

PERFORM  
TRANSFORM

# An Evaluation for BEEE Creative CIO

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September 2024

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Perform Transform was a project delivered by BEEE Creative that aimed to focus on the rapid changes in towns in the Hertfordshire towns of Hitchin (North Hertfordshire), Letchworth, Royston, Stevenage, and Watford. It hoped to question the relevance of the collections in the museums of those towns by giving space to gather stories of local individuals. Perform Transform used dance, arts, storytelling and technology to encourage engagement and exploration of heritage. It worked with intergenerational participants from historically underserved communities, and trialled new approaches to encourage engagement from those communities.

## Project Aims

Perform Transform wanted to challenge inequality to cultural access by addressing barriers to engagement. The project aimed to support historically underserved members of the local communities to provide tangible skills development through exploration and interpretation of heritage that improved a sense of belonging and wellbeing. Perform Transform aligned with BEEE Creative's strategic ambition to create an equitable creative sector with greater representation of social, cultural and embodied identities.

## Headlines

- The project achieved both breadth in terms of the numbers of engagements it achieved, and depth of experience for those who took part in the taster sessions and the residencies.
- Heritage was central to the project, which enabled participants to connect to their local museum. They were able to connect in new ways to the places they lived, their environment, with their own personal heritage, and to each other across the generations.
- Participants, regardless of age, gained new skills in the art forms they worked with and transferable social and emotional skills.
- Participants felt valued and heard throughout the project. BEEE Creative's participant-led approach supported participants to take part and contribute on their own terms.
- BEEE Creative's process and ways of working create particular conditions that support participation and engagement, including those who do not have a history of engaging in heritage and arts projects.

## Recommendations

**Building community trust** The time required to build individual relationships within the communities took considerably more time and resource than anticipated. Future projects should consider building in additional administrative resource to account for the time and that 'behind the scenes' efforts are required to enable some participants to cross the threshold.

**Points of entry** As this project has begun to do, offer multiple points of entry in future projects. What might be an enabler for one person, may be a barrier to another. Persisting and providing multiple points of entry will encourage engagement and re-engagement.

**Describing the project** Communities who have no history of taking part in heritage or arts projects are unlikely to take the perceived risk in doing so, without a clear understanding of what they might be doing. It is recommended that work continues with the Community Connectors Network to find ways of describing the projects, in ways that encourage that first 'risk'. The Community Connectors can be used to promote and explain BEEE Creative's approach, which may also build trust.

**Conditions of participation** It is recommended that BEEE Creative further investigates the ways in which the conditions it creates supports its aim to reach and work with underserved communities.

## Introduction

Perform Transform was a project delivered by BEEE Creative that explored the theme of transformation from 2012 – 2022, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It aimed to focus on the rapid changes in towns in the Hertfordshire towns of Hitchin (North Hertfordshire), Letchworth, Royston, Stevenage, and Watford. The project aimed to question the relevance of the collections in the museums of those towns by giving space to participants to gather stories of local individuals.

Perform Transform used dance, arts, storytelling and technology activities as the toolkit to enthuse engagement and interpretation of heritage themes. Working with intergenerational participants from historically underserved communities, Perform Transform trialled new approaches to encourage engagement from those communities.

## Activity

The project took place approximately over two years. The following activities took place.

### *Year 1 – Widen Engagement and Participation*

#### Participant opportunities

- Storytelling workshops and oral history collection
- Outreach residencies with local community groups
- Podcasts using the recorded oral histories
- Take away activities for home creation
- Mini Makes/Meet the Maker workshops – online and at the museums

#### Practitioner and staff activities

- Storytelling facilitation training
- Access training – EDI, audio description, Deaf awareness, Introduction to BSL, subtitle training

### *Year 2 – Deeper Participation, Showcasing and Exhibition*

#### Participation opportunities

- Open Make Events online workshops
- Open Make Events at museums
- Multiple day residency at each museum to create an exhibit based on community stories
- Installation launches
- Online launch of outputs
- ‘Choose Your Own Adventure’ app developed

## Activity Strands

**Artist and team training:** Voluntary training in EDI, Audio Description, Stage Text, Deaf Awareness and introduction to BSL. Compulsory storytelling training with Miranda Quinney.

**Outreach Residencies:** Stepping-stone workshops with community groups identified with museums, e.g. Peace Hospice, West Herts College, Mind in Mid Herts, acting as an introduction to the project. With a focus on participants creating for themselves, they included elements of “Meet the Maker” and “Open Make” but with the space and familiarity of existing groups.

**Meet the Maker:** Introductory workshops at the museums for people who were interested to find out more, meet the team and take part in a small activity. Sessions took place in the museums, and available online for those who wish to take part at home.

**Open Make:** A step up from the “Meet the Maker” workshops, but still open and introductory. Participants were involved more in sharing their stories. They provided an opportunity to collect some stories.

**Oral Histories:** Participants from any of the residencies/mini makes were able to choose to have their whole story recorded. People also responded to an open call out, which meant people who did not participate in the other activities could still take part. These were collected and used in the final outputs of the project.

**Museum Residencies:** These were equivalent to 5 days per museum, but the activity and structure was bespoke to each museum team. The participants were drawn from existing groups and general open calls, depending on the museum.

**Choose Your Own Adventure App:** This has been developed with each group contributing content to the app.

**Internship:** Attached to this project were paid training opportunities for an internship and traineeship.

## Project Aim

Perform Transform wanted to challenge inequality to cultural access by addressing barriers to engagement. The project aimed to support historically underserved members of the local communities with an offer of a programme with tangible skills development that improved a sense of belonging and wellbeing. Perform Transform aligns with BEEE Creative’s strategic ambition to create an equitable creative sector with greater representation of social, cultural and embodied identities.

## Outcomes

### Heritage

1. The heritage sector has increased equity of access
2. Participants increase engagement with heritage and their local museum
3. Practitioners develop skills in applied heritage

### Skills

1. Participants develop new skills: arts, heritage, social
2. Practitioners develop new skills: arts, digital, accessibility

### Wellbeing

1. Participants increase feelings of wellbeing, belonging and feeling valued

### Organisational Development

1. Developed cross-sector partnerships to commitment and action towards heritage
2. Developed cross-sector partnerships to address barriers to participation
3. Developed models of engaging with diverse audiences and increased learning around access

# Project Information

## Outputs

The following outputs outline the participants and audiences reached through this project. The outputs also demonstrate the training and development put in place to support the project's aims to be inclusive and remove barriers to participation. Overall, BEEE Creative exceeded the anticipated numbers of participants and audience reached. It should be noted that BEEE Creative planned to run a series of online workshops in response to participant appetite post-Covid. However, this appetite has diminished in time, with participants preferring an in-person experience. Therefore, 15 online sessions were offered with 4 delivered. These are included in the workshop numbers.

Output	Sessions / Outputs	Attendance
<b>Training:</b> BEEE Creative staff training, Museums, community groups and practitioners in storytelling and access	16	81
<b>Installation Launches:</b> for project outputs	6	159
<b>Audio Description and subtitling:</b>	5	NA
<b>Postcard Collection</b>	5	500 printed
<b>Museum Tours</b>	5	See Residency attendance
<b>Choose your own adventure App</b>	1	TBA
<b>Activity resources</b>	5	N/A
<b>Gallery Exhibition</b>	1	TBA
<b>Five-day artist residencies:</b> to create exhibits at each museum	29	270
<b>Creative workshops:</b> Meet the Maker and Open Make creative workshops, storytelling workshops	20	105
<b>Oral History collection</b>	18	18
<b>Community Outreach Workshops:</b> to explore museum objects and creative interpretation	47 <sup>1</sup>	417
<b>Artist and Museum planning</b>	5	20
<b>Exhibition</b>	5	6225
<b>Digital Content:</b> films from each museum <sup>2</sup>	15	1102
<b>Traineeship/Internship</b>		2

## Internship

BEEE Creative includes internship opportunities alongside its projects where possible. The intern attached the project was interviewed about her learning and development. She outlined her learning which covered professional skills such as understanding systems and processes, IT literacy development, fundraising, and running a business. She also identified some personal development in relation to understanding her working style. The intern was able to articulate the experience of her internship and the conditions that supported her development which included working in a flexible environment. She highlighted the open communication from BEEE Creative and the clear and constructive feedback she was given that focused on her growth and development.

<sup>1</sup> Three additional sessions were booked but subsequently cancelled by partner organisations

<sup>2</sup> The films were outputs that were not included in the original funding application but later agreed as they were integral to the development of the app.

## Participants

The people taking part included:

- Adults living with disability, long-term health conditions or illness
- Adults living with mental health conditions or sensory impairments
- Young people with career aspirations in cultural sector
- Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Children and their families

## Project Partners

- Museum at One Garden City (Letchworth Heritage Foundation)
- North Hertfordshire Museum, Hitchin
- Royston Museum
- Stevenage Museum
- Watford Museum
- Cheslyn House and Gardens
- Controlled Frenzy – specialists in creative technology
- Miranda Quinney – storytelling artist
- University of Hertfordshire – Oral History Team
- North Herts College
- Mind in Mid Herts
- Blakett-Ord Court Housing
- Wilbury Community Cafe
- Macfadyen Webb House (First Garden Cities Homes)
- Supported Activities
- Barnwell School
- Mind in Mid Herts
- Junction 7 Creatives
- West Herts College
- Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care
- Archers Court

## Artist Teams

- Watford Museum - Laura Horn (dance) and Anji Archer (visual arts), outreach with West Herts College and Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care
- Stevenage Museum - Maga Judd (dance) and Anji Archer (visual arts), outreach with Barnwell School, Mind in Mid Herts, Junction 7 Creatives
- North Herts Museum - Elaine Thomas (dance) and Alison Gibb (poet/artist), outreach with Supported Activities, Archers Court
- Museum at One Garden City (Letchworth Heritage Foundation) - Kasia Truefitt (dance) and Sam Ivin (photography), outreach with Wilbury Community Cafe and Dementia Club at Macfadyen Webb House (First Garden Cities Homes)
- Royston Museum - Jane Turner (dance) and Rob Finlay (film), outreach with Mind in Mid Herts and Blakett-Ord Housing

## Methodology and Limitations

A range of simple tools was designed to best fit the participants, artists 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](#). A small number of surveys were completed for the Outreach and Open Make workshops. Artist observations have been used to support this feedback. Completion of the residency baseline and endpoint forms was slightly inconsistent. Due to the sample size, it can still be considered that the responses are representative of the participants. Evaluator observation visits took place at all residencies except North Hertfordshire Museum as recruitment challenges resulted in scheduling conflicts. However, participant surveys, artist observations and observations from North Herts College have been used to support the evaluation.

# What Happened

## Open Make, Meet the Maker, Community Outreach workshops

The taster workshops – Open Make and Meet the Maker – and Community Outreach workshops took place between May 2023 – April 2024. These were staggered across the museums to account for museum and artist availability. These workshops were used to identify potential participants for the longer residencies that took place in the latter part of the project, as well as to identify potential oral history contributors. It was acknowledged by the Project Team that while it was desired that participants complete the full journey of the project, it was unlikely. Each activity strand was designed to stand alone, but to encourage deeper participation at the next stage of the project.

The following is a breakdown of participation in the Open Make, Meet the Maker and Community Outreach workshops for each area.

North Hertfordshire – 143

Letchworth – 137

Royston – 90

Stevenage – 95

Watford – 98

The participants in the workshops were asked to complete an end of activity survey. Only a small number of surveys were returned, 31 in total:

- Open Make: 8 (Stevenage and Letchworth)
- Meet the Maker: 15 (Royston and Letchworth)
- Community Workshops: 4 (Royston)

There were two responses from Community group leaders who answered on behalf of their groups.

The low numbers are unsurprising considering the nature of the activities, either as one-off events, or in community settings, with small participant numbers. It should be noted that some of the responses are representative of family groups and therefore more than one participant. Thematic analysis of artists' observation and reflection diaries has been undertaken to provide an understanding of these strands of the project.



*Photograph 1 - Workshop at Museum at One Garden City*



## Heritage

The project intended that participants would be able to explore the heritage of where they lived via their museum. It was hoped that this might encourage an increased desire to continue to engage with their local museum. The participants for Open Make, Meet the Maker, and Community workshops were asked how often they attended their local museum. The responses were evenly spread between the four options, with over half (n=14) visiting sometimes or regularly.

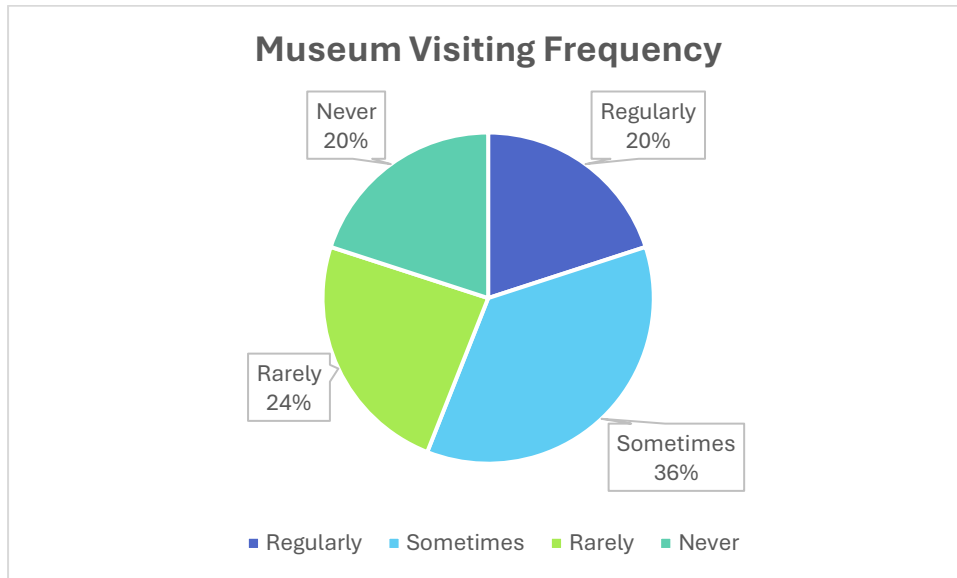


Figure 1 - Museum Visiting Frequency

After the workshops, they were asked if they would like to visit the museum as a result of taking part. All but one responded “yes”, who remarked it was dependent on their other family members. Most of the respondents provided reasons for saying yes. These included:

- To learn new things
- To have fun and connect with others
- To explore local heritage further
- To be creative

The participants were asked if they felt the workshops had enabled them to explore local heritage, and if they had learned something new about the local area.

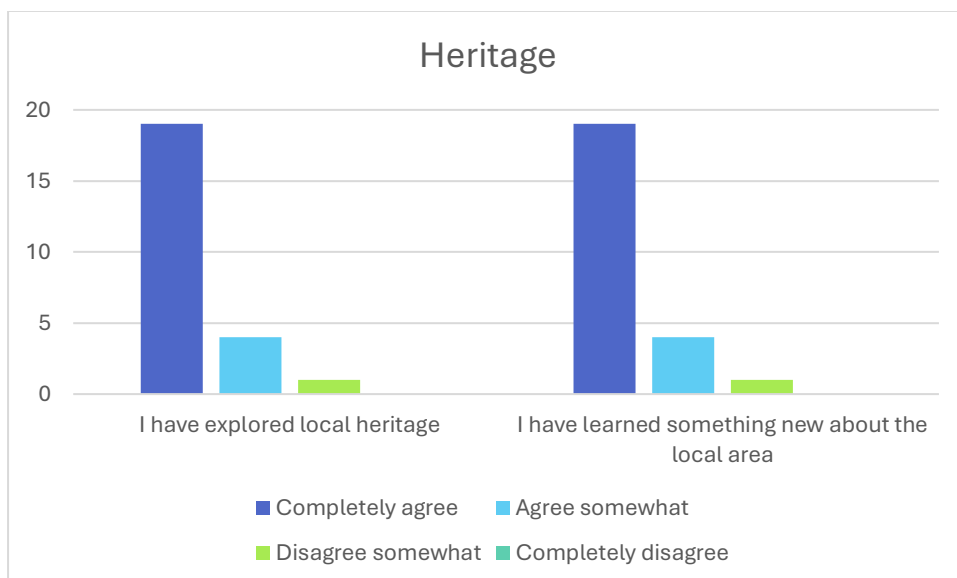


Figure 2 – Heritage: Open Make, Meet the Maker, Community Outreach

The responses were almost unanimously in agreement that they had explored local heritage and had learned something new about the area. They provided a number of reasons for wanting to return, either to the museum or to the project. These included:

- Enjoying the workshops
- Exploring heritage and their own stories
- Being part of a creative experience through the exploration of dance and art

The artist observations provided examples of how participants were able to engage with their local heritage. This often started with responding to objects or photographs that would stimulate sharing stories of their own past.

- *There was a good level of conversation in response to the objects. Lots of memories shared and the group found things in common. They liked to talk about the Watford images from past and present.* (Community – Peace Hospice, Watford)
- *The photos of Stevenage and the change in the last 10 years encouraged them to say their own stories and some of them had amazing stories. The life stories and it's just triggered those photos triggered to talk about their lives, memories of their parents and when they moved.* (Open Make, Stevenage)

The use of the arts activities provided a way in to interpreting and talking about heritage.

- *They enjoyed telling some stories about Letchworth and using the art supplies to draw something they liked in Letchworth.* (Community – Letchworth)

Despite the short-term nature of these activities, they still offered opportunities for deeper exploration of personal heritage.

- *It gave permission to open up, we [the artists] were there to support participants, giving the participants a freedom to go deeper into own stories.* (Open Make, Stevenage)

## Wellbeing

The participants were asked whether they had connected with new people, seen as an indicator of wellbeing (Fig.3). All of the respondents agreed they had. The respondents enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other people. In addition to being able to connect with new people, some specifically mentioned the opportunity the project gave to being able to connect with family.

- *People who didn't know each other came and engaged, joined in, laughed, moved, tried new things, shared stories and connections* (Open Make, Royston)

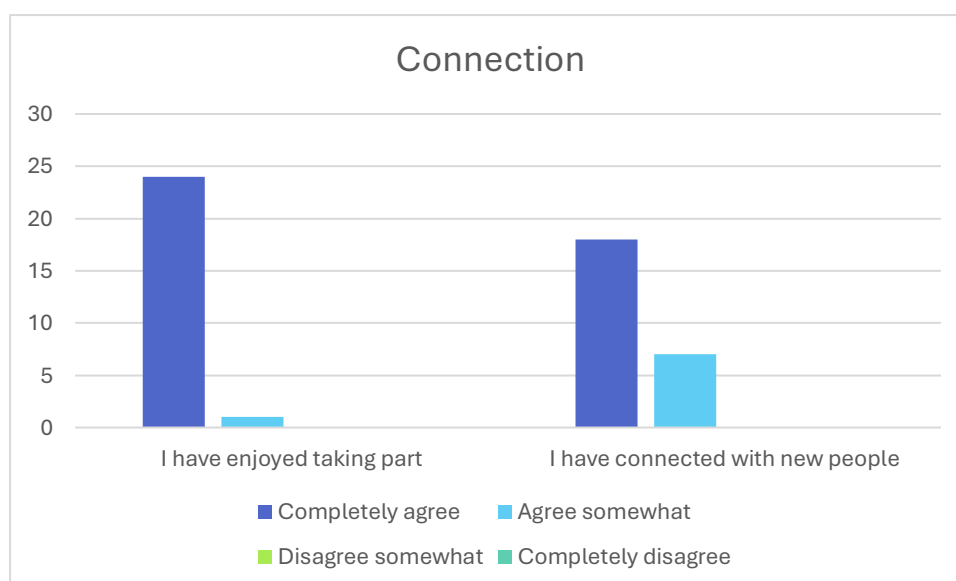


Figure 3 - Open Make, Meet the Maker, Community Outreach

The use of arts-based activities to explore heritage, can offer a profound experience for participants to connect with their and to connect with others, even when the interventions are short-term.

- *One lady shared much about her experience in the Women's league of Health and beauty. The objects from week one inspired this as she took out the juggling pins and demonstrated a baton swinging routine from her practise there. On the final week, she brought in a suitcase full of photo albums and programs from her days in this group. She commented that it was nice to find somewhere to share these memories as she hadn't got those photos out for years. She commented that it was nice to find somewhere to share these memories as she hadn't got those photos out for years. (Community – Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care, Watford)*

## Skills

Despite the short-term nature of the Open Make, Meet the Maker and Community Outreach workshops, it was still hoped that the participants may learn some new skills. The participants were asked if they felt this has been the case. They were also asked about the nature of the learning, if they felt they had their ideas listened to, and if they had been creative. All of the respondents agreed or completely agreed that that they had learned new skills, were listened to and had been creative. Two respondents referred directly what they had learned.

- *Learning how to improvise with movement*
- *Doing and thinking new concepts*

## Residencies

Following the series of Meet the Maker, Open Make and Community Outreach workshops, residencies with each of the museums took place between March – June 2024. Each residency consisted of 3-5 days of exploration of the theme relating to heritage in each venue, using the same artist pairings. The Watford residency took place at Cheslyn House and Gardens in Watford, itself a heritage venue, as the museum was closed for redevelopment.

Participants were drawn from the Meet the Maker, Open Make and Community Outreach workshops, with some continuing to take part. The residencies remained open access which allowed participants who had not taken part before to join in. Recruitment for North Hertfordshire Museum proved particularly challenging, and while an open access offer was provided, a direct approach to North Herts College to work a group of young adults with special needs was made. As a result, two 3-day residencies were delivered with North Hertfordshire Museum, one for the North Herts College group, and one for members of the public.

Evaluation activity for this element of the project included:

- Baseline and endpoint surveys for the participants
- Structured interviews with self-selected participants
- Practitioner and Evaluator observations
- Group Leader feedback from the North Herts College group

In total 97 participants took part in the residencies, with an age range of 9 months to 80+ year olds. The baseline surveys had 32 responses, and the endpoints saw 27 responses with some respondents answering on behalf of other family members.

## Taking Part

The participants were asked how they had heard about the project and if they had taken part in a previous Perform Transform activity (Fig.4). The fairly even spread of responses demonstrates that participants are not just hearing about the project from one major source, but from a range of sources online and within the community.

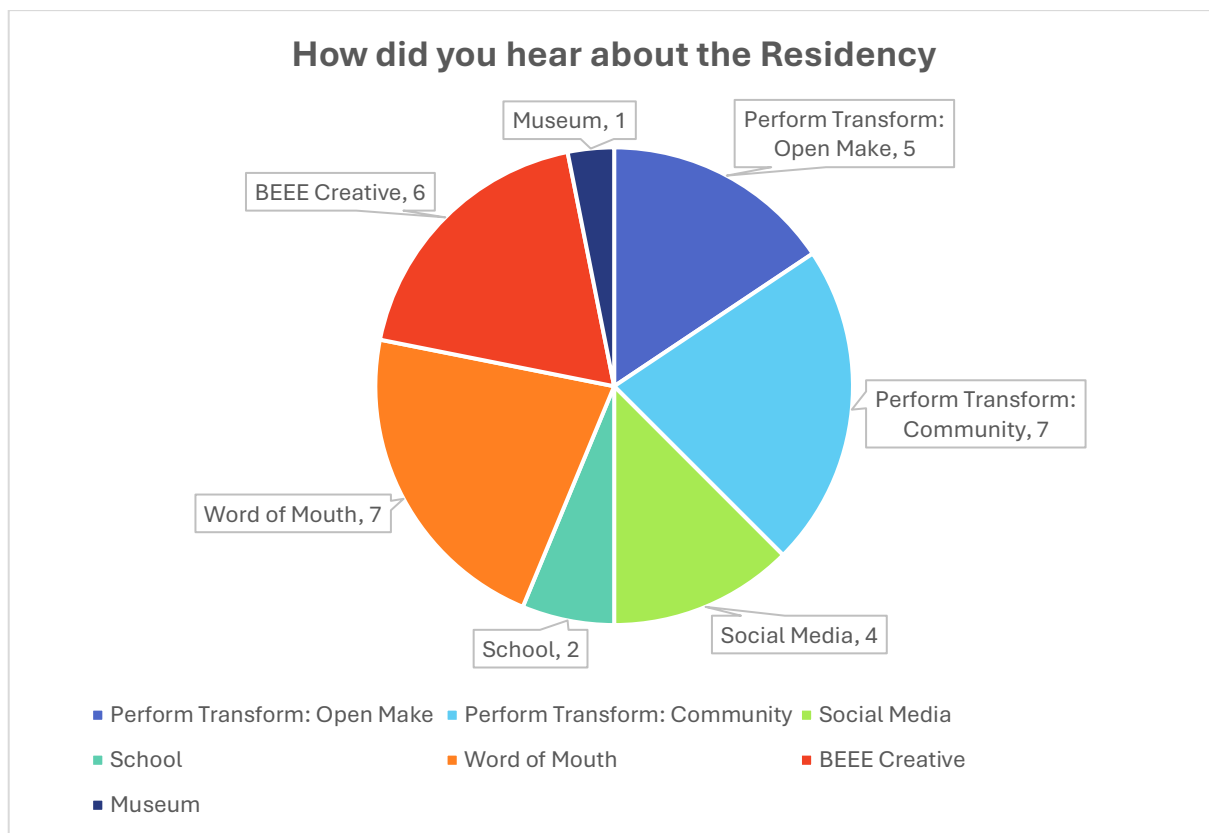


Figure 4 - How did you hear about the Residency

The respondents found out about the residencies through social media, word of mouth, school, and the museum. Below is a breakdown of participants who took part in the taster sessions, against those who did not. At least 6 participants have taken part in other BEEE Creative projects.

Venue	Previous Perform Transform Participants	New Residency Participants	Total Unique Participants
North Hertfordshire	2	47 <sup>3</sup>	49
Letchworth	11	5	16
Royston	5	3	8
Stevenage	4	8	12
Watford	5	7	12

The participants were asked what their expectations of the project were (Fig.5). They were given a list of options to select from, choosing all that applied, with the opportunity to include anything else. At the end of the residency, they were asked these questions again, to understand if their expectations had been met.

- *It exceeded our expectations. We just had such an awesome time. Just the combination of everything. The things that we were doing, the people that we were doing them with, being new people and the whole team were just so nice. By the time that the project had finished, we were*

<sup>3</sup> 40 participants were from the North Herts College group

*all kind of a little bit emotional. We were like, what are we going to do now?* (Letchworth Participant)

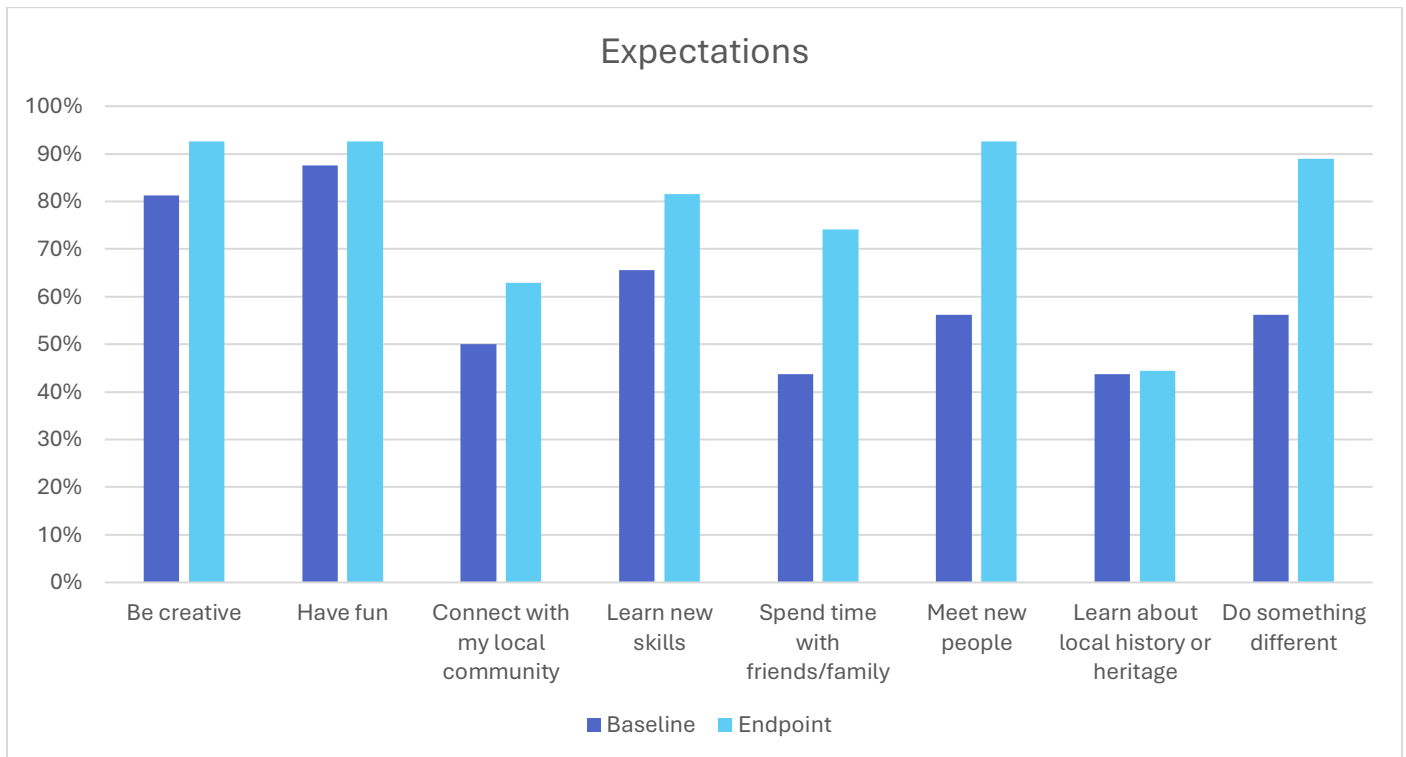


Figure 5 - Expectations: Residencies

Across all of the options, their expectations were met or exceeded. Most striking were the responses for:

- Meeting new people, with a difference of 37 percentage points
- Do something different, with a difference of 33 percentage points
- Spend time with friends/family, with a difference of 30 percentage points

In the follow up question to what they are most looking forward to about the project, the respondents top three responses centred on:

- Learning new skills
- Being creative, in particular through dance
- Spending time with family

The endpoint surveys asked a series of questions pertaining to the outcomes around heritage, skills development and wellbeing. The responses are presented below in Fig.6. The options for 'disagree somewhat' and 'completely disagree' were not selected by any respondent for any question.

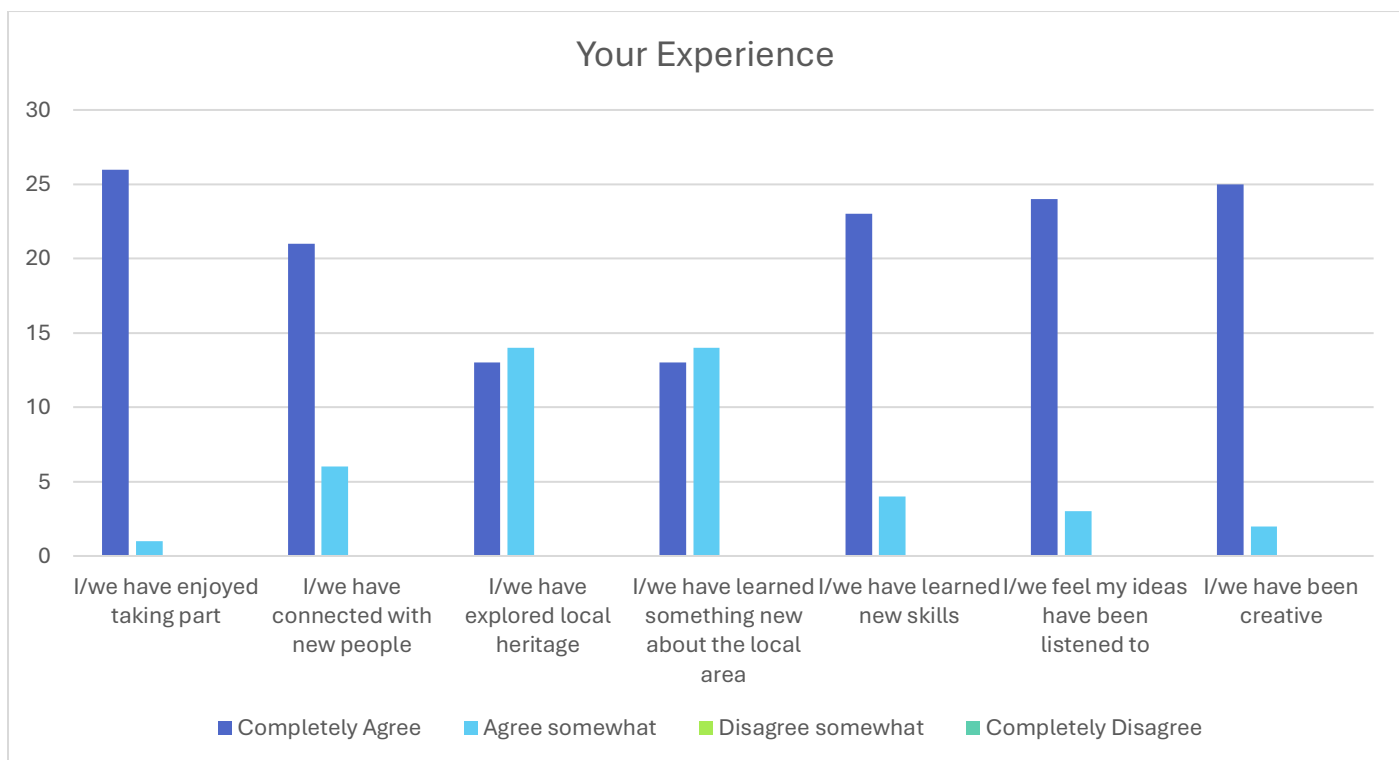


Figure 6 - Your Experience: Residencies

## Heritage

The residencies used the collections of the museums as stimulus for discussion and artistic exploration through dance and the accompanying artform for each museum. These interpretations were used to create the installation as the culmination of the project. The residencies began with an overall starting theme: the transformation of the towns over the last 10 years. Each museum then distilled this into a theme that felt relevant to their place. These were:

- Royston - changing use of community spaces
- North Hertfordshire Museum - Food
- Museum at One Garden City - landmarks in Letchworth
- Stevenage - fashion/shopping
- Watford - leisure time

These themes shifted and changed over time due to conversations with communities in the early stages of the project. This co-creative approach, allowing participants to lead the direction of the exploration, meant that while these themes became a jumping off point, the journey was richer and more personal to those who took part. The shift in theme for each museum is described:

- The North Hertfordshire residency soon moved away from the theme to become much more about an exploration of the museum space, and the participants' responses, hopes and connections to museum artefacts.
- Royston became about Royston as a crossroads, as a passing place. It looked at how people ended up in Royston if they hadn't always lived there. This was entwined with personal stories linking to artefacts in the museum.
- Watford remained quite strongly about leisure but included strong personal heritage from the participants.
- Letchworth became about what participants liked about their town and their own stories of living there.
- Stevenage shifted from changes in town centre to shopping to traditional dress or personal design.

Where there was deviation, the theme was certainly seen as the stimulus for exploration of other heritage themes.

- *The overall theme of the project was change and people's perceptions of change in their towns. However, the artists (generalised) struggled to gather stories about change. Instead, participants shared what they appreciate in their town, suggesting that change may not be relevant for those who haven't lived there long. (Project Lead)*

Perform Transform was guided by the contributions from the community with the installation reflecting what the participants wanted to be displayed.

In contrast to this, the oral histories did attract longer-term residents of the towns, who did talk about the change in where they lived. The oral histories attracted a different kind of audience/participant which broadened the reach of the project.



Photograph 2 - Residency at North Herts Museum

Participant survey responses indicate that they did feel they explored heritage of their local community, with all completely agreeing or agreeing somewhat to the questions about heritage (Fig.6). When compared to answers to the other questions, these responses were less emphatic in their agreement. However, in the interviews with participants, they all felt that exploration of heritage was intrinsic to the project, as it was the stimulus for exploration.

### *Local Heritage*

Each town the project took place in is different, with its own microculture and heritage. Exploration of the heritage of each place took place in different ways, but with ultimately similar outcomes. An explanation of how this worked for the Watford group is applicable across each group.

- *The participants...engaged in various artistic activities...aimed to capture the participants' stories and experiences related to leisure activities in Watford, with a focus on green spaces and heritage. (Project Lead)*

The artists observed that working with the museum collections via the art forms allowed for the participants to share their stories and process.

- *The afternoon group also became very absorbed in the museum collection and the drawing activities. They also enjoyed sharing their thoughts about what they had created and the stories behind that process. (North Hertfordshire Artist)*

Some participants observed that this had helped them see their town in a different way.

- *To walk through streets that you walk through every day, but actually look at it a bit differently. Look at it kind of in an artistic way as opposed to it just being there.* (Letchworth Participant)

For older participants, such as the group in Watford, this brought back their own memories of change and their part in the local history.

- *Looking at the book just reminded me of some of the things that we've had to enhance the heritage, learning about things like special bricks that are at Watford General Hospital.* (Watford Participant)

### *Personal Heritage and Connections*

Participants were able to connect with the history of the local area and their own personal heritage. The Lead Artists in Stevenage described their process of providing ways through creative endeavour to explore heritage. They felt that this not only provided participants with deeper knowledge of their town but increased their connection to their own heritage, whether they had lived there a long time or not.

- *I think we created this space for them to play, to explore, to feel a part of the culture and part of Stevenage and they felt more welcome than even before starting project because they explored different stories of Stevenage and its history. Everyone was much more connected and much more rooted in the context of history and change.* (Stevenage Artist)

For some participants the project helped them remember their own history in the town that they had forgotten.

- *The books from Watford Museum helped me to remember some of the things I've seen happen within Watford over the years because I've lived in 50 years now Watford.* (Watford Participant)
- *It's my own heritage.* (Watford Participant)

Other participants found that this exploration provided new ways to connect with others in their group. In Royston it offered a point of connection between one child in the group, who lives in a house built on the site of the old cinema, and an older member of the group who remembered going to that cinema.

The final output of the residencies, the installations, served as platforms for participants to explore and share their heritage and personal stories through art and movement.

- *Some people in the group have been living in Stevenage for a very long time, some of them for a short period of time. This group all had different heritage and different cultural backgrounds, so we were able to combine everything in the installation and the movement performance so that everyone had a chance to explore and share their own language, through the art and movement.* (Stevenage Artist)

### *Connection with the Museum*

All but one residency survey respondent said they wanted to continue to connect with the museum beyond the project. For some it inspired them to want to make active contributions to the museum.

- *Yes, it made me want to contribute to the displays and research history projects.* (Stevenage Participant)

For others it was to discover more about the heritage of their town.

- *There is always time to acquire new information that only a museum can display/archive.* (Stevenage Participant)
- *I think for us, that's kind of going to be like a place that we just drop in. Every kind of month or so just to see what else there is to discover that we didn't already know about Letchworth.* (Letchworth Participant)



Some participants specifically talked about the importance of holding the project in the museums, as it added to the experience.

- *I think having it in the museum, if it was just in a village hall, they wouldn't have the other stuff to draw on. (Royston Participant)*

Participants from the Watford group also felt the venue had a positive impact on their experience. While their project did not take place at Watford Museum, the venue it did take place in, Cheslyn House, is one of heritage significance.



Photograph 3 - Residency at Stevenage Museum

## Skills

Participants learned movement and other art form skills and techniques to express themselves. The survey respondents all felt they had learned new skills, with two identifying learning new skills as what they enjoyed most about the project.

- *I enjoyed learning new skills and putting them into practice - very satisfying. (North Hertfordshire Participant)*

The skills they learned can be separated into two categories, those relating to art form and heritage skills, and the harder to define skills of self-reflection, making sense of the world, and broadening horizons.

### Participants: Arts

Some participants identified the art form specific skills they enjoyed learning.

- *The skills that we learned; we've really enjoyed doing. The light painting. That was really amazing. We loved doing the photography. It was a really nice opportunity for the children to take. They don't go out and take pictures with a camera anymore. (Letchworth Participant)*

The artists also observed the development of participants' skills.

- *So it was wonderful to see it grow and to see them learning the skills with the printmaking and drawing on the shirts and writing on the shirt using fabric pens and fabric pastels. (Stevenage Artist)*

While the development of dance and the other art form skills were central to the project, most of the participants did not reflect on these in particular. This may either be because they felt their learning in other areas was more important, or they did not notice their art form skills developing.

### *Participants: Social Capital*

The participants were better able to identify the more transferable skills they felt they had developed through the project. These are skills that are difficult to describe but may fit within a definition of Social Capital. The Office for National Statistics defines Social Capital: *Social capital is a term used to describe the extent and nature of our connections with others and the collective attitudes and behaviours between people that support a well-functioning, close-knit society.* (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Participants were able to reflect on how the residencies, through the heritage lens, encouraged them to look at their familiar environments in new ways. This might be the physical environment, for example the Letchworth group learning to look at their town in new ways.

- *I think it gave them an awareness of how to look at your environment differently and how you could do that. It might just be a flower, but then you zoom in on it and you see it in a totally different way.* (Letchworth Participant)

This might also be the figurative environment, something that is more personal. This was described by a Stevenage participant being able to feel more.

- *And what it does is it makes us realise when we close our eyes, to pay attention. If we put some attention into something specific, we can feel more. That's what we felt, which in the real world we are so much cramped with information, especially with internet, social media, comparisons.* (Stevenage Participant)

Participants and artists from the residencies also referenced the knowledge exchange that took place between participants, the sharing and learning of skills.

- *I think it's great to learn from others because different people have different perspectives.* (Watford Participant)

This provided new perspectives for participants, encouraging acceptance and reflecting on their own strengths.

- *Everyone has their own skills and their own unique ways of expressing themselves, and I think it's really interesting to watch how other people do that. And learn from other people how different you all are, and what strengths you have. It's been a learning experience for everyone.* (Stevenage Participant)

One of the artists in North Hertfordshire described the openness of participants to share skills and learn from each other, which surprised them.

- *Something that surprised us was how on first meeting people it seemed unlikely they would be so engaged and interested in the activities. On many occasions during the residency and outreach workshops we were surprised at how participants shared existing skills and knowledge but were very willing to try new things and expand their creativity.* (North Hertfordshire Artist)

It is likely that the safe and open conditions created by the artists and BEEE Creative team are a contributing factor.

### *Artists: Applied Heritage*

Applied heritage is defined by Linnæus University, Sweden as being about *the potential of heritage to transform society.* (Linnæus University, 2023) Furthermore, by employing the definition of Applied Theatre, *the practice of using theatre-based techniques as tools to discover and learn, to explore issues of concern to communities, to identify problems and actively rehearse solutions, and to*

*provoke and shape social change* (Centre for Applied Theatre, n.d.) it is possible to consider that Applied Heritage is the use of heritage as a tool to explore and make sense of the world around us, and to shape social change.

The artists reflected on their own development in their observation journals. They did not specifically answer questions relating to their development of Applied Heritage practice. However, their approaches to the project, centring the collections of the museums and the stories of the participants and communities demonstrate their development in this area.

The artists found challenge in adhering to the heritage theme for their venue as much as they thought they needed to. One of the North Hertfordshire Artists articulated the tension between keeping to the theme and being responsive to the participants.

- *We felt it became unnecessarily complicated on a practical and conceptual level to incorporate the heritage theme for our project with our original proposal. We did use elements of the theme and the storytelling methodology in our outreach work but in terms of using the same themes during the residency we found it better to follow the participants' own interests and exploration of the museum. Whilst we offered new ways of working with their ideas in movement, drawing and writing, we were very much led by their interest and abilities. To use the heritage theme at this point would have seemed forced and an over direction the creative work on our part as facilitators.* (North Hertfordshire Artist)

Despite their concerns, the artists did not abandon the heritage element of the residency, it was still central to the delivery, just reframed to respond to the participants' interests. Other artists also felt this challenge and were worried they had not brought the focus back to the theme enough. The Project Lead reflected that keeping to the selected theme was less important. It served the purpose of providing the original stimulus for story sharing.

- *The Artists expressed a concern about whether they really had brought that in enough and linked everything back but I feel it is important to note that the initial heritage theme is what instigated the story sharing – what connects people locally – where their stories have commonalities and differences – whether that is their experience of local facilities, schools they went to, social life, growing up. It was all there but not necessarily captured as an output.* (Project Lead)

They continued to reflect on the richness of the stories, and to make a choice about what it is important to include in a public output, and what should remain within the group.

- *There was so much heritage/local story discussion, but we need to consider whether or not it is important to capture all that. So, I guess I am saying is that the output could appear superficial, local landmarks etc, but the depth of what was experienced and discussed throughout the project was much more contained within the group. It feels it should remain within the group and not a publicly presented output.* (Project Lead)

They went on to reflect that some of the stories and experiences shared are deep responses to heritage, but that experience may have been less authentic if the participants felt their responses were going to be part of the exhibition.

- *Very personal stories and experiences shared that could actually make a deeper response to the heritage theme but that said, reflecting further driving home – those deeply personal stories and experience might not have come out if they thought they would be part of the exhibition.* (Project Lead)

Managing this tension for this project will likely increase the confidence of the artists to deliver participant-led projects, with heritage as the focus and art form the vehicle for exploration.

## Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a broad umbrella term that can be defined in a number of ways. This evaluation has used the World Health Organisation's definition as its starting point: *Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose.* (World Health Organisation, 2024)

BEEE Creative understands the benefits engagement in dance activity can have on participants. Research has shown that engaging in creative activities can have a positive impact on wellbeing. The 2019 report commissioned by the World Health Organisation 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)

Wellbeing is becoming increasingly prominent in public and political discourse, with initiatives to increase wellbeing encouraged. NHS England recommends 5 steps to increasing wellbeing (NHS England, 2019):

1. *Connect with other people*
2. *Be physically active*
3. *Learn new skills*
4. *Give to others*
5. *Pay attention to the present moment*

This project considers it was able to meet all five of these requirements.



Photograph 4 - Residency at Royston Museum

The participants were asked questions at end of the residencies if they connected with others, felt their ideas had been listened to, and felt creative. The responses (Fig.6) show emphatic agreement to each question. One participant summarised the feeling they had from taking part as being 'happy'.

- *It made us feel. Do you know what the one word that stands out is? Just happy. It made us feel really happy.* (Letchworth Participant)

Thematic analysis of the open text responses and participant interviews has identified themes of Creativity and Feeling Valued, that contribute to wellbeing. Additionally, sub-themes within the Connection theme were identified: community, with others, with themselves, with the environment, cross-generational.

### *Creativity*

The survey responses asked participants what they enjoyed most about the project, with 19 of the 27 specifically referring to the creative elements of the project. One participant credited the project with reawakening her dormant creativity.

- *I've found that the whole thing has been so energising and inspiring to me and I'm creative, but I feel like it's gone to sleep, and this has reawakened it.* (Stevenage Participant)

Another participant felt the creativity of the project helped their group to connect with each other.

- *The whole experience has just been very expressive, very connected. We've all got to know each other in a group, and also individually, and we've all enjoyed, most of us, as far as I know, have enjoyed the different creative parts we've done, with the art and with the dance, and connecting the two together.* (Watford Participant)

### *Connection: Community*

Being so rooted in local heritage the project lent itself to fostering greater feelings of connection to the community. This was a common theme in the feedback across the groups.

- *The fact that it's a new town. I was born in Hong Kong so I don't have any connection with it so much and I think it's really helpful if people start to develop an identity where the town is as they are more likely to take care of it. Having a project like this creates that sense of energy, as well as enjoying it.* (Stevenage Participant)

Using the artforms to explore the town's heritage enabled the participants to feel inspired by their community, which for some led to feeling more pride in where they lived.

- *It [the project] gave us a better sense of community. And actually, it was rather inspiring. Having us explore pictures and interpreting them through our bodies. It made us feel happy, and it made us feel creative, and it made us feel a greater pride in our community.* (Letchworth Participant)

### *Connection: With others*

All participants felt connected to each other through their participation. For some, it was as simple as the creative expression providing the conduit to connection.

- *I like the dancing aspect. I can just flow with it. And get you together, have I been? I get you. Yeah? So the connection of the social element.* (Royston Participant)

Some groups, such as Stevenage and Letchworth, felt the connections were deep with people who would not necessarily come together. These connections continue beyond the project.

- *Such a nice, unique group of people that otherwise wouldn't have been brought together unless it was for that purpose. To find other like-minded people in such an expected, unexpected place. We wouldn't have crossed paths with them people before.* (Letchworth Participant)

For one participant it provided an opportunity to feel they were able to be part of a group and feel comfortable within that group.

- *For me it was being able to be part of a group because for many years I struggled with being part of a group (for who I was, nothing to do with the group) and to be able to do it and relax (Watford Participant)*

### *Connection: Cross-Generational*

Stevenage, Letchworth and Royston in particular had a broad age-range of participants, with children, parents and older people taking part together.

- *The intergenerational element of the [Stevenage] group worked really well for this project. There was an appreciation and respect for each member of the group, shared by the others and shown in the encouragement, interest in and positive response to each person's contribution e.g. movement or art. (Project Lead)*

The cross-generational aspect was met with some scepticism by some older participants, who found ultimately that it was an enriching element of the project.

- *We found a very good connection with each other. There was like (sic) no barrier between the older generation with the younger generation. They didn't know each other before but it was wonderful how the whole session was built up and created, so then all of them had some chance to express through the movement, through creative artwork. (Stevenage Participant)*

### *Connection: With the environment*

Connection with the environment was something that the Stevenage, Royston and Letchworth participants highlighted.

- *Participants from Letchworth, Stevenage, and Royston emphasised the importance of green spaces and how much they enjoy them. This highlights the contrast between urban growth and the value placed on green spaces by residents. (Project Lead)*

The Watford group whose dance was drawn from creative responses to the gardens at Cheslyn House also felt connected to and enriched by the natural environment. Those interviewed commented on how this made them feel.

- *It's also magical the way that some of the movement outside it just well beautiful doesn't really describe it yes connecting with the nature with the people that were forming shadows together it was just lovely. (Watford Participant)*
- *[Participant A] took us deep into the woodland and found an archangel plant, so she was telling us all about this plant but did this beautiful kind of movement sequence, and it was just a really special moment that we were able to capture her in the space that inspired her to do a kind of a longer solo movement and develop what she'd started the day before. (Watford Artist)*

### *Connection: With themselves*

Connection within themselves was one of the most repeated themes that came up during the participant interviews. The residency, despite its relatively short length, enabled some participants to connect to themselves both physically and emotionally.

- *It helps me to motivate myself. It's like learning my body. Every day I reach my point. Sometimes I feel exhausted, and I don't want to come. But I think maybe today I can learn something about my body movement. (Stevenage Participant)*
- *I've enjoyed the movement, very much so. Moving in a way you don't normally do, so that's been good. I've really enjoyed it all. But the movement, I've really found helpful because you get to a certain age when you can't sit about not doing much. (Royston Participant)*

One Watford participant described how the residency had facilitated them to work through some challenging emotional thinking, which in turn helped them to be more open and at ease with the group.

- *I think it's just opened stuff up, made me feel more, slightly more at ease with myself, to be myself in a group that I wasn't actually making a very strong connection with, which was very interesting. Well, I'm usually okay -ish, but there's usually a bit of a guard up, and I think the guard disappeared, so I could just be quiet on there and it was all right, yeah. (Watford Participant)*

The same participant went on to talk about the impact the residency had had on their feelings about their deteriorating memory, but by exploring the heritage of place, they were able to reconnect to old memories and feel better for it.

- *I have been told I probably haven't got Alzheimer's, but it [memory] is going, and it scares me sometimes. But doing this, I was going back on images and images and images I've had in the past, and there's a lot more there than I ever thought. I haven't touched on them for years. They've been thought about. And that was lovely. Then I felt richer, but sometimes I feel quite empty, because I can't tell you what I did on Sunday. But that made me feel very rich inside. It's still there. (Watford Participant)*



*Feeling Valued Photograph 5 - Residency at Cheslyn House and Gardens, Watford*

The participants were excited about the installation and their contributions to it. The Stevenage group stayed behind at the end of the final session to help the artists prepare for the set up, and some arrived early before the launch to help.

- *After the [Stevenage] group did a closed-door final rehearsal – there were a lot of emotions – pride, connection, people obviously so moved by what they had got out of their week together, how much they did, achieved and value of connections made. (Project Lead)*

Participants from other groups expressed pride in their achievements and were pleased that others would be share in them.

- *It was a really nice sense of accomplishment and to see other people turn up and look at it. (Letchworth Participant)*
- *I felt good, too. Yes. I've achieved something. I was going to say, you've got a sense of achievement. (Royston Participant)*
- *During the [Royston] launch the kids were going round saying – that's my picture, that's me etc – a real sense of excitement/pride in their work. (Project Lead)*

The legacy of the installation had deeper significance for some of the participants. One Watford participant described enjoying knowing that some of her life experiences would be shared with others. Not having any children to pass this personal heritage to, the installation has allowed them to know that some of their story will go further than them.

- *It was really nice to think that what I had experienced in part of my life, in my working life and also other sides of my life, would be recorded for someone else to hear about. Yes. I don't have grandchildren to pass it on to, or children, so it's likely that that will be there in a few videos.* (Watford Participant)

## Immediate Legacy

The immediate legacy of the project has seen participants wishing to continue their involvement in some way, either with each other, their community, or the venues. Examples include:

- Stevenage and Letchworth groups have created WhatsApp groups so they could continue to stay in touch and pursue activities together.
- BEEE Creative has had discussions with the Museum to explore how the group can continue to be involved. One participant wanted to volunteer to support arts activities at the museum, and another would like to lead Indian dance workshops.
- The project inspired a number of participants to continue to connect with their community, beyond the residency. *I feel inspired to get more involved in this community, especially as I just moved in last year (from overseas). So I try not to isolate myself.* (Stevenage Participant)
- In Watford one participant volunteered to host the exhibition on the days it was open to the public and is now going to regularly volunteer for Watford Borough Council at Cheslyn House and Gardens.
- North Herts College are going to have the North Hertfordshire Museum exhibition, after the exhibition finishes, to hang permanently in their Stevenage base.
- 7 participants from across the groups have taken part in a Community Connectors Network, set up by BEEE Creative to act as community advisory group. All who attended had not taken part in a BEEE Creative project before Perform Transform.



Photograph 6 - Residency at North Herts Museum

## Organisational Development

BEEE Creative was interested in understanding how this project could contribute to its aim to engage hyper-locally, how it could work with partners to do this, to reach underserved communities. It sought to do this through the development of partnerships, mainly through working with the local museums,



and community partners. In addition, its delivery model was designed to provide a number of points of access for participants to 'try out' the offer, with a hope they may continue to re-engage.

## Partnerships

BEEE Creative made inroads in the local communities by working with partners who provide services locally. The partners worked with community groups whose service users would be considered underserved in projects like these. They included a retirement living scheme, dementia care provider, community café, hospices, a college and a mental health service. These partnerships facilitated reaching participants who may not have taken part otherwise. It was hoped that the community outreach residencies might encourage those participants to take part in the museum residencies.

The museums were key partners in the project. Overall, four of the five museums felt the project worked well and described BEEE Creative's excellent organisation and communication throughout. They acknowledged the complexity of the project and that sometimes this was challenging to manage within their own busy schedules, but BEEE Creative navigated it well. The other museum had a slightly more challenging experience with the project. In a follow up interview with the Museum lead it was apparent these challenges occurred primarily due to a change in personnel part way through the project, with limited record or handover from their predecessor about the project and the nature of the partnership. The Museum lead could however see the value of the project and expressed a desire to continue to work with BEEE Creative in the future.

## Museum Learning

The Museum partners were asked if they had learned anything from the project, in particular engaging with different participant groups. Three of museums felt the project had brought new participants to them, with one also describing making links with new community partners. The museums described that the experience was more than just introducing new people to their venues but observing the way they were engaged. In particular they highlighted the mix of art forms, meaningful activities, and the space given to participants to explore and express themselves.

- *I'm always impressed by the structure of the projects, the delivery of different elements and particularly how time is given to allow all the facilitators to do their best and for participants to really have a great experience. this time it was interesting to see an artist and dancer work together with a wide range of ages to make something everyone could enjoy. (Stevenage Museum)*

## Meeting Strategic Objectives

It was important for BEEE Creative that the relationship was a partnership, and that the project would also serve the strategic objectives of the museums. The Museums were asked if they felt the project had met their strategic objectives. Four of the five museums described how the project did this.

Responses included:

- Engaging new people with the museum's offer
- Increased connection with established participants
- Increased awareness of community groups about the museum's offer
- Developed relationships with community partners that open opportunities for future collaborative projects
- Contributed to aims of skills development, becoming more creative, and enabling the community to understand how they fit into local history

The other museum felt they were unable to answer this question due to the Museum Lead coming into the project late. However, they did say that after having rewritten the museum's Forward Plan, this type of project sits within the vision and values of the museum.

## Legacy

The ongoing impact of the project was recognised by some of the museums. One identified that the project had given staff inspiration to maintain a heritage and arts connection through community engagement projects. Participants had brought visitors to the exhibition, who in turn were inspired and wanted to find out more about the museum's activities. This was supported by another museum who felt the project was continuing due to the exhibition still being in place and drawing in visitors.

## Learning and Discoveries

BEEE Creative made a number of discoveries about the way it works and how it engages with communities during the life of the project. This learning has come from reflections from the Project Lead, Artists, and the participants who took part in the Community Connectors Network meeting, these have been collated in the following themes:

### Describing the Project

While the premise of each individual element of Perform Transform was simple, the combination of the parts amounted to a complex and wide-reaching project. This was necessary, and built from previous project evaluations that suggested longer-term lead in with communities was required. While this supported the project reaching new participants and groups, it proved challenging for participants to sometimes grasp, and therefore trust, what the project was.

- *The group organiser said people were reluctant to join the session as they didn't know if they would like it. (Watford Artist, Community Outreach)*

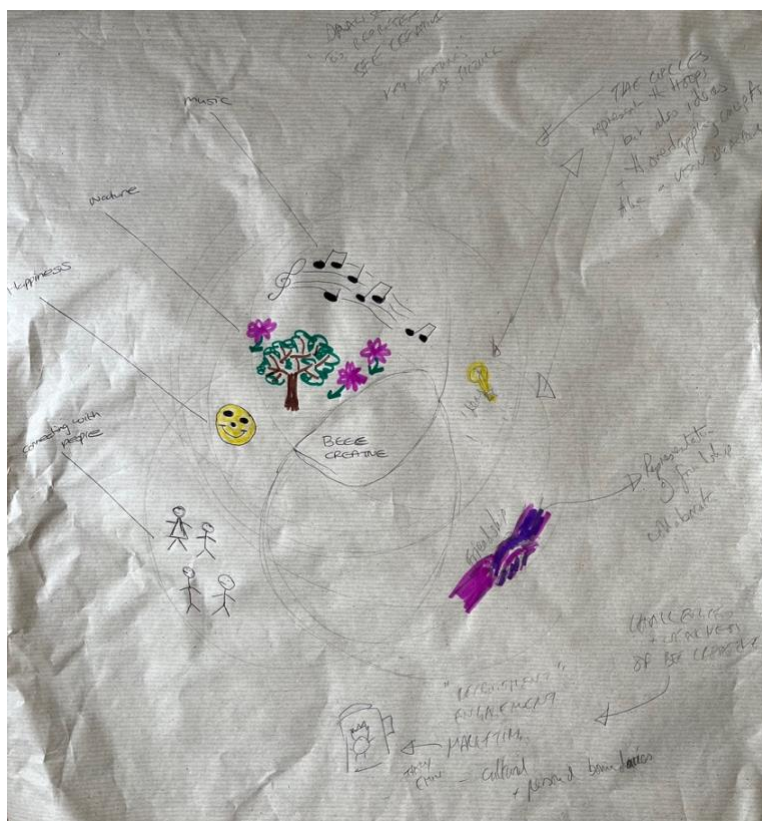
At one Open Make workshop it was observed some people left the workshop because they did not want to engage, and they did not know what to expect.

- *So they left without telling us probably they didn't feel they didn't know what is it and what do they expect (Stevenage Artist)*

The Community Connectors Network feedback provided further insight. They were asked to draw their experience of engaging with BEEE Creative. Three images came back: a maze, a Venn diagram, and a key. The Venn diagram described a number of overlapping circles that represent the great elements of BEEE Creative's work but could also present as barriers.

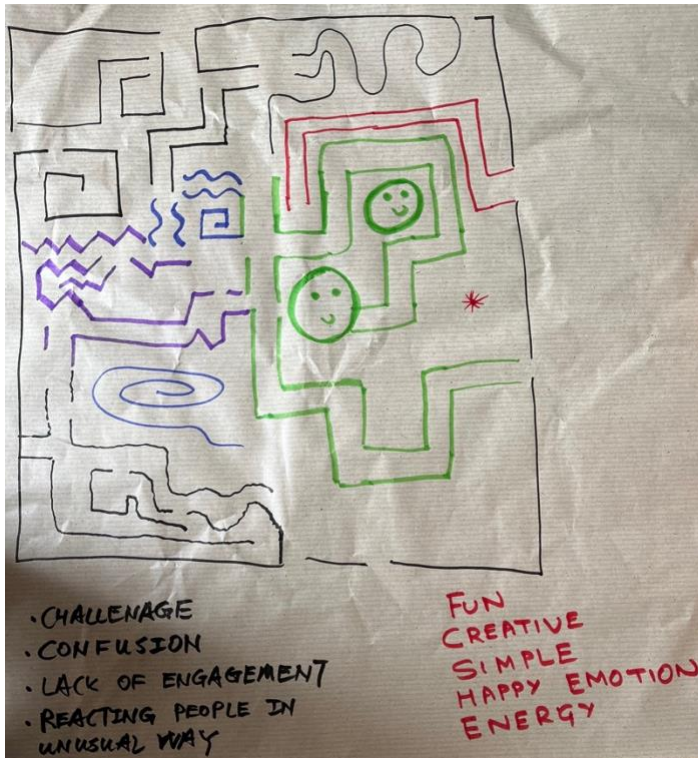
- *The hardest thing is to just want to say to people - trust us - you'll have loads of fun, because everyone always has so much fun. However, there's a barrier before you get into having fun - the initial barrier could be BEEE Creative's complex offer itself - if people are unsure about arts, dance, museums, arts - each layer you add is potentially another barrier.*

They talked about each element that appeals to one person might be a barrier to someone else and to overcome that, it would require people to take a risk to take the first step.



Photograph 7 - The Venn diagram describing BEEE Creative's work

- *It requires someone to have the confidence to be out of their comfort zone. If that first step can be made, then positive experiences are then reported and unexpected new passions evolve.*



Photograph 8 - The Maze of BEEE Creative engagement

The maze described the process of creation with BEEE Creative. It was used to describe different entry points, different areas of interest. They described the inclusive nature of the work by observing anyone can enter the maze and everyone traverses the maze differently, getting out of it what they want.

- *Not only do individuals have different entries to the maze, everyone learns or observes and brings something out of the maze – finding their own way (no right or wrong way/non-judgemental). The maze doesn't have to be complex; the idea doesn't have to be complex. The idea is to connect with people, the intention should be to have fun and feel satisfied and happy.*

The maze also described the need for people to take the initial risk of stepping into something unknown, which could be a barrier.

The participants provided suggestions on how to better describe the project and overcome

barriers to participation. These included the use of testimonials from participants like them, continuing to offer taster sessions and reaching out to diverse communities. Gaining trust through using word-of-mouth marketing and acknowledging that people may need numerous entry points to engagement to build that trust.

### *Marketing and Community Engagement*

Perform Transform's period of community outreach and Museum taster sessions did see some engagement in the residencies. However, how to 'convert' more participants from tasters to more sustained engagement was something the Community Connectors Network group considered. They suggested strategies that included:

- Persistence with communities and provide multiple touch points for engagement
- Use the Community Connectors Network to help promote, describe and sustain initiatives
- Identify local events and use them to reach communities

### *Participation on their terms*

There was hope at the start of the project that the taster workshops may lead those participants to take part in the residencies. There was an acceptance that while this may not have happened as much as hoped, there was agreement that participating on their own terms was still positive, and those participants' stories were still shared and incorporated into the final outputs of the project in either the installations or oral histories.

- *Additionally, the artists have settled into their collaboration, gathered materials and stories from those that for many reasons might not be in a position to join the final residency and we have already built-up trust and connections with some participants. (Project Lead)*

### *Heritage Theme*

At the start of the project the artists chose a heritage theme to focus on the town they were working in. The overall theme of the project was change and people's perceptions of change in their towns. Some of the artists found it challenging to gather stories of change. However, participants shared what they appreciate in their town, suggesting that for those who were not long-standing residents, the theme of change may be less relevant.

There are two points of learning. Firstly, being responsive to the needs of the participants may require a change from the original theme, but this is possible without undermining the heritage focus of the project. Secondly, regardless of how long people have lived somewhere they ultimately seek connection and community.

### *Contrast between Urban Growth and Green Spaces*

The project initially stated that Hertfordshire has a faster-than-average population growth in England, leading to increased housing development building. However, participants from Letchworth, Stevenage, and Royston emphasised the importance of green spaces and how much they enjoy them. This highlights the contrast between urban growth and the value placed on green spaces by residents. Participants from these groups, in particular Watford, discussed the importance of green space, its influence and its inspiration for them.

## Conditions

Across each of the residencies the importance of having safe spaces where people come together was highlighted. People seek a sense of community and want opportunities to come together. With the right conditions in place, this can happen regardless of age, heritage or length of intervention. An exploration of those conditions, as identified by participants, artists and project staff, were needed to enable this has been undertaken.

### *Time and Resource*

This project was built on the learning from the evaluation of previous projects, and it built in time to develop community partnerships and relationships with participants, to encourage participation. This was by and large successful. The nature of this project, aiming to respond to individual needs and interests meant that a significant amount of time was required to facilitate this, both in and outside of the workshop space. The Project Lead described how time intensive it was, and they felt like they knew every participant extremely well by the end of the project. It took lots of 1-1 emails and talking to participants on the day to really understand how people were feeling.

- *This does involve a huge amount of intuitiveness – awareness of needs in the room and a need for extra hands to be able to provide alternatives – and acting on those needs. This is a case for making provision for extra staffing...Both administration before and during project and people in the space.* (Project Lead)

### *Organisation and Communication*

Perform Transform was a complex project with many moving parts. It was multi-strand, operating in five different places, each with differing needs and identities. Meeting the requirements of the artists, museums, community partners, and participants was complicated and required strong organisation and communication. The Museum partners in particular noted a strength of working with BEEE Creative was the organisation and communication.

### *Museum partnerships*

BEEE Creative was able to take advantage of leaning on its well-established relationships with the Museums in each place. Despite some challenges with one Museum due to the personnel change part way through the project, having the Museums' buy-in was a contributing factor to the success of the project. The Museums understand BEEE Creative's approach and process, they were able to trust the process and convey that trust to potential participants.

### *Skilled and Experienced Artists*

The majority of the artists brought with them years of experience of working in community settings. There was one artist who had less community experience and did find elements of the project challenging, albeit inspiring overall. The artists were confident in their artform and using those artforms to explore heritage. Most importantly they were confident to be participant-led, and not necessarily following a prescribed workshop plan, but were able to respond to the needs and interests of the participants.

- *The activities were structured but allowed for flexibility, with each day informing the next. Participants had opportunities to contribute their stories and interpret them through movement and art. (Project Lead)*

### *Participant Led: Flexibility and "Going with the Flow"*

The artists took a flexible approach, providing tasks and exercises but allowing participants to shape the project outcomes organically. This fostered a sense of responsibility and ownership among the participants. The artists aimed to create a supportive environment allowing space for participants to express themselves freely, while also encouraging collaboration and mutual support within the group. They did this, even in challenging circumstances.

- *It was hard to get started on time because there were other activities going on. We started with about 10 participants, but people would drop out and go and try other things. It was hard to explain we wanted them to because it's very informal (Letchworth, Community Outreach)*

The importance of being flexible, reading the groups' needs and providing a framework for inspiration and collaboration was observed by the Project Lead and the Artists. The Lead Artist described the need to 'go with the flow' for this project, describing a way of working that provided a space for participants to take part in a way that is right for them.

- *Go with the flow is definitely a theme of the Perform Transform 'space' – artists creating an environment for people to take part in a way that is right for them. This includes going with the flow with timings, having an awareness of energies, having a whole toolbox of activities and potential ways people can take part. (Project Lead)*

This flexibility and being mindful of participants' needs engendered a feeling of safety amongst the participants. They were given warm encouragement, to participate how they wanted.

- *[Stevenage Artists] created a very safe space throughout, offering ways for everyone to take part or opt out of each instruction...Friendly, warm encouragement and positive, detailed feedback followed movement tasks, to reinforce the value of everyone's contribution too. (Project Lead)*

### *Building Trust*

Trust was a recurring theme mentioned by Participants, Artists and the Project Lead. Firstly, in building trust in the offer through the Community Outreach and the Museum Taster workshops (Open Make).

- *Although they [the residencies] are still the “main” event and the exhibition is still important, the value is most definitely what is happening in the build-up and in the residency space with the group. (Project Lead)*

Going into community settings that were familiar with some participants was one way of building trust. In Letchworth the artists arrived earlier to ensure they had time to chat and connect with people before they started the session.

- *The participants were more open with us, it felt that they were more trusting having us in their space. They joined in with all the dance and movement and enjoyed telling us about their memories and stories of Letchworth. (Community Outreach, Letchworth)*

Trust also needed to be built during the residencies. Participants sometimes felt out of their comfort zones and the exploration of stories and personal heritage had the potential to feel unsafe. The trust built for some in the taster sessions contributed to them trusting the artists.

- *When we started everyone was holding back emotions but because some of the participants came to our previous pop -up workshops...they knew about us and they trusted us, they opened so much and did this through dance and movement. (Stevenage Artist)*

### *Belonging*

It was observed by some artists the importance for the participants to have sole use of the space. This encouraged both a sense of belonging to the space and to the group, and a sense of ownership.

- *The [Watford] group had exclusive access to Cheslyn House during the project. Although the gardens were open to the public, the indoor space was reserved solely for the group. This created a sense of belonging and ownership over the space, which seemed to be a common thread across the various Perform Transform residencies. (Project Lead)*

### *Creative Exchange*

The delivery model encourages a ‘flat hierarchy’ in the workshop space, with participants framed as co-creators and collaborators working alongside the artists. This practice had the dual result of participants feeling like their ideas were heard and valued. It also enabled the artists to authentically gain from the experience through the creative exchange.

- *The artists felt they gained as much from the experience as the participants, highlighting the exchange of ideas and the opportunity to bring more of themselves into the creative space. Existing friendships within the group were acknowledged, and the feedback highlighted the difference between a typical arts activity and a transformative creative space that fosters a sense of teamwork and collaboration. (Project Lead)*

### *Artist Collaboration*

The pairing of a dance artist and an artist with another art form provided additional entry points for participants. For example, those who felt averse to dance were encouraged by other art forms. It also provided an enriching experience for the artists. They all expressed professional respect for their partners, valuing the skills and experience they brought and could learn from. For most of the artists, it was the first time they had worked together, so they had to forge a working relationship.

- *And first thing to say is actually it has been a great collaboration and it's been just brilliant, very inspiring (Stevenage Artist)*

It is useful to observe that the artist pairings found their individual ways of working together, that best benefited their art forms. There was not a prescribed expectation for how the artists worked together. Most worked in a similar way, each taking the lead at natural points. In Royston, this worked differently, with the dance artist mostly taking the lead facilitating the sessions, with the film maker documenting and editing the interactions. The different ways of working highlight the flexibility built into the project enabling responsive approaches for and by the artists.

## Conclusion

BEEE Creative has met its intended aims for Perform Transform. This was a multi-faceted project. While its outputs are impressive both in terms of its reach into communities who are historically underserved by projects such as this, and the depth of experience for participants, these alone do not represent the entirety of the complexity of the project. Time spent on individual relationship building, developing trust, and a responsive participant-led approach were ingredients that enabled BEEE Creative to make inroads into the local communities.

The intended outcomes were achieved due to building on the careful foundations laid by BEEE Creative in the early stages of the project. Participants were able to explore local history and their own heritage on their own terms, and in ways that were meaningful to them, with the art forms and creativity central to this exploration. Relationships with the museums and community organisations were developed, with desire for collaboration on future projects.

The ongoing legacy of the project continues with participants independently engaging with their local museums in ways they had not before, and some participants continuing to work with BEEE Creative to continue to develop its work with underrepresented community groups.

## Recommendations

### *Building community trust*

The time required to build individual relationships within the communities took considerably more time and resource than anticipated. However, this was a necessary process within the project, to build the trust of people who would not have previously considered taking part in such activities. Future projects should consider building in additional administrative resource to account for the time and 'behind the scenes' efforts are required to enable some participants to cross the threshold.

### *Points of entry*

As this project has begun to do, it is recommended that future projects working closely within the community offers multiple points of entry. As described by the Community Connectors Network, what might be an enabler for one person, may be a barrier to another. Persisting and providing multiple points of entry, to encourage engagement and re-engagement.

### *Describing the project*

While the participant-led approach enables the project to respond to the needs of participants, providing a richer and more authentic experience, it makes describing the project challenging. Communities who have no history of taking part in heritage or arts projects are unlikely to take the perceived risk in doing so, without a clear understanding of what they might be doing. It is recommended that work continues with the Community Connectors Network to find ways of describing the projects, in ways that encourage that first 'risk'. The Community Connectors can be used to promote and explain BEEE Creative's approach, which may also build trust.

### *Conditions of participation*

This report began to explore the conditions BEEE Creative creates that alongside the activities supports participant engagement and meeting the anticipated outcomes. It is recommended that BEEE Creative further investigation into the ways in which the conditions it creates supports its aim to reach and work with underserved communities.

## Appendix A – Methodology

### Baseline

Tool	Activity Strand	Detail
<b>Participants</b>		
<b>Baseline Questionnaires</b>	<b>Museum Residencies</b>	To assess the starting points of skills base and feelings of wellbeing
<b>Practitioners</b>		
<b>Baseline questionnaires</b>	<b>Training</b>	To assess the starting points of skills base of practitioners

### Follow up

Tool	Activity Strand	Detail
<b>Participants</b>		
<b>Follow up Questionnaires</b>	<b>Museum Residencies, Mini-Maker, Open Make, Outreach Residencies</b>	To assess skills learned, wellbeing impact against baseline
<b>In session observations</b>		To provide another measure of self-identified impact on wellbeing and skills learned
<b>Participant focus group</b>	<b>Museum Residencies</b>	To provide another measure of identified impact on wellbeing and skills, lessons learned
<b>BEEE Creative</b>		
<b>Follow up Interviews</b>	<b>Organisational Development</b>	To understand if project expectations were met To identify learning around addressing barriers to access and engagement, cross-sector partnerships, engaging with diverse audiences
<b>Museums</b>		
<b>Follow up questionnaires</b>		To assess if skills within the museum have been increased, particularly in: equitable access To assess museum appetite for future projects of this nature



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