBC Arts (Fancourt, Garnett, Spiro, West, & Müllensiefen, 2019) has developed a validation scale measuring how creative activities regulate emotions, recognising the impact that engagement in arts activities has on health and wellbeing. The new Arts Council England 10-year strategy also makes clear links with engagement in creative activities and increased wellbeing. *Getting involved in creative activities in communities reduces loneliness, supports physical and mental health and wellbeing, sustains older people and helps to build and strengthen social ties.* (Arts Council England, 2020)

The participants were asked to complete baseline and follow up questionnaires that asked about their expectations, feelings of creativity and general wellbeing. Due to the very small numbers of the groups the sample sizes are very small. Therefore, follow up focus group sessions were run with participants from In the Beginning, some of whom also took part in the Dancing with Light commission.

Participant Expectations

The participants were asked at baseline what they were expecting to experience by taking part, (Fig.1). This was revisited in the follow ups to see if their expectations had been met. Responses from both commission projects have been combined for this response. While the samples are small, they have been converted to percentages for comparison.

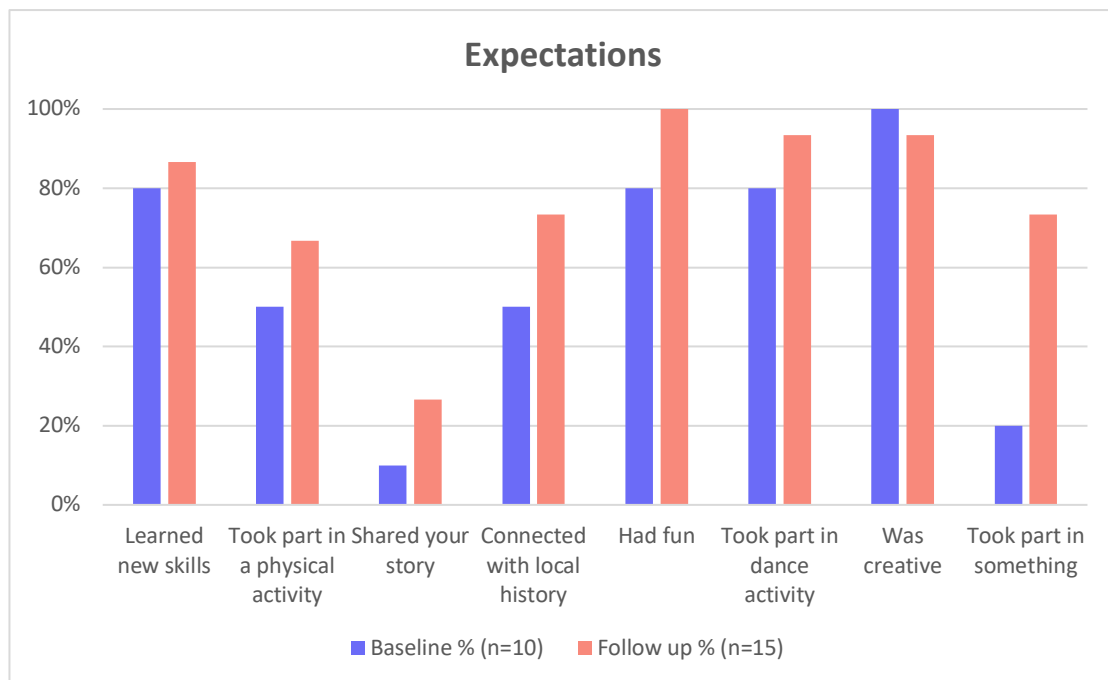


Figure 1 - Participant expectations for the Commission strands

This illustrates that in almost every case participant expectations were met or exceeded. There was only one participant who did not select 'was creative' in the follow up questionnaire. In some cases, such as 'had fun' and 'connected with local history' participant expectations were significantly increased.

Participant wellbeing

The participants were asked some questions about their general wellbeing to see if taking part had any impact on their general wellbeing. The questions were taken from the WHO-5 wellbeing scale (World Health Organisation, n.d.). As the sample size was so small and due to the nature of the project, only three questions were used and only as a guide, with follow up open questions aimed to better understand the more focuses elements contributing to wellbeing such as connecting with others, learning new skills and being creative.

The baseline and follow up questionnaires for both commission participants asked them how often they felt the following:

1. I am cheerful and in good spirits
2. I feel calm and relaxed
3. I feel active and vigorous

Comparing the baseline indicates very little change in most of the participants. It should be said that all but one participant scored highly in all three questions, indicating a starting point of good wellbeing.

Increased feelings of belonging

The respondents did identify increased feelings of connection and belonging, which are contributing factors to decreasing loneliness and increasing wellbeing. They were able to feel connection even though they were engaging via online platforms for most of the project. In the follow up questionnaires some respondents identified the element of the project they enjoyed the most was making connections with other participants and feeling part of something together.

- *Engaging with a wide variety of people*
- *Being part of the project, belonging*
- *the opportunity to work with others*
- *The final workshop at Stevenage Museum where we could explore "in person" together creating light movement images was a joy, particularly after doing most of the project alone at home or online.*

The focus group also responded to questions about feelings of belonging and connectedness. They felt the project had given them an opportunity to connect with others, in richer ways.

- *It's come to life. At the start I had to make a list of all the names so to connect with the group and connect with a spectrum of people. It felt a bit like a family.*
- *During lockdown I have been really well connected. I haven't really felt it so I didn't think it would be an issue going on zoom with this project. However, it's been absolutely wonderful meeting these people who haven't been in my circle and its really broadened my experience of people and my connectedness.*
- *This project came at a really good time because I am finding this third lockdown really tough. I do feel we can talk about it to friends.*

In addition, the respondents felt that taking part gave them a sense of purpose, particularly during a winter lockdown.

- *The project gave me a kind of usefulness to do something really worthwhile. It gave me discipline and made me focus. Usually my diary is full of things and this year my diary has nothing in it. You have to concentrate and have to deliver which helps my while having to be at home because I am not used to being at home.*
- *I'm just loving it. There's a sense of purpose.*

Learning new skills

Participants were asked if they felt they had learned new skills. This question was deliberately left as an open text question to encourage a broad interpretation of what skills might mean. For example, they could include technical, dance or social skills. All of the respondents felt they had learned new skills.

The Dancing with Light responses mostly fell into two categories: using technology and developing photography skills.

- *I learned how to use a new app on my smartphone*
- *I learned how to slow shutter speed to create artwork*
- *Gaining knowledge what Dancing with Light is. Learning and experimenting with a new app. Getting support and also glowsticks supplied by the team.*

Some also referenced learning about learning about light and how to use it.

- *I learned how to take photos with light. How to use slow shutter apps.*
- *I have learned about the light and what you can create with the light*

Implicit in some of their responses was development of creative use of the new skills.

- *I enjoyed learning and experimenting with a new app...Encouraged to experiment. I enjoyed the sharing on padlet.*
- *I have learned about the light and what you can create with the light*
- *This project has made a real impact on me. I was curious about how the relationship between light and movement would work out in practice, but never imagined I would be so enthralled by the light painting app. I've enjoyed experimenting with different ideas, and even now the project is over, I still enjoy trying different things out.*

The In the Beginning responses were strikingly similar but related to animation and film, where participants felt they had increased their skills in technology and their understanding of animation, which in turn supported their creativity.

- *I learnt to video and send and to stay in the picture when filming.*
- *How to use the camera on my mobile phone, make a video and send it on. Made me work out how my movements could create the scenes required for the animation*
- *Understanding process of animation in film making, the technique and editing involved.*
- *That animators have infinite patience, forensic attention to detail and a clear vision of how the film will look*

The focus group session with the In the Beginning participants also asked if they felt they had learned new skills. In addition to the responses above they also reflected on taking learning from the lessons themselves.

- *I like the warm up sessions. The way you do it in little components and put it together, it really helps. It has been extremely helpful. It's really added to my repertoire of remembering things.*

Interpreting stories and local history

BEEE Creative aims to use dance and other art forms as a means to explore and connect with local heritage. The commissions did this via dance, photography and animation. The participants were asked if they felt they had a better knowledge of local heritage, and if they felt better connected. It should be noted that some of the participants were not from Stevenage or Royston, with some from as far away as Southend-on-Sea.

The participants were asked slightly different questions for each commission, to better understand the differences between them. They were asked to rate on a scale of how much they agreed with the following statements:

| In the Beginning | Dancing with Light |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I enjoyed using different artforms to explore Royston's heritage | I enjoyed using different artforms to explore the relationship between movement and light |
| I saw the museum in new ways | I saw the museum in new ways |

Table 4 - Open text questions for Commission participants

All of the respondents agreed or completely agreed with these statements. On further exploration, in the focus groups and open questions, the respondents identified that prior to the project they were not as aware of the heritage of the local town they were working with.

- *I enjoyed taking part as a family and finding new ways to relate to the museum and its displays*
- *I enjoyed understanding the nature of the project in creating an animation of Royston tapestry with historical interest and importance which I was not aware of previously.*
- *The project actually very interesting and how it covers for example the history of Royston.*

Some respondents also indicated that it had encouraged them to visit the museums independently, or to look into the heritage of their local areas.

- *Learning about the history of Royston and the story behind the creation of the tapestry was fascinating. I have never been to the town, only bypassing it on the way to somewhere else, but will definitely make an effort to explore the museum and the cave once lockdown restrictions allow.*
- *I was going to say I didn't even know this tapestry existed. I don't know Royston or Hertfordshire very well at all. It's made me very interested in the history of the area. We obviously have a lot down in Essex as well and it's made me realise how little we know about our local areas.*
- *I had no idea Royston had such historical interest and had never heard of the Museum itself until recently. Am looking forward to visiting some time in the future.*

Increase in engagement - recruitment

At the outset the project had the aim of increasing engagement. While the project has exceeded its goal via other strands, BEEE Creative was keen to recruit new participants the commissioned work. Most of those who took part in this strand are previous BEEE Creative participants, with others joining by word of mouth. BEEE Creative has identified that it is challenging to recruit to this type of project as the concept is abstract and difficult to describe. Therefore, a second focus group, made up of some In the Beginning participants took place, to ask their advice on what could be done for future projects.

Some participants from the In the Beginning commission felt the initial email with information was overwhelming in its detail and for some it was almost enough for them not to take part.

- *That first email was quite official and information overload. It didn't pull me in*
- *The first e mail contained a lot of information would have liked less but perhaps with a more punchy visual impact*

They were asked what they thought needed to be done differently to encourage more people to join in. Firstly, they felt that because the project was so abstract it needed some visual images to help people understand what it was.

- *The pictorial element to advertise the project. I didn't have a clue what we were going to be doing.*
- *It's a brand new concept it was hard to wrap my head around it.*
- *The overall look of the email was similar to all the other emails. It needed some straplines and some visual impact...So it became separate to the rest of the course. I think it would open up to more diversity. Appealing to a range of ages and people.*

They also had concerns about whether they had sufficient technical skills to take part. For example one participant said she did not have a smartphone but took part using her tablet, which she did not realise she could do.

- *I was concerned because my IT skills are lacking, I thought, I am never going to be able to do this.*
- *Another friend who comes to the weekly sessions she lives on her own and she thought she would need someone to video her. I haven't needed anyone to help me. If it can be made clear that people who don't have a lot of skills can do it on their own.*

The respondents were asked what could be done to help broaden the reach and diversify the participants. In addition to reworking the initial selling email, they said word of mouth was very powerful and that if they took part again, now they knew what it was, they would actively try to recruit their friends.

- *Word of mouth is powerful, using participants to contact more people...Using past participants to be advocates for the work.*

They also felt that being clear about the range of people taking part would be a selling point. They also want a wider range of individuals taking part.

- *I would love to have the broader range of participants (having the young men there!). I would love to have more young people.*

They referred to the first session and praised how it was used to dispel their concerns about taking part and felt that this should be advertised more as a taster session, with no pressure to continue, so that it could be used as session covering FAQs and an explanation of the concept. A further consideration might be to include past participants in an advocacy role during this type of session.

- *It was good to have that first meeting to find out more and to explain it. It explained a lot.*

It is clear that the participants who did take part enjoyed and very much benefited from the experience but this was not necessarily made clear in the initial email. It is recommended that past participants are consulted on ways to reach into communities for similar future projects.

Overall, BEEE Creative has met its desired wellbeing, skills development and engagement with heritage outcomes.

Online Workshops

The online workshops were developed in response to the lockdown restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. They were designed to remove barriers to engage with dance during lockdown and times of other restrictions. The sessions took place on a weekly basis and involved both new and returning participants. Separate sessions were aimed at adults, and families. As with the commissions, due to the sessions taking place online, the participants were able to take part from their homes from locations further away from Hertfordshire. It was felt that as this was part of ongoing activity, it would not be appropriate to conduct baseline activities. Due to the small sample size of participants evaluation was kept to conducting a focus group activity to explore outcomes, and learning.

Participant Wellbeing – feeling connected (using heritage), feeling less lonely, learning new skills

As with the commissions a primary focus for the online workshops was to support the wellbeing of the participants, particularly in terms of feeling connected, decreased feelings of loneliness, and feeling physically active.

Feeling Connected

The participants who took part in the focus group activity all reported feeling better connected to each other.

- *You see other people and you socialise. You get to see the same faces. I get to see my sister. We've started to have a coffee [online] after the class then because we know we're around. It's nice to other people*

For another participant, she felt that it enabled her to connect with people who are in a similar situation to her, so she felt more connected to them.

- *It's good to be part of something. Part of other ladies and say hello that couldn't get out as much and being part of a group that has something in common.*

The group do feel more connected but they did identify that it is a slower process when meeting online, rather in person.

- *You can't go for a coffee. You don't get to know people as well as quickly but you get to know each other over time. It's slower than it would be, but we're busy afterwards. We always have a chat at the beginning and [the Project Lead] always asks us how we are so we do get to know them*

Physical Activity

The focus group were asked about how taking part made them feel physically. The group felt that the weekly sessions did have a positive impact on them physically, with some feeling they have more energy and others saying they feel fitter.

- *I find the warm-up very good because I realise how stiff I actually am, I am very stiff in my neck and shoulders and you always feel better after you've done a good warm up. Apart from the dance which is often quite aerobic so you get both parts the warm up and aerobic which is good for the movement*
- *I feel like I've had a work out*
- *I would like to keep my body a bit more trim. I swear I have lost a bit of weight as well*

Barriers identified and removed

The move to online, even when restrictions had eased did remove some barriers for some of the participants who were still reluctant to meet in face to face settings.

- *They are nice for me because I used to go to a Zumba class once a week but obviously I don't because they are indoors.*
- *I am still not ready to go back now. Our Zumba class is in a small enclosed room and I don't feel comfortable coming back to that small room, and I don't see it happening for a long time.*

Some participants also identified that the format of the session, plus being online, removed pressure from them that they feel in other exercise activities such as Zumba.

- *With the dance you're moving the body but it's not strenuous. You're doing to your own level. When I did Zumba I was under pressure to keep up with all the youngsters. With this, either online or face to face I don't have that pressure. I can do it to what my body is able to do.*
- *There's no pressure to do more than you're capable of. In a live class you see someone who's really good and you feel disheartened!*
- *It's a different experience online. It's much nicer. You can be much sillier because no one can see you if you don't want so you can have more fun*
- *[The facilitator] can't see my legs move, just the top half, which is good!*

Creativity and Structure

The participants also identified that they enjoyed the structure the sessions give to their days and for some it is a reason to get up in the morning.

- *It gives you a routine or structure.*
- *I'm retired, it's nice to have a routine and know what you're doing, people to see*
- *It gets me up ready for the day, earlier than I am used to. When you first retire you think I've got all this freedom and then I thought I was getting a bit sluggish because I wasn't moving as fast because I didn't have a reason to go out.*

The participants also enjoyed the structure of the sessions. They enjoyed having some creative freedom, but being led by a facilitator (Carrie Washington).

- *I like being told what to do in a dance. I don't want to think about it and just do it. [The facilitator] does ask us if there's anything we want. We did do musicals which was fun*
- *I like to be told what to do. I don't know anything about dancing. I am not a creative sort. Even though I like watching dancing I like to be told what to do.*

They also enjoyed the being exposed to difference dance styles and music.

- *I like the various dance routines that we did. The ballet, hip hop, tango, salsa. Yeah I am happy.*

Overall, the online workshops have been very enjoyable for the participants, enabling them to feel more connected and giving their day structure and purpose. They have also provided a means of staying active and exploring their creativity.

Increase online engagements

An aim of the project was to increase online engagements by 25%. Due to the nature of engagement, with some participant cross-over with other BEEE Creative projects it is challenging to extrapolate project specific data on online engagement increases. However, during the project period of A-MUSE, BEEE Creative had 3323 online participation engagements. The figure for the same period in the previous year was 850 online participation engagements. This is an overall increase of 290%. Therefore, while the total increase can be attributed to A-MUSE, it is possible to conclude that BEEE Creative has met and exceeded its target of increasing online engagements by 25%.

Similar to the Commissions this focus group was consulted on what they thought BEEE Creative could do to increase engagements and widen the reach of this work. Also similar to those who took part in the Commissions, the responses focused on very localised marketing activity and the use of word of mouth. The participants felt that using current or past participants to help advocate for the sessions would be useful. They also felt that advertising locally, using more traditional advertising methods may increase engagements. They suggested local GP surgeries, the library, community bulletin boards, local shop windows. They also suggested advertising in the local magazine that is circulated to residents.

It is clear that that the online workshops have met the aims of the project, particularly in terms of wellbeing. It is evident that for those participants who were able to access the activity online, some barriers to participation were removed by means of removing the pressure to ‘perform’ and alleviating anxiety of mixing face to face. One participant concluded:

- *It’s enjoyable and physical exercise which is good for you. It’s fun. You feel like you’ve achieved something.*

Wake Up and Dance

An additional online element to the programme of work developed was a daily morning online session called Wake Up and Dance. Each weekday morning, a BEEE Creative practitioner would lead a 10 – 15 minute session of free dancing. Participation was free and open to all. The practitioners would also dance, providing dance moves for those who felt they needed it, but participants were able to move how they wished.

Sessions generally averaged around 24 participants who joined when they were able to. Participants came from Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, with some from further afield. The primary aim of these sessions was increase feelings of wellbeing through having fun, being active and feeling connected.

Participants were asked to complete a follow up questionnaire (n=22) to provide feedback about their experiences. Interviews with two participants also took place.

Participant Wellbeing – feeling connected (using heritage), feeling less lonely, learning new skills
Wake Up and Dance appears to have met a need for its participants. The feedback from both the questionnaire and interviews was extremely positive. Participants were asked how often they attended the sessions. The table below illustrates how committed participants were to ensuring it became part of their daily routine.

| How often did you take part | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| I tried not to miss a session | 17 |
| Fairly regularly | 3 |
| Sometimes | 2 |
| Once or twice | 0 |

Table 5 - Wake Up and Dance Participation regularity

The sessions appear to have had some impact on the daily lives of the respondents in terms of both their physical and mental wellbeing. This is illustrated in Fig.2, where participants were asked how the workshops made them feel. One participant summed up their experience by commenting: *I felt better for it.*

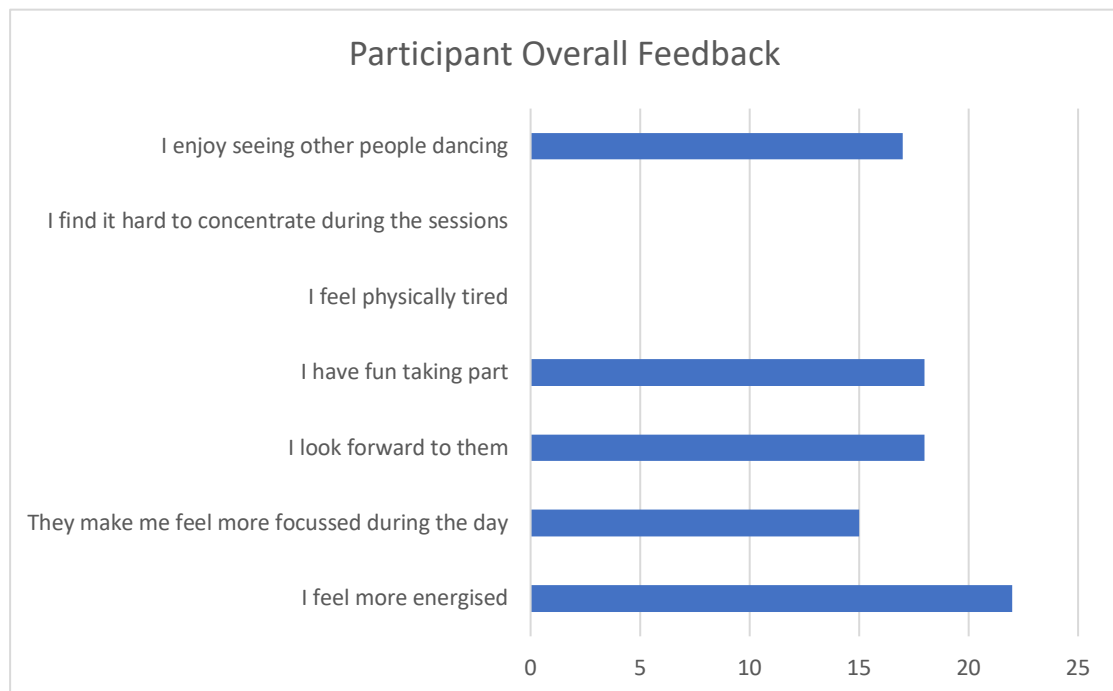


Figure 2 - Wake Up and Dance feedback

All of the respondents said they felt more energised followed by 18 respondents agreeing they had fun taking part and they looked forward to them. No respondents said they found it hard to concentrate or they felt physically tired as a result of the sessions.

Feeling Connected

The sessions do not devote much time to conversation before or after the sessions. There is some 'chat' that takes place at the start, but the purpose of the sessions were to be quick and to fit into the morning routine. Therefore, BEEE Creative was interested to understand if despite this, and the fact they take place online, if participants did still feel connected to each other.

Some participants did comment they would like to have more opportunity to connect.

- *It would be nice to have a little bit more contact with the other people taking part. I feel as if I am doing it on my own.*
- *Being introduced to the group and visa versa*

However, the majority of participants did feel some connection to the others who took part. The participants were asked how much they agreed with the statement: *I felt I was able to connect with others over digital technology.* All but one respondent strongly agreed (12) or agreed with that statement (9). When asked what they enjoyed most about the sessions some respondents referred directly to feeling more connected.

- *Its my link to the outside world, something to focus on and see others.*
- *The coming together of friends to share in the joy of dance at the start of the day*
- *Connecting to others and giving me a routine and purpose to the day.*

Others went further and commented that they enjoyed feeling like they were part of a community with other 'like minded' people.

- *A sense of community (important when one lives alone, especially during a pandemic)*

- *Being part of a community that loves to dance around in their own home. Something we all do anyway but even better with others*

For others, particularly during the pandemic, it has helped them to feel less alone and isolated.

- *It's great to see like minded people who want to dance. And it's great to have [the facilitators] dancing with us. Also, it lifts my spirits and helps me feel less alone.*
- *They [the sessions] are an absolute life saver. This gives me a reason to get up and it's often the only company I have in the day.*

Increased positive feelings

The respondents also identified that the daily 10 minute sessions made an impact on their mood directly after the sessions, with this lasting for some, into the day.

- *It lowers my stress levels and leaves me ready for the day.*
- *It just felt invigorating and happy. What more could a gal want !*
- *It usually sets me up for most of the day or the whole day.*
- *I can take on the world. You wake up and think oh no, another day at home. After 10 – 12 minutes of dancing I really feel great and I can take on the world. It has done really good things for my mood.*

Some of the respondents who felt it had improved their mood directly referred to the fun element of the sessions as being a key factor.

- *Fun shared time with others, gives me a direct purpose early in the morning, and I find I'm in a good mood afterwards!*
- *It is fun and it makes me feel good*
- *Fun shared time with others, gives me a direct purpose early in the morning, and I find I'm in a good mood afterwards!*

Physical Activity

The NHS guidance for older adults over 65, is that they should aim to do approximately 150 minutes of moderate exercise – which includes dancing – per week (NHS, n.d.). This works out to be just over 20 minutes a day. The Wake Up and Dance sessions, were providing up to 50 minutes per week of this moderate exercise. BEEE Creative was interested to understand if the participants identified any differences in their physical activity. This could include levels of fitness or energy. The respondents did feel an increase in their fitness, even though they were only participating for 10 minutes a day.

- *I can definitely feel a difference in my fitness level.*
- *I think it's done a lot of good for my fitness*

One respondent indicated that it was having tangible benefits to their fitness and energy with relation to a recent medical diagnosis

- *I have recently been diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure. I have to do 1.5 hours exercise a week and I told my GP about it and she was very impressed. It's a gentle way of getting back into exercise.*

Other respondents identified that taking part increased their energy, which for some, lasted well into the day.

- *Have noticed that my energy has increased during the day*
- *I have had a mobility problem recently but was still able to take part whilst sitting down! And it worked! I was still energised and my upper body was getting the exercise it needed.*

Sense of achievement

Thematic analysis of the open text responses to questions on what they enjoy about the sessions, indicate that taking part enables some respondents to feel a sense of achievement. For some, this is related to taking part in regular exercise.

- *I feel good that I'm exercising on a regular basis.*
- *The discipline and challenge to keep going, exercise*

For others it is the feeling of having achieved something.

- *The feeling I have achieved something and it's only taken 10 minutes*

Sense of purpose

The respondents also identified that the sessions gave them a sense of purpose. Particularly for the older, retired participants, they felt it gave them a reason to get up in the morning.

- *I was beginning to feel very slothful and take even longer to get out of bed but now I have a reason to get up and be ready, washed, hair done, full makeup and breakfast by 9 am!*
- *The discipline of being up, dressed and ready to go before 9am. Winter mornings had made me a little lazy and reluctant to get up, but now there is a good reason to leave my warm bed.*

For others, they felt it not only gave them structure but enabled them to have more focus during the day and be more productive.

- *I enjoyed doing the Wake Up & Dance, as it's given me a focus for the day*
- *gives me a direct purpose early in the morning*
- *A reason to get up. Get more things done work and play.*
- *I find I'm more productive and ready to get on with my day earlier rather than drifting until 10 o'clock and finding I'm still having my breakfast.*

Barriers to Engagement

The Wake Up and Dance sessions were designed to encourage as many people to take part as possible. There were several features of the sessions, which were deceptively simple, that aimed to reduce barriers and enabled a high level of participation and retention of participants. The following elements have been identified by the respondents as the success characteristics of the sessions.

Timing

The respondents all felt the 10 minute sessions were enough. They did not feel overwhelmed by the length of the sessions and found that it was easy to fit them into their day, even for those who worked. The notion of it enabling them to exercise was also appealing.

- *I liked the idea of ten minutes*
- *The knowledge that even 10 mins dancing is enough to get body and brain moving and kickstart some helpful endorphins*
- *I wanted a quick easy form of enjoyable, doable exercise*

None of the respondents commented that it was difficult to access the sessions online. While this would indicate that these respondents have access to the internet and a suitable device, the technology itself was not a barrier to access.

- *It was so easy to log on and be part of a dance group*

Some respondents also highlighted that they enjoyed that there was a lack of pressure to get things right. This was in part due to the session being online so they could not really focus on anyone else, and that they were able to do 'free' dancing.

- *The people are so friendly and there is no pressure to dance better than anyone else*

Therefore, there are some clear characteristics of success for this element of the work, where barriers had been identified and sought to be mitigate. This is outlined in the following illustration, Fig.3.



Figure 3 - Success factors for Wake Up and Dance

The Wake Up and Dance sessions have been very successful in achieving the outcomes BEEE Creative set out, and the model is worth investigating, particularly as more people return to work as Covid-19 restrictions ease. While most respondents felt they would continue to engage online, even after restrictions were lifted, it is yet to be tested. It is likely however, that some people will continue to participate in this way as it does enable participants from a broad geographical reach to meet, connect and dance every day.

Dance for Schools

It was originally envisaged that 20 schools would be invited to create short films to be presented in an online festival exhibition. This would be supported by teacher training for Primary, Secondary and SEN schools delivered by dance artist and facilitator Tom Hobden. Primarily delivered online, the resources were designed to increase understanding and skills development for creating dance for film in school settings. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the severe impact this had had on schools and their ability to plan and to run classes as normal, 12 schools took part, with 9 producing a film for the festival, rather than the planned 20. However, those 9 schools did produce films for the online festival. Run in collaboration with the Hertfordshire County Dance Teachers Association, the Hertfordshire Schools' Digital Dance Festival 2021 was a collection of creative dance films from school groups across the county based on the theme "A Postcard From...".

The evaluation for this strand of work was light touch as it took into consideration the needs of the participating teachers. Teachers during normal times are traditionally 'time poor' while juggling many and varied priorities. During this period of uncertainty schools were going through a number of iterations of lockdown and operational restrictions, as well as teachers having to deliver lessons online and face to face. It was felt that the evaluation requirements for teachers should not be too onerous. Therefore, they were asked to complete a follow up questionnaire after the online festival. Three follow up responses were submitted by participating teachers, with two from secondary schools and 1 from a primary school. Therefore it should be noted that the responses outlined below do not necessarily reflect the experience of all involved.

Expectations

The teachers were asked about their expectations of the project and what they were hoping to get from the experience and what they actually felt they took from being involved. The following table presents the questions and responses.

| | Expectations at start | Expectations met /exceeded |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Learn new dance skills | 0 | 1 |
| Learn new film making skills | 3 | 3 |
| Share your skills with your students | 1 | 2 |
| Connect with other teachers | 1 | 0 |
| Advocate for Dance | 2 | 2 |
| Connect with professional artist/practitioner | 2 | 2 |

Table 6 - Teacher Expectations

This shows that of the respondents their expectations were generally met. It is also likely that there would have been potential to connect with other teachers had this not been limited by Covid-19 restrictions. One of the respondents would have liked to have had an opportunity to connect:

- *More collaboration with other teachers, of theme sharing their ideas on editing. Problem solving together.*

Skills – teachers

The teachers were given the opportunity to take part in online training and access resources. The teachers were asked if they felt they had learned new skills. Two of the three respondents indicated they had. The third respondent selected 'N/A' as they had not accessed the training or resources. One teacher stated:

- *Was pleased with the final outcome of filming, having never edited before. I learnt a lot from Tom Hobden's first online session*

One teacher responded that the training and resources also gave them confidence to undertake the project in the first place.

- *The support and ideas stage was very helpful and made, even someone like me, feel that we could deliver this opportunity for our pupils and create something good*

Skills – students

The teachers were asked if they felt the students had learned or developed skills. All three respondents indicated that they had, from team work to dance skills to digital skills.

- *This was the first ever piece they performed together as a group. Some students are new to dance, so was a huge achievement for them to be filmed whilst dancing.*
- *They started to recognise how dance can be taken outside of a dance studio and how it can change depending on location. They also got to consider camera angles and locations to support the making of the overall film.*
- *Their digital skills as well as their understanding of different ways to record dance were hugely improved*
- *It gave them a taste of performance skills*

Unexpected outcomes

There were some unexpected outcomes identified by the teachers. Firstly, one felt that by taking part it enabled a conversation to be opened about dance on film.

- *Sparked conversations regarding dance for film that aren't just music videos/tiktoks!*

The Primary school teacher responded that it enabled their group to produce digital dance films for a school event for children and families.

- *All year 5 produced their own two minute dance film using the same format as the festival to create a virtual event for school (90pupils)*

Another teacher described having to rework their original idea of presenting live, which opened up more creative opportunities.

- *Students and myself created a piece of dance with a view to performing live, however this was made impossible by the covid restrictions! We then had an afternoon off timetable where we performed the material in different locations around the school site to see how the environment changed the way the dance was received.*

They went on to describe that this supported the students to feel more ownership of the piece.

- *Students performed and suggested locations and camera angles they thought would work well giving them some ownership over the final project.*

The Dance for Schools strand has had impact on those who have responded to the follow up questionnaire. The respondents have indicated they would be interested in taking part in future work like this. The teachers learned new skills, as did the pupils. There is further scope for teachers to be encouraged to think creatively how their skills can be applied in other contexts within school, such as the in-school celebration event.

Research and Development

The research and development strand was to explore a tour of the commissioned work, with a workshop package, to take out into the local community. Originally, it was planned that this would include community volunteers, likely drawn from some of the adult workshop activity. However, many of the older participants were still uncertain or anxious about taking part in face to face activity, even after national restrictions had been eased. Therefore, it was offered to families to take part, so that they could provide feedback on some of the ideas developed. While families were more likely to take part, as this strand of the project took place in the lead up to summer, some families dropped out so they did not risk their summer holiday plans.¹

The research and development worked with six artists, including members of the BEEE Creative team. The following table (Fig.5) outlines the artists involved in the research and development.

| Artist | Artform | Other information |
|-------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Carrie Washington | Dance | Director of BEEE Creative. Experienced arts practitioner |
| Hannah Delaney | Dance | Project Management Assistant for BEEE Creative and freelance dance artist |
| Meriam Broersen | Dance | Intern for BEEE Creative on the A-MUSE project and emerging dance artist |
| Skye Wilkinson | Dance | Freelance Community Dance practitioner based in East Herts |
| Wayne Parsons | Dance | Artistic Director of VOXED Dance Theatre, https://voxeddancetheatre.com/who/ |
| Jane Turner | Dance | Artist/Choreographer based in North Hertfordshire, https://janeturner.net/about-jane-turner/ |

Table 7 -Research and Development Artists

¹ In the summer of 2021 some travel corridors abroad were reopened for holiday travel. In order to travel however, it was a requirement to adhere to strict Covid-19 testing rules. At the time, if a member of the household came into contact with a positive Covid-19 case, they would have to isolate for 10 days. If a member of a household became Covid-19 positive, they and the rest of the household would have to isolate for 10 days. This resulted in cancelled or postponed holiday plans for many across the country.

It had originally been planned to have BEEE Creative's Project Lead and Project Administrator and two apprentice roles but during the recruitment process BEEE Creative received interest from artists with a broad range of interest and experience; those with strong artistic practice, those with a strong teaching practice, and those with a strong local interest. As a result of this, to achieve balance they formed a group of six: two choreographers/producers, two early career artists, in addition to the BEEE Creative staff. It was felt that this was a good choice although the Project Lead reflected: *We didn't make a definition in roles and this is something I wonder if we should have.*

As this work is developmental the artists were asked to complete reflection diaries, that documented their learning and development. In addition, the family who took part were asked targeted follow up questions about their experience at the end of the research and development work.

Artistic and Heritage Development

Connecting to Heritage

The research and development was an exploration of using dance and other artforms in heritage settings. The research and development did achieve this aim by using the heritage settings and their collections to inspire the narrative develop the artistic response. The result was an exploration of movement, physicality, storytelling, visual art, and participation.

The artists described in their reflection diaries a strong connection to the local history, in particular the tapestry, as stimulus for their work.

- *The Royston tapestry is very much the seed/the fertile core of this project for me: a spectacular achievement woven by a community together. (Artist A)*

They also explored how the work could connect to place, both in the past and now.

- *Connecting to Royston cave, obviously it is made of chalk so using chalk within our piece...Connecting also with chalk streams which nearly all of Hertfordshire rivers are chalk streams and chalk streams are dying, that's another way we can look into it. (Artist B)*

The tapestry provided the starting point for a narrative of the piece, which in itself became a journey for participants to join in with.

- *Timeline - recognising history to present day, to future in the actions we take or the stories we pass on which all weave together in the identity of a place and the people living there. Relates nicely back to the weaving of the Royston Tapestry. (Artist C)*

Identify new ways of interpreting local stories and history

The process itself was an exploration in how to use different approaches and artforms to interpret and share local stories and history. This required the artists to also engage deeply with the local history and collaborate with their experience and knowledge to create the piece.

- *We talked about journeys and stories and how we wanted to portray that. And how people and culture and communities were created and moved on, like migration and invasion. Past and present. We talked about different stimuli to promote that like soundscapes or poetry or rhythms. (Artist B)*

The artists all reflected on the nature of the 'finished' piece and how to describe it.

- *Is it a workshop, immersive theatre, is it participatory performance (Artist B)*
- *Something I recognise this week is a lot of it feels somewhere between a performance and a workshop. Which might be a nice hybrid (Artist D)*

One of the artists felt that the inclusion of participation within the piece enabled them to think more deeply about the creative process and inviting them to share the exploration of history.

- *Inviting participants to be part of a process seems to have a powerful impact and growth in appreciation for creative work, rather than working towards one final piece all the time. Similar idea with a trail or adventure; we invite participants on a journey. (Artist C)*

The family who took part in the trial performance were interviewed at the end. The sound quality of the recording of the interview has made it challenging to report verbatim what was said, however notes of the interview were taken. The family provided feedback on the experience and overall enjoyed it. They liked the interactive elements such as throwing balls and building roads. There was an element of the piece that required chalk drawing on a sheet which they all enjoyed. They found the repetitive performance moments less enjoyable.

The feedback points to the interactive elements, within the framework of the narrative, enabled the family who ranged in ages to engage with the local stories and history. The mother of the family said it had been a good introduction to Royston and that they would like to visit the cave. She suggested that the piece would have benefited from further context and introduction to Royston as they were not from the town.

Skills Development

The two primary aims of the research and development was firstly to explore a tour of the commissioned work and secondly to support the development of skills and confidence of emerging dance artists. There are clear moments in their reflection diaries where the artists identify moments of learning. For example, one artist began thinking in broader terms about their artform and its application with digital technology.

- *I continue to envisage sewing/threading/strings (and larger versions of that) as a key component going forward, but that the use of digital software that can make things come alive magically (Artist A)*

For others it triggered a desire to do further research and develop their knowledge and thinking.

- *I normally do a lot of research on the effects of dance on health, after this session I am really curious what elements in dance trigger those effects. (Artist E)*
- *Shaun's animation was really inspiring, and I found the combination of scratchy immediate drawing and real people moving and making actions in silhouette (Sp!) really interesting. (Artist A)*

The process also gave space to the other artists to share their knowledge and expertise. For example, one of the artists had expertise in Early Years, and they were able to share appropriate knowledge in that area.

- *EY [Early Years] Report 'Right to Play' shared...very interesting - almost already doing a lot of what's required in practice, but good to have a reminder of ways of working to highlight and prove we are meeting criteria for healthy child development / understand why we do things the way we do. (Artist C)*
- *Artist D used an active listening technique – recording key words that helped provide a record of what everyone brought to the table and individual interests. (Artist F)*
- *This group of artists brings such a diverse knowledge and skillset, that I think it only enhanced the rich, thoughtfulness of the pilot work created. (Artist C)*

Additionally, the process itself was a learning experience for everyone. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, a hybrid approach was taken, with the first three exploratory meetings taking place on zoom and the final two days in person. The Project Lead outlined the process established.

- *Tried new ways of developing new projects that have established new working practices, e.g. three zoom introductory sessions to establish project direction and initial ideas, time in between each for thinking/research space, then coming together in a physical space. This gave us a much more collaborative direction.*

All of the artists felt the restrictions of working online, but also found that it helped to focus them.

- *Capturing ideas in smaller groups allowed space for each individual to talk and open up a little more. I think being on Zoom still makes forming connections and full trust in a space difficult (Artist C)*

They also found that when they did come to work together face to face they needed to ensure a safe space for sharing ideas was created. It was also clear that a sense of equality had been created, which enabled all artists feel able to contribute.

- *The group and the space was created to be open and honest, which really helped in terms of narrowing down our ideas to form what will be our pilot immersive/interactive workshop of the project. (Artist C)*

The Project Lead reflected that she felt that she led too much of the sessions online, but this was likely due to the nature of online working.

- *The online sessions felt I had to lead them a lot more than I had wanted to – I had wanted more to come from the team, so there was a lot larger role for me in gathering and shaping all the information we generated in order to keep a focus and momentum moving forward. That said, it seemed to work well.*

This would be something to consider in the planning for future work like this.

While the Research and Development strand did not achieve its original goal of working with community volunteers, it did achieve its aims of identifying new ways to interpret local stories and history. Additionally, it provided a nurturing and creative environment for the artists, regardless of experience, to share their knowledge, ideas and creativity. BEEE Creative as an organisation aims to support and nurture emerging community dance artists, and this process with some development, can be used as a model to do this.

Internship

The internship for this project was offered to a candidate who had previously completed an internship for BEEE Creative on a previous project. This allowed her to continue to develop her understanding of community arts practice, as well as focus on new skills to develop. A follow up interview with the Intern took place shortly before the end of their placement. She was asked to consider her development during their Internship with regards to increases in confidence as a professional dance practitioner, skills development, and what their progression from this point might look like.

Not originally from the UK, the Intern has retrained in community dance, having previously qualified and practiced as a doctor. She brought to this role a unique perspective of dance and health, as well as years of professional experience in a different sector.

The Intern's role was slightly different to the one she fulfilled in the first placement. In the first internship her role covered more delivery of the social media work and some marketing design, as well as other responsibilities. For this internship she did less of this and had a larger responsibility to reach out to potential partners, which included cold calling and emailing.

Confidence and Skills

The Intern described the new responsibilities as initially challenging for her. Emailing potential partners was not something she had been required to do in her previous work. She said: *The cold emailing was something completely new to me. As a person I found it rather daunting.* Initially she was writing the emails as if they were from the Project Lead, which she found easier. When she was writing them from herself, she found she was less confident. *I was rewriting them [the emails] because they were from me and then I thought if they're good enough for [the Project Lead], they should be good enough for me. It was a good learning point for me.* She did begin find her confidence in this work and began to be more creative in her approach. *Once I started sending the emails out, I started to have fun with it and thinking about how to chase them up and not feel like I am spamming them. That was something completely new.*

The Intern also referenced feeling like she had more responsibility this year. She felt that due to Covid-19 where everyone was in a similar situation and having to experiment, she had more freedom to explore. This year, she felt there was less of that freedom. She did not feel this was a negative thing, but something she needed to get used to. *This year I felt I had more responsibility, in the beginning that was scary but then you grow into it. Once I got over that hurdle it was fine as well.*

Having had professional experience in another field, and having already completed an internship for BEEE Creative, the Intern did not reference skills specifically as much as her confidence as a professional community dance practitioner. Her involvement in the Research and Development strand, supported her to feel more confident. *Once we started working that all fell away. I forget that I actually have a lot of experience, just in a different field but it's still useful experience.*

The Intern has the unique perspective of someone who has established a career in one sector and is now starting again in another. She knows from experience the journey she will need to make in order to gain experience, which is both reassuring and challenging. *The thing I am most nervous about is leading and setting up sessions. I know I can do it because I have done but I am just aware of how inexperienced I am.* It is also a paradigm shift for her, moving from a career in medicine, to a career in the creative industries. *In medicine you just have to know the knowledge. In this you have the wide open sea of creativity. I am feeling inexperienced in this field and I think it's because I know how confident I am as a doctor because I have done it for over 10 years. When you change your career you know how inexperienced you are.* She feels her next steps is developing her skills as a workshop leader and developing her confidence to feel like she is a professional practitioner. *I know how to build a session, I know what I find important. It's just the doing. It's knowing you have to make mistakes and that's how you learn.*

Progression and professional development

The Intern felt that she was given very good support and opportunity to progress and develop professionally. She described being able to attend (online) an international conference on Arts and Health, and Social Prescribing. This is an obvious area of interest for her and it was useful to see the broader application of social prescribing beyond the arts. *We look at it from the arts and health perspective but social prescribing is so much bigger than that!* I didn't realise it was so much bigger than arts and health. It also helped her to consider possible applications of her work in this field in her home country of the Netherlands and to begin to make connections there. *I was really curious as to how others do it. Everything that I learn I am really curious as to how I can bring it back to the Netherlands.*

BEEE Creative aims to support the development of emerging artists and the support provided by the Project Lead has been appreciated by the Intern. She described a number of ways that she was supported and helped to develop. Firstly, she described how the Project Lead trusted her with responsibility but without adding pressure to 'get it right'. *One of the things [the Project Lead] does really well is that she gives you responsibility but not the pressure to achieve. She gives you the freedom to experiment and try out and learn but she also says 'I know you'll figure it out. I'll give you this responsibility and if it doesn't turn out that's ok, but I know you can do this.'* She felt this was a strength of the Project Lead's management style. *I think that's something she does really well. That sense of being taken care of...I really feel taken care of on a professional level. And on a personal level, she checks in on me.* She said this made her want to work harder and do better. *It's the invitation and the trust that makes you want to do the best you can.*

The Intern went on to describe the support she had from BEEE Creative to develop new projects. [The Project Lead] *sent me an email saying if you have project ideas you want to develop, I am here to help. It's nice to get those steps.* She felt this was very positive for her because she knows how small her network is and opportunities are compared to her medical career. *I guess during medschool you already do so many internships that by the time you start working you have done so many things already your responsibility grows and grows and you then get dropped in the deep end.* She feels supported by BEEE Creative to help her expand her network, which she feels is very undeveloped in the UK.

She felt the internship was extremely important to her, particularly in light of the pandemic. *This internship was a bit of a lifeline for me. In the Netherlands I have the network. Here it feels I have to work harder for it, perhaps I need to be more patient. I find it hard to find my footing there. Most of it goes through*

networks and I don't have that network – I am new to this field, new to this country so it was good to be part of that team so my network is expanding through BEEE Creative

Finally, she enthused about the opportunity to support and be part of the commissioned activity. *Those two days with the R&D and the days in the Museum with the Dancing with Light participants, I thought 'this is what it is all about' it sparked that joy and I remembered why I wanted to do.* This inspired her to rethink her next steps. I then got the urge to look at the jobs that do more of that. Before I was just focused on the PHD on this. *I am afraid that if I dive into the research alone it will be just a mind thing I will need to connected to artist thing. I don't want to lose it. I am eager to work on that more, either to assist or leading, facilitating dance sessions.* She also referred to the confidence she was given in being treated like an equal member of the creative team on the Research and Development project. *My heart is so full. I felt like a proper part of the team. Sometimes with my confidence I don't think I have experience yet, or my contributions are valid. I guess I don't have to worry about that if I look back on today.*

It is clear the internship has achieved its intended outcome of providing an opportunity for skills, confidence and professional development. The nurturing environment, coupled with trust and responsibility, is indicative of a model of best practice created by BEEE Creative.

Conclusion

A-MUSE was delivered under challenging circumstances. While it was designed in response to Covid-19 and its restrictions, BEEE Creative would not have been able to predict fast changing landscape of lockdowns, easing of restrictions and changing rules. Additionally, they were not able to predict how individual participants would respond personally to the pandemic and the easing of restrictions. Therefore, the project has had to remain responsive and adaptable to quick change.

Despite these challenges, on the whole AMUSE has achieved its aim to address identified development needs that supports BEEE Creative's longer term strategic priorities, via all strands of this project. It has met its aim to continue to support the development of dance infrastructure in Hertfordshire and beyond, particularly through the Internship and Research and Development strands. It has also met its aim to increase feelings of wellbeing and connectedness in participants. It has done this through connecting to local history and stories and exploring new artistic ways of sharing that history and those stories with artists and participants alike.

Recommendations

Wake Up and Dance The Wake Up and Dance element of the online work was extremely successful. It is recommended that if possible this work is continued. It would be useful to monitor continued retention as more people go back to work in the office and restrictions ease. It is also recommended that the elements of success for this work are applied across other projects, where appropriate, and are used as selling points.

Community Ambassadors – Advocacy BEEE Creative aims to increase its reach to participants not yet accessing their provision or dance in general. For many people who are unfamiliar with community dance practice, they find it challenging to understand what the work is and if they would benefit. It has been demonstrated that those who do 'take the risk' enjoy their involvement and benefit from it. It is recommended that some participants are approached to support the recruitment to future projects, where they can advocate for the work and describe BEEE Creative's approach.

Community Ambassadors – Marketing BEEE Creative is developing a core group of participants who know and understand its work. It has also worked with participants new to this work. It is recommended that BEEE Creative approach those newer members to provide some feedback on its next round of marketing to help recruit new participants.

Cross Sector Partnerships A similar approach is recommended for the development of cross-sector partnerships where participants can be used to advocate for the work and demonstrate it in practice, to support potential partners have a better understanding of the work and see its impact.

Research and Development Model The Research and Development model has been successful in not only exploring new ways to interpret and artistically share history and local stories, it has also proven to be a good model for professional and artistic development. It is recommended that this model is reviewed and refined where there may be more planned development opportunities. Additionally, reviewing the hybrid approach to working may enable a diversification of artist involvement from different backgrounds.

Artist Reflection The artist reflections were useful to gain an insight into the process of the Research and Development. The responses from artists ranged from extremely detailed, to limited. It is recommended that for future similar work the evaluator provides further support for the artists so they can better make use of the reflection diaries to support their learning. The evaluator can provide a range of tools for the reflection that best suit the individual. It is also recommended that the project lead outlines the importance of reflection diaries for both evaluative purposes and personal professional development.

Works Cited

- Arts Council England. (2020). *Let's Create Strategy*. Retrieved from Arts Council England:
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>
- Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019, November). HEALTH EVIDENCE NETWORK SYNTHESIS REPORT 67: What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Fancourt, D., Garnett, C., Spiro, N., West, R., & Müllensiefen, D. (. (2019, February 5). *How do artistic creative activities regulate our emotions?* Retrieved from
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211362>
- NHS. (n.d.). *Physical activity guidelines for older adults*. Retrieved from NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/>
- World Health Organisation. (n.d.). *About the WHO-5*. Retrieved from The WHO-5 Website:
<https://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/who-5/Pages/default.aspx>

List of Tables

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1 - Outputs and Activities | 6 |
| Table 2 - Participant reach | 6 |
| Table 3 - Project Personnel and Partners | 6 |
| Table 4 - Open text questions for Commission participants | 10 |
| Table 5 - Wake Up and Dance Participation regularity | 14 |
| Table 6 - Teacher Expectations..... | 19 |
| Table 7 -Research and Development Artists | 20 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1 - Participant expectations for the Commission strands..... | 8 |
| Figure 2 - Wake Up and Dance feedback | 15 |
| Figure 3 - Success factors for Wake Up and Dance | 18 |

Appendix A – Activities Matrix

Baseline

| Tool | Activity Strand | Detail |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participants | | |
| Baseline Questionnaires | Commissions Dance for Schools | To assess the starting points of skills base and feelings of wellbeing |
| Intern | | |
| Baseline Interview | Internship | To assess the starting point of skills base, expectations and hopes for the role |

Follow up

| Tool | Activity Strand | Detail |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participants | | |
| Follow up Questionnaires, interviews | Commissions Online workshops Dance for Schools | To assess skills learned, wellbeing impact against baseline (Commissions). |
| Practitioners (Trainees, Volunteers) | | |
| Follow up Questionnaires, interviews | Research and Development | To assess if expectations of development have been met To assess if skills and confidence have increased To assess next steps for trainees and volunteers |
| BEEE Creative | | |
| Follow up Interviews | All applicable strands | To understand if project expectations were met To identify success indicators for an online programme, volunteer strand, exhibition space etc |
| Intern | | |
| Follow up interviews | Internship | To assess skills learned and professional development To measure impact of internship on career next steps/employability |
| Audience | | |
| Feedback Forms | Dance for Schools (Dance Festival) Exhibition | To assess audience response to the Festival and Exhibition, and contributing success factors |

Appendix B – Key Performance Indicators

Commissions

Participants will identify:

- Increased feelings of connectedness
- They have learned new skills
- Enjoyment in using artforms to explore local stories and history

BEEE Creative will:

- Identify success indicators for combining dance and other art forms in museum settings, for community led projects
- Incorporate learning in future iterations of this work and other projects
- Demonstrate this practice can produce high quality artistic outputs

Online Dance Delivery

Participants will identify:

- Increased feelings of connectedness
- They have learned new skills
- They have maintained or increased physical activity
- Routes to engagement via new cross-sector partnerships
- Preferred ways to engage online
- They enjoyed the workshops/engage regularly

Practitioners/Artists will:

- Observe increased skills
- Observe increased connectedness between participants

BEEE Creative will:

- Identify success indicators for an ongoing online offer
- Increase the numbers engaging online
- Identify indicators for successful cross-sector partnerships
- Have 25% increase in online participants

Research and Development

Practitioners/Artists

- Trainees and volunteers will identify increases in skills and confidence
- Observe increases in confidence and skills in trainees and volunteers
- Volunteers will indicate desire to continue to volunteer for BEEE Creative

BEEE Creative will

- Assess the learning from the R&D for future development
- Increase understanding of using the commissioned work to reach new participants and audience
- Develop understanding of the role of volunteers in its work

Exhibition

- BEEE Creative will use learning to develop incorporation of online exhibition space within its programme
- 50% increase in exhibition audience

Dance for Schools

Teachers

- Identify increase in skills and confidence in creating dance films
- Indicate desire to continue to engage with BEEE Creative

Internship

The intern will identify

- Increases in confidence and skills
- Pathways to personal career progression
- Areas for professional development