VitaliSE Step Change
A Dance for Health Project
Autumn 2012 – Spring 2013

Research and Evaluation Documentation
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Acknowledgements

VitaliSE Step Change was a participation and professional development project devised and developed by Dance Up.

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   The Big Lottery Fund
   Artswork
   The Lights, Andover

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The research and evaluation of the VitaliSE Step Change project was undertaken by:
   Elsa Urmston and the participating artists

The project was delivered with twelve partner organisations:
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   Appleby House, Epsom
   Pinehurst Care Centre, Crowthorne
   The Fordway Centre, Ashford
   The Wellington Centre, Andover
   Icknield Special School, Andover
   Glenwood Special School, Emsworth
   Haselworth Primary School, Gosport
   Yellow Dot Nursery School, Chandler’s Ford
   Aldershot Army Barracks, Aldershot
   The Garage Youth Centre, Southampton
   Rowner Youth Centre, Gosport

Many thanks to all the participants and staff at the partner organisations.

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Produced on behalf of VitaliSE Step Change Project, Dance Up in Ipswich, Suffolk
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Executive Summary

The VitaliSE Step Change project was devised and developed by Dance Up (formerly Hampshire Dance), to provide opportunities to artists across the south of England to develop their skills, expertise and experience of working in dance and health settings, by offering a bespoke training programme and mentoring scheme alongside placement opportunities with regional partner organisations. This ambitious project ran from autumn 2012 to spring 2013, comprising a training and mentoring programme devised and facilitated by freelance dance artist, Rachel Liggett. Artists then worked in pairs across a range of educational and community settings in the south of England with groups of all ages and abilities to develop their professional skills in practice, evaluation and research by drawing on a placement-based model of work-based learning, mentoring and professional development. The artists shaped and delivered dance sessions that focused on the health and wellbeing benefits of dance participation. They measured the impact of their work by collecting data which focused on outcomes relating to physical, mental and social confidence; engagement in dance; and social wellbeing. Alongside this, the artists undertook rigorous reflection of their practice where they were asked to reflect on their practice and professional development as a result of the training and mentoring programme, delivery, evaluation and research processes. The artists reported that the luxury of training allowed them to affirm and develop their skills and expertise and to connect with others. Drawing on the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework, the opportunity to learn, give and take notice was hugely applicable amongst the community of artists, contributing to a sense of satisfaction and self-actualisation in what they achieved. The artists have realised new skills and put these into practice, developing their autonomy and ownership of what they do, in the spirit of ongoing professional development.

Findings from the placements themselves are wide-reaching. In summary, advances in physical, emotional and social confidence were perceived to have been facilitated by dance participation for all groups. Engagement in dance was aided by delivery practices, which focused on enjoyment, ownership and relevance to the participating groups. Social wellbeing was fostered by dance especially where time was given to talking, discussing, experiencing and sharing and where the focus of leading participants was on supporting autonomy and valuing person-centred practice. There are clear connections to formal health-based policies and frameworks, which suggest that dance can support aspects of the Public Health Framework such as social connectedness and self-reported wellbeing. In the VitaliSE Step Change project older participants suffering the effects of dementia experienced some improvement in short and long term memory, reduction in anxiety and enjoyment from the social connection with others. Others explain their enjoyment, happiness and satisfaction in participating in dance sessions. The practice of dance connects clearly with the Five Ways to Wellbeing, providing person-centred opportunities to enhance wellbeing through moving, remembering, connecting with others, taking notice, learning and giving.

The aims and objectives of the VitaliSE Step Change project have been successfully achieved. Artists have experienced a range of training and work-based opportunities, which allowed them to develop their practice in planning, delivery, research, evaluation, strategic planning, policy, partnerships, co-working and mentoring. Strategies for facilitating work in a range of settings, which focus on developing engagement, confidence and social wellbeing have been identified and are worthy of further action-based research by artists and partner organisations. Participants’ subjective perceptions of health and wellbeing were improved as a result of the various projects undertaken and the artists’ own sense of wellbeing has been enhanced through their participation.

Importantly, this report supports the development of dance for health-based projects which include artists as key stakeholders in commissioning, delivering and effectively evaluating their work within the wider political, economic and social contexts in which it exists. The implementation of facilitative programmes which support this transfer of ownership to artists and participants within the current economic climate appears timely and forward-thinking in sustaining and developing the role of dance for health.
1. Introduction

1.1 Project summary

In 2012, Dance Up received funding from the Big Lottery Fund Supporting Change and Impact programme, to implement, facilitate, deliver and evaluate a dance for health programme with communities in the south of England. The aims of the VitaliSE Step Change project were two-fold;

- to facilitate a thorough professional development opportunity which would contribute towards cultivating a sustainable workforce with the appropriate skills and expertise to plan, deliver and evaluate dance for health-based activities in a range of community and education contexts; and to enable these artists to run a range of projects and put their skills into practice
- to capture data, which reflects the health impacts of dance participation on the range of communities with whom the artists have worked.

Working on placements mostly comprising regular weekly sessions over a 10 to 12 week period, thirteen artists participated in a 6-day training programme in Autumn 2012. During Spring 2013, ten artists worked in pairs to devise the aims and objectives of their placements, deliver classes and workshops and to develop research methodologies, which would allow them to rigorously evaluate the health impacts of their work, as well as their practice within this context.

1.2 The organisational context

Prior to the commencement of this project, it is important to acknowledge the context of Dance Up during 2011-12. The organisation moved to a new business model, in order to overcome the challenges of losing regular funding from Arts Council England. Speculation on the cuts to funding has warned of the possible reduction of dance provision, especially with Youth Dance England (YDE) losing funds meaning a possible reduction of youth dance provision across England (ACE, in Woolman, 2011). Many anecdotal accounts suggest that cuts to Local Authorities have resulted in the reduction of funding to education and community work across the English regions, and because of cuts to YDE from Arts Council and the Department of Education, the local infrastructures that organise dance for children and young people may no longer exist and this must mean a reduction in opportunities (personal communication, Linda Jasper, Director YDE, May 2013). Yet Dance Up remains a key instigator of dance projects across the south of England by diversifying its offer, and continues to build on its sector-wide reputation for rigorous and innovative projects, especially in the field of dance for health (Quin, Redding and Frazer, 2005; Blazy and Amstell, 2009).

The VitaliSE Step Change project is key in this process of tightening the focus of the organisation and ensuring the longevity of the work that it instigates, not just as a lasting legacy for the participants of the projects, but critically, to secure sustainable employment opportunities for artists based in and around the Hampshire area, who also face employment challenges as a result of the cuts to arts organisations. It also acts as an advocacy programme to broaden and sustain the place of dance for and in health, both in terms of the contribution such work can make to the health and wellbeing of participants, but also the appropriation of dance artists as partners and collaborators in the provision of public health exercise programmes.

Given its scale and format, the VitaliSE Step Change project provided an ideal basis to continue the excellent reputation Dance Up has developed in the dance and health sectors respectively. Receiving a commendation from the Royal Society of Public Health in 2010 for its dance science-based research with TrinityLaban, Dance Up has been integral to the development of dance and health-based research within the UK and internationally. The focus of NRG Youth Dance and Health Project (2005) examined the effects of creative dance participation on the
physiological health and wellbeing of young people aged 11 to 14 years (Quin, Redding and Frazer, 2007). This project was the first of its kind to collect robust evidence of the impact of creative dance on health. NRG2 Youth Dance and Health (Blazy and Amstell, 2010) was a further collaboration between Dance Up and TrinityLaban, which sought to develop more rigorous experimental methodologies in field-based dance science research. Dance Up has also worked closely with YDE to produce advocacy materials (Hampshire Dance and YDE, 2011), for the role of dance for health. Through this, Dance Up has developed a very present voice in the dance for health debate nationally.

These projects and initiatives were developed prior to economic change, with discrete roles clearly assigned to different partners in the project: project managers devised the project strategically, artists delivered the workshops and researchers evaluated the impact of the work. Dance Up has again tried to pioneer a refreshing way forward in terms of working in dance and health research projects under the economic climate we currently experience (2013). Importantly, the skills of project development, delivery, evaluation and research have been cascaded to the artists themselves, in the hope that they are more fully equipped to draw on their practice-based expertise to meet the evidence-based demands of working in the health sector. The ownership of the placements was passed to them, facilitated by Dance Up and mentors in dance and health practice and dance and health research, whereby all partners in the initiative were able to draw on, extend and sustain their expertise and viable involvement in the face of economic change.

And so, in the same way that the project itself had a two-fold focus, as does this report. The health-based impacts of the twelve placements on the participants that took part have been collated and analysed, in light of current debate around the place of dance for health and other comparable research findings. Additionally, the impact of the VitaliSE Step Change professional development programme of training and mentoring has been examined from the perspectives of the artists, mentors and Dance Up staff to make sense of the successes of the programme, but also highlight areas of development, which can inform future initiatives such as this one.
1.3 The context of dance in and for health in the UK

There continues to be an emphasis within the public health remit to encourage the UK population towards physically active leisure pursuits in aiding health and wellbeing (Cavill et al., 2006; DH, 2011). Numerous studies emphasise the positive physical and psychological impacts of physical activity on reducing illness (Allender et al., 2007) and disease (Baumann et al., 2002), and improving mental wellbeing (Biddle, Fox and Boutcher, 2002) and social interaction (NICE, 2009). Cuypers and colleagues (2011) found links between arts participation and increased longevity, better health and higher life satisfaction, whereas more specifically, Murcia and colleagues (2010) found that adult recreational dance participation was related to self-reported physical, emotional and social improvements in wellbeing. Burkhardt and Brennan’s (2012) systematic meta-analysis of the physical and psychosocial effects of recreational dance participation amongst children and young people further supports these claims. Thus, the combined impact of cultural and arts’ participation, plus the physical nature of dance, would suggest that dance has a positive role to play in impacting on the health and wellbeing of children and adults. This debate has been outlined by the Dance Manifesto (ACE, Dance UK and NCA, 2006, p. 11) and re-emphasised by Tony Hall’s review of dance education and youth dance provision in England (2008). It continues in industry journals such as Animated (Foundation for Community Dance) and Dance UK News (Dance UK), as well as the numerous evaluative reports available online (Muldoon and Inchley, 2008; Ells et al., 2009; Connolly et al., 2010; Dance Southwest, 2011; Urmston et al., 2012). These sources clearly chart the successes of various national and international projects being undertaken to develop expertise, knowledge and understanding of the role that dance has to play in health contexts, with participants across a range of ages and abilities.

Equally, there is a considerable body of practice, which exists across the UK where health care professionals, Department of Health and the dance sector, acknowledge the health and wellbeing benefits of dance as a positive force respectively (Isle of Wight NHS Primary Care Trust, 2012; DH, 2010; White, 2013). Certainly, dance organisations and dance artists appear to recognise that working in a health context is concerned not necessarily with “cure, but bringing about easier conditions in body and soul, [where] dance can move us from the passivity of being a ‘patient’ into active participation in restoring our own health” (Tufnell, 2010, p. 18). The combination of practice-based knowledge that comes from artists working in the field, with the evidence-based knowledge that has arisen from arts evaluations and research projects means that the dance sector can increasingly advocate for the place of dance for health.

The capturing of artist experiences is common practice in evaluating training programmes and projects and is considered best practice in developing and strategising for future investment and development of projects (Arts Council England, 2013). The focus in this project has been to collate stories of experiences and journeys of professional development from the artists’ perspectives, as a result of being involved in the VitaliSE Step Change programme. The artists were encouraged to consider the minutiae of their experiences in order to build a larger picture which provided evidence of their journey towards Maslow’s constructs of self-actualisation (1954) and professional wellbeing (Gardner and Driscoll, 2007). Thus, the aim has been to create meaning from lived experiences that relate to the context of dance for health, not just for the participants of the placement projects, but also for the artists and critically, to contribute to the development of this type of professional development ecology.
2. The VitaliSE Step Change Delivery Programme

Although the disciplinary starting point for this research has come from the impact of dance within a health-based model, the social and wellbeing outcomes have formed the prevalent lines of enquiry across all the projects. The World Health Organisation’s definition of health has influenced this and as suggested by Caldwell and colleagues (2005), there is increasing precedence for the value of less medicalised approaches to health research, which can account for a more holistic consideration of the impact of physical activity research, in terms of psychological wellbeing, social outcomes and physical health. Caldwell et al. continue that by encouraging evidence-based practice whereby practitioners must situate their work within a broader context of literature and research practice, competence within the health sector can develop. Similarly, by drawing on evidence-based practice typical of the health sector, the VitaliSE Step Change artists set their own research parameters, collected data through some quantitative and mostly qualitative methods, and then related their findings and reflections to the wider dance and health sectors. It was anticipated that by engaging artists in this way, they were empowered to deepen and relate their practice to frameworks, which are commonly used within the health sector.

The projects were pre-cursored by a six-day training programme devised and led by lead artist Rachel Liggett, where all participating dance artists came together as active agents to meet, share, and develop their skills and awareness of dance for health settings. The content of this course combined practice and theory, with a focus on facilitated, artist-led learning. It involved pair, small group and whole group activity with time for discussion, reflection and to ask questions. The course was carefully structured and facilitated with a fair degree of flexibility in response to group need. The aim was to create a safe, supportive and challenging environment allowing for enquiry and open dialogue. Proceeding from the training course, artists were assigned 4 x 50 minute mentor sessions with Rachel to develop their thoughts, practice and values further. Elsa Urmston also supported the mentor process in order to aid artists in the development of research and evaluation skills. The artists met once more for a mid-point evaluation day in February 2013, led by Rachel and Elsa, to bring the artists’ experiences together and to focus on the research requirements of the project itself. An evaluation of the training programme can be found in Appendix 1.

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1 “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948).
2.1 Project Details and Research Foci

Twelve placements formed the basis of the VitaliSE Step Change programme, led by a total of ten artists, who were paired together as part of a mentoring process, with one more experienced and one less experienced artist forming the partnership. Project hosts were identified through Dance Up and the artists; artists were able to identify specific contexts of interest to them, in which they wanted to develop their expertise. The artists met with project hosts and identified a range of research aims for their projects. Typically, these fell into the following areas:

- **developing physical confidence** such as improvements in balance amongst older people, developing physical awareness and responsiveness to creative tasks and dynamic, spatial and temporal performance developments in children’s performance of movement material
- **charting changes in engagement** such as attitudes to dance, concentration and focus in dance and in other areas of the participants’ lives
- **examining how dance can contribute to notions of social wellbeing** by gathering self-reflexive data from participants about self-esteem, self-confidence and enjoyment.

The following table offers descriptive data of each project and the planned research focus of each project.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Title</th>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mode of Delivery</th>
<th>Research Focus/ Question</th>
<th>Delivery Artists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Judith Adams Day Centre</td>
<td>Older people 55-mid-80s years old Dementia 2 male: 8 female 10 participants p/week</td>
<td>Chichester</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>13 sessions 45-60 minutes How dance and reminiscence-based work can contribute towards social wellbeing.</td>
<td>Jo Cone Kat Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appleby House</td>
<td>Older people 50-90 years old Dementia 4 male: 16 female 20 participants</td>
<td>Epsom</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>12 sessions 60 minutes How dance can contribute towards increased mobility and balance to reduce the incidence of falls.</td>
<td>Maxine Phillips Vicky Frayard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinehurst Care Centre</td>
<td>Older people 65+ years old Dementia 8 male: 12 female 20 participants</td>
<td>Crowthorne, West Berkshire</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>12 sessions 60 minutes How dance can contribute to increased mobility and develop coordination.</td>
<td>Claire Tyler Kat Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordway Centre, Pupil Referral Unit</td>
<td>Children 4-11 years old Behavioural, social and emotional difficulties 9 male: 3 female 12 participants</td>
<td>Ashford, Surrey</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10 sessions 30 minutes How dance can help to encourage and improve engagement, concentration and responsiveness to dance and physical activity.</td>
<td>Nikki Watson Hayley Ovens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andover and District Mencap: Wellington Centre</td>
<td>Children 5-11 years old Learning disabilities 12 male: 4 female 16 participants</td>
<td>Andover</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10 sessions 30-45 minutes How dance can contribute to improvements in physical balance and engagement.</td>
<td>Maxine Phillips Kim Rumary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icknield Special School</td>
<td>Young people 13-16 years old Learning disabilities 8 male: 6 female 14 participants</td>
<td>Andover</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>11 sessions 45 minutes How dance can contribute to improvements in physical balance and self-confidence</td>
<td>Maxine Phillips Kim Rumary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenwood Special School</td>
<td>Young people 13-16 years old Learning disabilities 4 male: 5 female 9 participants</td>
<td>Emsworth, Hampshire</td>
<td>Weekly sessions 11 sessions 60-90 minutes</td>
<td>How dance can contribute to positive social interaction and integration of group members</td>
<td>Jo Cone Hayley Ovens</td>
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<td>Haselworth Primary School</td>
<td>Early Years 4-5 years old 16 male: 11 female 27 participants</td>
<td>Gosport</td>
<td>Weekly 11 sessions 50 minutes</td>
<td>How a structured dance class can support self-confidence socially and in creative dance skills</td>
<td>Vicki Hargreaves Kim Rumary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow Dot Primary School</td>
<td>Early Years 3-4 years old 10 male: 16 female 25 participants</td>
<td>Chandler’s Ford</td>
<td>Weekly 11 sessions 45 minutes</td>
<td>How dance can support self-confidence socially and in dancing</td>
<td>Vicki Hargreaves Aimee Symes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldershot Army Barracks</td>
<td>Early Years and Carers Children: 6 months to 5 years old Carers: 25 to 30 years old Gender Children: 3 male: 9 female Gender Carers: all female 12 children; 8 carers</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Weekly 12 sessions 60 minutes</td>
<td>How dance can support social engagement for adults and children of army families and develop responses to creative dance activity</td>
<td>Nikki Watson Vicky Frayard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garage Youth Centre</td>
<td>Children and young people 5-16 years old All female 8 participants</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>2-day intensive project 12 hours in total</td>
<td>Due to nature of this project, the evaluative process focuses on the artists’ reflections on their delivery and how this can support the participants’ attention across long time periods</td>
<td>Claire Tyler Aimee Symes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowner Youth Centre</td>
<td>Children and young people 10-12 years old 2 boys: 3 girls 5 participants</td>
<td>Gosport</td>
<td>Weekly 5 sessions up to 60 minutes</td>
<td>This project was a late addition to the VitaliSE StepChange programme. The evaluative process focuses on the artist’s reflections on her delivery to enable the participants to focus and channel their energy in dance sessions.</td>
<td>Hayley Ovens</td>
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There are a wide range of physical activity and dance-specific research studies which suggest that physical participation can support improvements in physical confidence (McKinley et al., 2008); engagement and attitudes to physical activity and dance (Heyn, 2003; Houston and McGill, 2011), which may also traverse to other parts of participants’ lives (Urmston et al., 2012); and notions of social wellbeing (Morgan and Haglund, 2009; Bond and Stinson, 2007). A full review of literature relating to these constructs is beyond the scope of this research evaluation report. Nevertheless, it is useful to define some of the terms, which the artists have chosen to focus on in order to bring together understanding and context. Of course, the artists have privileged their a priori knowledge of dance practice, foregrounding their practice in establishing the research focus for, and often with, the participant groups. The definitions in Table 2 are drawn from the artists’ dialogue through the mentoring process, alongside their placement evaluation documentation. In defining these terms, it becomes clear of the crossovers between them and the inherent complexity therein. However, the artists are drawing from their own experience, their understanding of literature where possible and including participants’ opinions in their defining of terms. In actuality, these definitions became the measures by which to perceive changes amongst the participants within these research foci.

Table 2: Defining the terms of this project (results from artists’ email discussion group, March 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Synonyms and definitions</th>
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| **Confidence:**  
  physical confidence  
  self-confidence | • The ability to perform a taught sequence without the teacher leading or demonstrating  
  • Being able to perform creative tasks in a more imaginative way – for example exploring movement which hasn’t been explored before  
  • Being able to commit to a movement task fully and without reservation  
  • Being proud of oneself in overcoming a barrier – e.g. shyness, embarrassment, unwillingness  
  • Being able to expand movements to a larger kinesphere  
  • Being able to stand still and be stationary  
  • Upright posture, with head held high  
  • Being able to engage in group discussion, and knowing that one’s own point is valid / has merit and be free from doubt in one’s convictions  
  • Being able to learn from experiences and to persevere in the face of challenge  
  • An increased self-awareness in relation to self and group  
  • Being able to work as part of a team where this couldn’t happen before  
  • Being able to participate in class with fewer inhibitions, barriers and anxieties  
  • Being able to take part in contact work and make physical contact with others  
  • An increased trust of those around you  
  • Ability to be more expressive  
  • Expressing the want to share ideas with others in the group, teachers and partners, and the want to share the work produced |

2 In some instances, the VitaliSE Step Change artists provide a more detailed review of literature in relation to their areas of focus; these can be found in Appendix 2.
with “outsiders”
- The ability to hold eye contact
- Increasing the range of motions within movements
- Increasing the quality with which movements are performed
- Increasing ability to communicate ideas effectively
- Increased ability to play and “risk-take” during tasks

### Engagement:
Social engagement
Physical engagement
Dance engagement
Engagement in other activities

- Participating in the session, physically, verbally, observing
- Participating regularly
- Positively working as part of a team or independently
- Making creative contributions in sessions by discussing, physicalising, watching
- Responding positively to feedback to improve the quality of movement and response to tasks
- Perseverance in developing skills and responses
- Sharing enjoyment and pleasure in dancing and being involved in dancing
- Activities undertaken outside of the dance sessions such as watching and discussing dance, continuing to be involved in dance after a session has finished
- Maintaining a positive attitude to dance
- Maintaining focus and concentration throughout the session

### Social wellbeing

- Being able to develop relationships with others which foster a sense of belonging
- Being able to integrate and interact with others positively
- Feeling comfortable in yourself when part of a group
- Being able to communicate effectively and articulately in a range of contexts
- Being able to lead and be lead
- Having sufficient self-esteem and self-confidence to be able to contribute and make meaningful connections with others
- Achieving balance in the activities which one undertakes, to work, relax and enjoy life
Artists drew on a range of dance genres for their work, focusing mainly on contemporary and ballet-informed vocabulary as a starting point. However, common to all projects was a creative dance approach. In defining creative dance and the principles that underpin this work, the artists have defined this as the following:

- No right or wrong solutions in creating and perfecting movement in a safe space
- Developing movement through tasks and stimuli which is unique to the individual participant and group
- A focus on one’s own dancing which may include expression in some way and the development of the imagination in response to themes, props, ideas and stimuli
- Transferring ownership to participants
- Accessibility and equality: tasks accessible to all which evolve in a progressive way; equality of access to activity
- Respect for and celebration of difference

2.2 Key connections to policy and health

Key political strategies (DH, 2010; DH, 2011; CMO, 2011) can perhaps inform how dance and health projects are devised and evaluated, particularly in light of the shift in the emerging NHS plans, where the Director of Public Health will share responsibility for the population’s health with local authorities and Public Health England (2013). As Burkhardt and Rhodes (2012, p. 7) suggest, such localised structures, alongside partnership working, provide an “ideal opportunity for greater delivery of joint outcomes between health, culture and leisure.” With the Public Health Outcomes Framework (2012) focused on helping people to live healthy lives, to make healthy choices, and to reduce health inequalities across England, there is scope for the outcomes of dance and health projects to frame their evaluative enquiries in line with this, as Government strategy evolves. Thus, the public participation outcomes of the VitaliSE Step Change project have been examined in light of this framework where appropriate. But, the particular significance of this project has been in empowering artists to become key stakeholders in the provision of dance for health initiatives whereby, firstly, they themselves develop their skills in evaluating the impact of their work with participants, within useful frameworks which physical activity commissioning bodies can identify with; and secondly, they are able to develop and understand the impact of their artistic practice within the context of dance for health projects and support their own wellbeing and self-actualisation. In this, the Five Ways to Wellbeing (2011) informs the overarching research aims of the project, across both participants and artists. The five ways are conceived as:

- **Connect to others:** participants are coming together as projects are initiated in a variety of settings and artists are developing a network of professional development through training, networking and mentoring in the South East and across the UK.
- **Be active:** of course, participants have been encouraged to be active in their very participation in dance projects; artists actively deliver their workshops.
- **Take notice:** participants, carers, family members, friends, colleagues and artists have been encouraged to take notice and reflect on their curiosity in physical activity, dance, their responses and in the case of the artists their practice in the spirit of ongoing professional development.
- **Learn:** participants, carers, family members, friends, colleagues and artists have been encouraged to engage in the spirit of life-long learning and develop their understanding, experience and confidence in new things, be that as a dance participant, supporter or a dance facilitator.
- **Give:** for most projects, the notion of supporting social wellbeing has been an underpinning value, informing how sessions have been delivered to bring communities together and encourage engagement in dance to improve health and wellbeing. Social interaction,
focused on teamwork, problem solving, reminiscence, humour and fun have been the methodological frameworks employed by artists as they encourage connections between people.

The multi-layered nature of the VitaliSE Step Change programme is clear therefore. It is informed by the history and pioneering dance and health research, which Dance Up has already undertaken. It has combined the professional development aims of individual artists at different stages of their careers, with different interests and areas of expertise in working in and through dance. The discrete research aims of twelve individual placements also informed the scope of this documentation. And finally, the relationship of this to the political and economic frameworks which inform and fund the work intersects directly with the professional development outcomes which this type of project can foster, as well as the explicit data collected from participants of the twelve placements. This type of project and its associated research documentation is emergent, multi-layered and inherently complex as it tries to capture the rich experiences of the organisations, artists, mentors and participants, in relation to the role that dance can play in enhancing health.
3. Evaluation

With the two-fold nature of the project, the following sections have a focus on evaluating the professional development opportunity followed by the outcomes of the placements themselves. Separating the two foci serves to foster thorough consideration and evaluation of how the aims were met, although limits the inherent transferability of the artists’ experiences with the outcomes of the placements. In presenting findings in this way, the complexities of the project may be oversimplified and it is acknowledged that there are crossovers between professional development, project planning, delivery and evaluation and the processes involved in a large-scale project of this nature. The reflective narratives created by the artists are not included in this document to protect the privacy of the artists involved. However, the placement evaluation documentation written by the artists is located in Appendix 2.

3.1 Summary Artist Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist Data</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 artists$^3$</td>
<td>23 to 33 years</td>
<td>All female</td>
<td>1 to 12 years, ranging from formal education to community settings and working across ages and abilities</td>
<td>All artists have UG degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some have a range of PG Diplomas in performance and choreography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some either have PG degrees or are about to embark on programmes of further study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Additional training and qualifications include Makaton, FCD summer schools, behavioural management amongst others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Course</th>
<th>Placement Delivery</th>
<th>Evaluatio Day</th>
<th>Reflective Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation attendance</td>
<td>13 artists</td>
<td>10 artists</td>
<td>8 artists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Professional development

As part of the professional development process, the artists were asked to create a self-reflexive narrative, which identifies their practice journeys in participating in the VitaliSE Step Change project. Eight artists completed this request. No set structure to these narratives was prescribed so that artists could navigate their own journey in written format, and through the very process of creating the documentation, could continue their reflective journey as they needed to. Thus, the person-centred principles of reflection embedded in the training course were continued in the data collection methods at this stage. Guidance in reflective practice was provided throughout the

$^3$ Thirteen artists commenced the project training, one of whom was a reserve participant. Twelve artists commenced placements although one did not come to fruition, thus ten artists completed the delivery phase. Artist reflections are drawn from all artists who started the delivery process.

At the initial delivery stages of the project, the participating artists articulated a range of aims that they had in relation to their participation in this project. These included:

- Developing confidence in planning, delivery and reflective practice
- Expanding teaching styles and approaches to adapt to different contexts, groups and settings
- Shadowing experienced artists and gaining inspiration from team teaching and mentoring opportunities
- Refining and reaffirming skills
- Developing skills in effective evaluation and research
- Developing knowledge and understanding of dance in a health-based setting

These aims have broadly been supported through the training and experiences offered by the VitaliSE Step Change project. Although perhaps not explicitly realised by the artists at the start of the delivery phase, the aims that they identified suggest that, metaphorically speaking, they had opened the door and looked at the possibility of becoming key stakeholders in the devising and evaluation of dance for health projects. Thus, the project’s aim of cascading ownership of such projects to artists themselves was a shared aim by the artists. The gap in ownership is evident in the artists not realising, at this stage, that they may also be part of the commissioning process in instigating their own work.

### 3.2.1. Skill acquisition

For most artists, the process of planning and delivering projects was a reaffirming process, where they were able to refine and develop teaching practices with different community groups. This extends from the participating artists leading discrete projects, to the lead artist who reported that she felt that she was able to consolidate her finer skills in facilitation, having a real sense of arrival in her role and innate confidence in the range of opportunities she offered. For the artists, a combination of set material and creative tasks was devised, drawing on a range of didactic and exploratory facilitation styles, which also allowed their confidence to blossom. The process of working with other people has meant that artists have acquired new ideas for class content, as well as reflecting on alternative modes of delivery, which they may not previously have tried out. All artists developed skills in co-leading and the negotiation of the leadership role with colleagues. The artists have also learned about formal frameworks for evaluation and research and have developed working methodologies to collect data; of course some artists embraced this more than others and this is reflected in the range of evaluative documentation in Appendix 2. The artists have all acquired and refined skills in reflection, to create reflective narrative documentation to form the basis of this section of the documentation. And whilst the artists have not all been explicit in the acquisition of reflection, research and evaluation skills in their own reflections, the completion and experience of these tasks implicitly means development in these areas. What does come into question here is the worth which the artists place on the reflection, research and evaluation process to serve the purpose of professional development, but also in the project’s aim to cascade expertise to artists in supporting them to become key stakeholders in the development of dance for health work. The range of engagement with the evaluation tasks would suggest that different artists place different priorities on components of their practice; clearly the practice of doing takes prominence for many. For others, the relationship of reflection and evaluation to developing their practice was evident through their engagement with mentoring and the quality of their responses in written and dialogic form. This inherently stems from the values which artists place on their work and more importantly where they are in their professional development journey. It is vital therefore for reflection and evaluation work to be facilitated in a way, which is supportive of each artist and
allows them to discover and affirm their work in a way which suits them. It is also important that professional development opportunities ensure the embedded use of reflection in training and mentoring, if it is to be used as a research and evaluation methodology, and that rigour in the process is encouraged and supported throughout.

3.2.2 A supportive context

The artists particularly commented on the supportive nature of the training programme in its entirety (course, delivery, co-leading, mentoring) and how this led to increasingly positive perceptions of self-confidence and self-efficacy in dance skills, delivery and interpersonal skills between colleagues and participants. Although the artists have not necessarily been explicit about why this has come about, the opportunity to take time out for training and to develop practice with other artists was seen as especially rewarding. The emphasis for Rachel Liggett in delivering the training course and in providing mentor support was to foster a sense of a community of learning (Lavé and Wenger, 1991) in which she acted as a facilitative guide to share stories of experiences, which might serve to inform and develop future artistic practice. Artists were engaged as active agents in this process, contributing to sharing and discussion to varying degrees, dependent on their experience, confidence and professional development journey.

The artists described the value of reflection with their co-deliverers, where time allowed, as part of this supportive process. There was less a focus on judgment but more on unpicking areas which worked and which did not, and creating strategies to address this for the future. The mentoring process continued for artists who chose to draw on the offer, through distance mentor support via phone calls, email correspondence and Skype with Rachel and Elsa. The role of both mentors was considered invaluable to all artists, where the mentors dovetailed between each other’s expertise successfully and supported artists, as they needed. It is clear from feedback from both artists and
staff at Dance Up that the mentor system is a vital component of a project of this nature and would certainly be recommended in the design of future projects of this kind. It is perhaps important to consider how mentoring can be provided. In this case, mentoring was provided remotely, where artists were not observed in situ by the mentor themselves, and this may have inhibited the uptake of the mentoring offer by artists. The value of visits to artists in the workplace, and reflection with artists as a result of this type of mentor opportunity may mean that the artists feel more empowered to seek out the mentoring opportunity in the first place, and indeed that the work is perceived of value beyond themselves. It may be that the mentoring process requires more guidance from the mentor or organisation, although it might also be said that this negates the principles of autonomy which effective mentoring and coaching within a professional development setting is built upon. Nevertheless, in repeating this project again, it is strongly advised that mentoring takes place face to face and focuses on embedded learning whereby delivery takes place and mentoring is supportive of the practice of doing in order to extend the artists’ reflection skills further. In this way, the artists practise planning, delivery, evaluation and research as part of a coherent whole rather than a somewhat compartmentalized process. The in situ mentor process can also act as a means of quality control, where contraindications for participant groups can be addressed, content output can be supportively guided and reflection becomes a truly embedded activity to practice.

3.2.3 Co-leading

The co-leading partnerships worked to varying degrees; for some, personalities clashed and for others, the team leading experience was gratifying. Most of the artists took time to problematize the team-teaching experiences they had. Some described it as a ‘luxury’ in which they could play to their strengths and learn from partners’ expertise too. Their practice felt refreshed as a result of working with another artist. Others referred to co-leading as a ‘challenging role’. The challenges in co-working in this way seemed to lie in conflicts of values and confusion between roles. More experienced artists felt unsure of the mentoring role which they either wanted to assume, or were forced into by their partner. Perhaps more forthright dialogue between artists at the start of the delivery process may have eased such conflict. Others felt that delivery styles and work ethics did not match their own, creating conflict in terms of responsibility and expectations. The labeling of artists as ‘experienced’ or ‘less experienced’ also brought about problems, particularly insofar as these labels were not necessarily owned by the artists, or indicative of the experiences they felt they had had. Some artists were experienced in a particular setting or context, but had little experience in community practice; others acknowledged that their experience was quite far-reaching but were not sure whether they themselves were acting as mentors or as co-leaders. However, most artists drew on a reflective process to explore their practice in relation to the co-leading experience, drilling into their own attitudes, values and approaches to either try to resolve any issues during the delivery phase, or to understand the context of the experiences that they had after the project and how this might impact on their future co-leading practices. Thus, the reflective process served to nourish the individual artists in terms of their professional development, and encouraged them to take responsibility for their practice in a self-supportive manner. Certainly the partnership process is a delicate one in which many variables play-out to impact its effectiveness and it is acknowledged that not all of these can be foreseen. Of course, it is vital that partners get on; exploration into values of practice, previous working experiences and artists’ explicit objectives in becoming involved in the project in the first place, may also be useful to consider when devising a project where co-leading is a key working method.
3.2.4 Adaptability

Working with another artist tended to either highlight or enhance confidence in artists’ adaptability to different situations and taking themselves outside of their comfort zones. Some artists discussed their growing ability to recognise and respond to the individuals in their groups. Others drew on their increasing confidence in breaking away from their teaching plans. Either inspired by their partner artist to do so, or merely through experiencing delivery in this context, most artists expressed that they grew more confident in drawing from a toolbox of tasks and activities, rather than strictly sticking to the plan they had created in advance of the workshop sessions. For some this was a new approach, for others it reaffirmed their practice in this regard. Thus, a responsive leadership style emerged for some artists, which iterated the notion of a person-centred practice. Person-centred practice is a common tenet of community dance (Foundation for Community Dance, 2013) and health-based practice (Manley, 2011), and so for the artists to report on this suggests a significant development in terms of the bringing together of dance practice within a health-based context. Evidence of the artists’ development towards this value potentially indicates that the bringing together of artists, with a mentor, in a context of co-learning in formal training and on-the-job experience has transferred into the dance practice of these artists. Furthermore, the artists described dance as being a natural catalyst for person-centred practice, which is not just about developing dancing skills amongst participants, but dance sessions also acting as a place for participants to socialise, meet and take time out. Two more experienced artists reflected on this process being part of what it is to lead dance in community settings and to also be a part of this process of socialisation. Here, crossovers with the health and wellbeing aims of the wider project can be seen to impact not only on the participants, but also on the artists as participants too in light of the principles of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954) and professional wellbeing (Gardner & Driscoll, 2007). Lead artist, Rachel Liggett, acknowledged that this was a fundamental tenet of the professional development processes employed as part of the VitaliSE Step Change project. The focus for her own delivery was ensuring the transfer of ownership and empowerment for the artists involved and to bring with that a growth in confidence in skills and expertise in order that the artists
can continue their journey towards fulfilling and self-actualising their aspirations for the duration of the project, and for the future.

3.2.5 Reflection

Some artists also reflect on the process of reflection itself on a number of levels. Firstly, being supported and mentored in formal processes of reflection helped some artists deepen the significance of their thoughts, where formalising the reflective process through the physical process of writing, helped them to organize perceptions more effectively. For one artist the contextualising of practice in terms of theory was ‘really interesting’ and for two others it helped them to understand the place of their work in relation to higher order themes and policies relating to arts and health provision and advocacy. One artist felt that the focus on research was overwhelming at times but could also report on the value she felt in embedding reflection into her practice, which was something she had not experienced previously. Until this project, the process of delivery and reflection had been separate activities, whereas now she has a clearer idea in practice of how one can feed the other. As a result she perceives reflection to be a very positive process where she is eager to ‘try new things without fear of getting it wrong’. For a few artists, the principles of evidence-based practice were thoroughly explored. Nikki Watson and Hayley Ovens explored their working processes in detail in order to make sense of the effects their practices had on participants at The Fordway Centre. Their full report can be found on page 63. As part of a project at Rowner Youth Centre in Gosport, Hayley Ovens reported on how her practice and teaching strategies impacted on the participants’ experience, health and wellbeing, especially focusing on the engagement of young people in community dance settings. Her full report can be found on page 93. She reflected on facilitating engagement and identifies possible strategies which could be drawn on in this; judging the energy, mood and atmosphere of an individual or group; providing a safe and positive social environment without judgment; encouraging individual acknowledgement of achievement and effort within a mastery focused environment; supporting creative input into sessions; and thinking on your feet with a ‘creative artillery’ of ideas to call upon. Hayley evidenced her practice as frameworks for positively influencing engagement amongst young people. She has described measurable, positive outcomes and draws out how she achieved these goals in order to advocate for dance for health projects such as this, which clearly transitions into the aim of artists as key stakeholders in the development of this work.

3.2.6 Outcomes

The artists have identified a range of outcomes, which can act as measurable results for the professional development aims of the project and are worthy of inclusion here. These include:

- Undertaking ongoing training in non-verbal communication in order to continue and develop work with groups of participants who have a learning disability
- Confidence to develop a dance company located in the community which offers classes to extend the work she experienced at part of the VitaliSE Step Change project
- Experienced artists offering mentoring opportunities for other artists on the programme
- Artists being offered work in similar settings as a result of their work on the VitaliSE StepChange project
- Continuation of projects after the life of the VitaliSE StepChange project, where either the artists continue their association with the groups and participants themselves, or where care workers, teachers and volunteers aim to continue some of the activities in their own work with support from the VitaliSE Step Change artists
- A Grants for the Arts application for a dance and health project focusing on working with adults who suffer from Multiple Sclerosis
- Artists from the project continuing their association, working together within a professional dance company to deliver community projects and professional dance performances
At this stage (July 2013), it is clear that the VitaliSE Step Change programme has supported artists’ confidence and experience to develop their own initiatives in dance and health initiatives and continue associations with organisations and artists instigated as part of this project. Although beyond the scope of this evaluation document, it would be useful to revisit the artists and examine the longer term impacts of the project on their practices in six and twelve months time. Evidence of transferring stakeholder roles to artists is clear. Therefore, the development of a sustainable workforce with employment opportunities in the South of England is prospering and no doubt more long-term effects will be attributable to the VitaliSE Step Change aim of workforce development.

### 3.2.7 The impact of project organisation and logistics on professional development

Many of the artists reflected on the management of the project and how this impacted their professional development. Whilst the artists reflect on time being a positive aspect of the training course, time to plan and share experiences as part of the delivery process was missing for many. Some artists suggested that the mid-point evaluation day needed equal focus on artists being able to talk about their projects with each other, to share successes, ideas and reflections, before focusing so heavily on the needs of the research itself. For some, artists’ schedules and geographical placement made it difficult for them to find time to reflect and plan thoroughly during the project. Again, this is a logistical consideration for pairing artists together. And whilst the training course period was timely in execution and time-rich for sharing and building a sense of community, the lead-in time to the project delivery period was very rushed and short. Some artists report feeling very stressed and unprepared at this time. This tight timeframe was directly due to the short turn-around time from receiving funding for the project, to the delivery period that the funders had set with Dance Up; the work needed to be completed by the end of the financial year (March 2013). Nevertheless, a number of the artists utilized the distance mentoring opportunities at this time, to situate their experience in terms of practice, creating tangible solutions in unforeseen circumstances. Although, at the time the artists’ perceived their experience as not ideal, the time pressure may have allowed the artists to develop new skills in an unfamiliar or less than desirable context, which over time may be realised by the artists themselves. Being responsive and adaptable has already been acknowledged by the artists as key factors in practice-based contexts and the same might be true in more organisational and logistical frameworks too. It is perhaps not atypical that projects such as the VitaliSE Step Change programme bottleneck in terms of their time management, particularly when accounting for recruitment of participant groups and the logistics of partnerships. The changes in funding structures may mean that funding is released even closer to project delivery deadlines and partners in any project of this nature need to remain resilient in the face of this.

The hindrance of time also had an effect on the geographical location of some projects. The original intention of the project was to place projects in areas where dance provision was limited and, where possible, in areas of multiple deprivation. The definition of deprivation was not clarified in the original funding documentation. According to Hampshire County Council (2011, p. 3), Hampshire is described ‘being broadly prosperous and faring well overall in terms of low levels of deprivation, although pockets of extreme poverty exist in the larger urban areas.’ This is indicative of surrounding counties also (Communities and Local Government, 2011). Deprivation can be defined in terms of economic status, health, disability, employment, education, housing, children and young people, and geographical barriers to access services amongst others. Five projects were located in areas of economic deprivation; six projects were undertaken in areas of educational deprivation and all projects were located in areas where there were geographical barriers to access services. Thus, to an extent this aim was fulfilled, given a broad understanding of what deprivation can be. Greater lead-in and planning time may have allowed placement of a greater number of projects to be located in areas of economic deprivation, if this was the original intention.
Some artists identify that the aims and objectives of the project were not transparent during the initial course or subsequent planning stages. This perhaps reflects the emergent nature of the project in terms of its scope and practical implementation from a paper-based funding application, to realising its true potential in real terms. Whilst the over-arching aims of the project were clearly identified in funding applications, the details and full scope of what the project could be, were conceptualised as the lead artist, artists and partners came on board. This was further cemented during the research and evaluation process also. Perhaps, this might be seen as a strength in that the project was adaptive and reactive to the partners and stakeholders involved. Nevertheless, one artist explains that she felt that the artists had disparate objectives in participating in the project and that at times the overarching aims of the project were not clearly articulated in the early part of the project. As the project’s scope emerged other aspects of the project appeared to be bolted-on (such as the research requirements of the artists in collecting measurable evidence to assess the impact of their work). This artist suggests a sense of disempowerment and, until she started to deliver the project, a slight reluctance to engage in mentoring (which she now regrets). Whilst the research aims were clearly articulated in the initial funding application and were discussed during the training course, the extent of these may not have been fully understood by the artists until the delivery period. Equally, the evaluation and research strategy was not included in the initial planning of the course and its delivery and this may have contributed to the lack of clarity about the aims of the project as a whole, and the demands of the research aspect of the project on the artists directly. In evaluative discussions between Rachel and Elsa, embedding reflection and evaluation within the course design, mentoring and delivery before commencing the project would be of use for the future. As suggested in previous evaluation documentation for community dance and inclusion projects (Angove and Bradley, 2011), designing projects alongside the evaluation and research aspects of the project can lead to a more strongly aligned and joined up process, where the artists perceive themselves to be an intrinsic part of the research process. Certainly, this recommendation continues through as a result of the VitaliSE Step Change project.
3.3 Placement Evaluations

As seen in Table 1 on page 12, the scope of all the placements was far-reaching and inherently complex. The focus of this section is to pull together the salient themes emerging from all placements, as indicators of the contribution that dance can make to health and wellbeing amongst different populations across the south of England. All artists completed the evaluation and research process and reports for each placement, authored by the artists themselves, are provided in Appendix 2. These provide specific detail relating to each placement, the aims, contexts and methods used in delivery and evaluation. Nevertheless, it is useful to bring together data to understand the impact of the placements for the participants themselves. As referred to in sections 2.1 and 2.2 on pages 11 and 17 respectively, the research foci of the project fall into three categories which are:

- perceptions of confidence
- engagement
- social wellbeing

During mentoring conversations and at the mid-point evaluation day the artists agreed modes of evaluating their placements to bring some sense of compatibility to the reports. Structures of the reports were broadly agreed and artists were encouraged to draw on their professional wisdom and observational skills in interpreting behaviours. Artists were encouraged where possible to triangulate their findings with feedback from participants and co-workers, to make sense of the experiences of participants in light of the aims of their discrete placement.

3.3.1 Summary Participant Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Gender mix</th>
<th>Number of sessions</th>
<th>Number of hours delivered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: 187</td>
<td>6 months – 92 years old</td>
<td>Male: 78</td>
<td>120 sessions</td>
<td>130.75 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children: 93</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young People: 36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults: 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults: 50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.2 Evidence: Perceptions of changes in confidence

Perceptions of confidence by both artists and carers, teachers and other co-workers on the various projects, as well as in some cases the participants themselves, can be seen to have improved as a result of the VitaliSE Step Change project. The artists recorded these through observations of changes in behaviour and physicality and where possible, conversations between themselves and the participants. Co-workers’ perceptions of changes were used to triangulate artists’ observations through interviews and questionnaires; the benefit of the co-workers’ reports lies in the fact that they were able to collate information of confidence changes beyond the dance sessions themselves. Whilst it is not always possible to verify that changes in confidence are directly attributable to the dance sessions themselves, co-workers have the benefit of understanding participants’ normal behaviours and can perhaps perceive more global changes in confidence amongst participants as they are with them on a day to day basis.

Positive changes in confidence can be concluded across the range of ages and abilities of participants. Amongst older participants at Appleby House and Pinehurst Care Home, range of motion was seen to increase particularly in the upper body, with numerous participants reporting less stiffness in the joints. Artists observed that, as the placement progressed, participants
performed movement utilising more of their kinesphere and their willingness to take more risks with the size of movements developed over time. Some participants were more willing to take part in freestyle movement sections of the classes, perhaps indicating a greater sense of self-efficacy as far as movement is concerned. Certainly greater willingness to move in front of other people increased across these groups, perhaps another indicator of increased physical and mental confidence. At Appleby House, participant Ken felt confident enough to walk alone with his frame to the dance sessions as the placement progressed. Thus, it might be possible to suggest that for him not only did his physical confidence in the sessions increase, but that this transferred to more everyday tasks such as walking alone.

Artist observations of children and young people who have learning disabilities also record increases in physical confidence. The artists at two placements chose to examine changes in balance as a result of participating in the project; movement material in the sessions focused on balance and using the Stork Test, participants’ balance was measured pre- and post-intervention. Results for both groups proved inconclusive, yet for some individual participants balance improved (please see pages 68 and 74 for Stork Test results for these two projects). One participant was upset after doing the test at the first time point; however at time two he very willingly participated in the tests and indeed his balance improved, suggesting not only improvement in balance, but also confidence in participating in an activity which tested balance – his balance improved considerably at the second time point. A participant also utilised this movement in the creation of his dances, perhaps further suggesting increases in balance confidence through the duration of the project. As with the older people, these participants performed movement more fully and precisely as time progressed through the placement, and more willingly shared their ideas with the class and to an audience, again an indicator of increasing confidence and self-efficacy perhaps. The development and refinement of participants’ motor skills was mentioned by a co-worker as a very clear outcome for her, and whilst not necessarily a direct construct of confidence, this may well be a physical manifestation of the confidence to persevere in the face of challenge. A certain level of self-efficacy may well be important for such refinement to occur.

Amongst the children participating in the project, increases in physical confidence were perceived by the artists as they confidently expressed themselves in physical movement and took ownership of themes and ideas to develop the content and direction of the projects. Again there was some observed improvement in motor skill development, although whether this is solely down to the dance sessions is difficult to ascertain. Teachers and parents observed some transference of confidence to other settings too, where children were more confident to discuss in class and engage with other children, whereas before the project, they were less inclined to do so. For one boy at Hasleworth School, social interaction developed through the course of the project as he began to make friends and work in partnerships, which allowed him to build trust; this contributed to developments in his social confidence primarily, but was clearly observed through developments in his body awareness. A parent at Aldertots noticed a significant change in her child’s ability to interact with other children which was supported by the artists’ observations of her increasing willingness to leave her mother’s side in classes and focus on the task. In the Aldertots project, the participants appear to have taken more and more of a lead in devising tasks and stories for the sessions, again suggesting improvements in social, physical and imaginative confidence perhaps.

Providing different teaching structures seemed to provide pathways for different participants to develop confidence. For some it is clear that set, structured material allows them to trust and feel safe to develop their voice creatively; for others more play-based work brings about an opportunity to socially interact and develop confidence in this domain. The use of props with participants of all ages and abilities seems a key factor in supporting confidence, as the focus becomes more about interacting with the prop rather than the focus on the moving body. It might be relevant to explore the construct of confidence in relation to use of props over a longer time period with participants of all these groups. Clearly, providing varied modes of delivery over the course of a class or project allows confidence amongst participants to prosper.
3.3.3 Evidence: Increased engagement

Engagement is a common theme to all placements and is a fundamental concern of community dance practice (Amans, 2008). Evidence of engagement was drawn from artist and co-worker observations in most placements, of participants sticking with tasks for longer periods of time, improved levels of concentration and a willingness to talk, discuss and share stories and ideas with the group they were working with. A key underlying factor in the reports relates engagement to notions of enjoyment; there are numerous quotes from participants at Appleby House (page 55), which capture the enjoyment they felt in dancing and connecting with others. One female participant started the project very negatively and doubted the value of dance for her. Yet by the end of the project she eagerly attended the sessions, and participated in activities. The co-workers explained that this was very unusual for this client; ‘she is difficult to engage in social activities.’ Reports from the artists working with older people discussed improved memory recall amongst the participants and especially those suffering with Dementia. Participants became better at recalling some movement patterns, depending on the severity of their condition, but many were able to recall the dance artists working on the project and the very fact that dancing happened on that day at the centres, as well as being able to recall stories from their pasts, which would inspire the content of the sessions. As a result their engagement may have improved because of this improvement in memory recall.

Inviting participation seemed a key strategy for engaging older people at the Judith Adams Centre, by asking ‘would you like to dance?’, dancing with partners and sharing stories of the past. This perhaps engendered a sense of ownership over the work itself, which stems from the participants’ experiences and the relevance of this to their lives. Indeed, this is a common theme amongst the evaluations relating to the projects with children and young people also. Drawing on relevant activities such as sport and football at The Fordway Centre helped artists connect with the participants of this pupil referral unit. Starting with a brief chat seemed to further promote ownership amongst the group and allowed the participants to work with the artists to resolve and problematise ideas. Scaffolding tasks allowed the participants to develop new skills at a pace, which was not overwhelming but still offered challenge and with that engendering a sense of pride throughout the group of the work that was being achieved. A very measurable outcome of engagement can be seen with one of the case study participants at The Wellington Centre. This young man changed his day of attendance at the centre during the project and yet wanted to still attend the project, so ensured that he was there just for the dance sessions each week. The artists report that he became more passionate about dance by asking questions, giving feedback and participating with full commitment. Although the artists do not expand on why this might have happened, this might be a focus for future study – how do creative dance activities and role modeling behaviours support engagement in dance, specifically with young people who have learning disabilities? At Hasleworth School, a male child’s engagement in dance and learning improved, as seen through the artists’ observations of improved concentration and active listening and participation in tasks devised by the artists and group. Many artists report that when the participants are developing their own creative ideas and choreographing their own work, engagement increases from when they may be involved in learning set material from the artists in a more didactic learning mode. Artist Hayley Ovens’ report on her development of practice and ideas for facilitating engagement are useful here in exploring the predictors of increased engagement in dance. They add to a range of education and motivation theories surrounding engagement and motivational climate and would be worthy of further more empirical examination.
3.3.4 Evidence: Social wellbeing

Social wellbeing was perceived by artists (as observers of the participants, but also as co-participants of this process too) and co-workers and where possible from the participants themselves. The overview of evidence from Judith Adams outlines participants’ responses to the sessions, which indicate positive perceptions of wellbeing; ‘lively and alive and using my energy.’ Comments also draw on the importance of social connectedness; ‘everyone is playing’, ‘everyone happy – lovely feeling when everyone is smiling’ and ‘being part of a group is very good.’ At Judith Adams the artists and co-workers observed a reduction in anxiety in a number of participants but especially one participant who would express that they did not know where they were. The participant’s worrisome feelings tended to abate during the sessions themselves with the artists observing enjoyment in connecting with other people as a way for anxiety to be reduced. The significance of participants helping one another revealed empathy amongst the participants in care centres, suggesting a sense of increased social wellbeing during the dance placements.

The team working theme recurs again in the work with children and young people, where at The Fordway Centre the artists observed that the sense of ownership which supported engagement in dance, also facilitated positive working relationships. Often team working would support conflict resolution in the group and bring together people, who would not normally cooperate, to problem solve movement tasks. The artists reported a sense of increased self-worth amongst the Fordway Centre group, as they celebrated successes and achievements during their dance sessions. At Glenwood School, one participant provided some evidence of the impact of dance in improving socialisation. By drawing on peer teaching strategies and the participant's interest in directing dance rather than doing it herself, the artists encouraged this young girl to engage with a group of other young people, where normally she finds it hard to forge friendships. The friendship which began in the dance session has been sustained beyond the project. At Aldertots many of the adult carers commented on the inter-regimental socialization that has occurred as a result of the dance project there. Historically many families would not normally mix, especially across regiments, yet this project has inspired greater interaction and understanding of the place of this type of work in
socialising; ‘meeting people from army families is important as the husbands are away a lot so it’s
good to keep the kids entertained… makes time fly and be enjoyable as routine is important to help
family through the time without daddy.’ Further evidence from Aldertots focused on the increased
empathy amongst the children and adults, as they would work together to develop ideas. The
interaction between adults and children was meaningful for all involved, for enjoyment but also
learning, cognitive and social development.
4. Conclusions

Numerous conclusions can be drawn about the VitaliSE Step Change project and its impacts on participants in terms of health and wellbeing. Clearly many positive findings have been explored. Equally importantly, the bringing together of artists for training, mentoring, delivery and evaluation has supported them to develop self-actualising behaviours in support of their professional development, health and wellbeing, in a sector which can bring about quite a lonely existence. Perhaps here the opportunity to connect and be sociable is especially significant.

The placement findings provide intersections to domains within the Public Health Framework, which are worthy of discussion. The value here is in identifying the impacts, which dance participation can have, through data collection methods which capture the experiences of the individuals involved, drawing on observations and self-report strategies by the participants themselves.

4.1 Social Connectedness

(*Public Health Framework - Domain 1: 1.18*)

The evidence of this project suggests that dance can bring together groups of people of different ages and different abilities to connect and interact with other people. Some participants may be quite isolated from services due to geographical location, there may be a paucity of dance provision in their area, or indeed they may be isolated because of the health conditions that they face. Some outputs from this project suggest that dance has the ability to transcend such challenges and bring people together to feel emotionally, physically and mentally connected. Clearly, the research foci of the placements have the potential to interact and strongly influence the notions of social connectedness; in engaging with dance, participants’ confidence in moving and interacting can grow, one’s sense of connectedness may feel more rooted and so overall health and wellbeing can flourish too. The same social connectedness might be said of the delivery artists where being able to share and explore in a non-judgmental and trusting context reaffirms and inspires practice for these artists.

Community dance practice lends itself strongly to the principles of social connectedness as suggested by the Foundation for Community Dance (2013):

Community dance is not confined to any specific type of dance and is concerned with engaging people creatively and safely in a dance style, or exploring dance ideas and forms of their own. It can involve creating dance for performance, and is centrally concerned with the experience of dancing and the process of making dance, and includes many ways of ‘participating’ - learning, making, performing, watching and talking about dance.
4.2 Self-reported Wellbeing

(Public Health Framework - Domain 2: 2.23)
The artists’ reports reflect the participants’ perceptions of their increases in wellbeing to varying degrees, often dependent on any additional needs, which they may have. Furthermore, the narrative reflections from the artists themselves reflect on their own self-reported wellbeing also. Thus, in creating a broad community of practicing artists, participants and co-workers, the coming together to enjoy dancing, to explore and identify with others and move the body brings forth evidence that dance can contribute to wellbeing from the participants’ viewpoint. Participants reported feeling less stiff, others say ‘it’s nice to be here’, others drew pictures to express that they like dancing and liked working in pairs. Artists on the training course reflected on feeling confident, having new skills to explore and refine, feeling reaffirmed by the practices they already employed and that they feel ok with being certain and uncertain in what they were going to do. The evaluation reports stand for themselves in this regard, but are perhaps best summarised by a dancer at Judith Adams as ‘supercalafragalistickexpealadoshes’.

4.3 Dementia and its Impacts

(Public Health Framework - Domain 4: 4.16)
Whilst not directly reporting on dementia and its health impacts on people suffering with the condition, there is some evidence to suggest that dance can positively affect the lives of those participating at that moment in time. Participants at Judith Adams, Pinehurst Care Centre and Appleby House are affected by dementia and, as stated above, participating in the VitaliSE Step Change project allowed memories to be recalled, for participants to connect with other older people, the artists and the co-workers physically and emotionally. Some care workers stated that they had learnt much about the older people they cared for in witnessing their enjoyment and having time to talk. Observable changes in anxious behaviour were witnessed by the artists and carers; as suggested by the artists, further research in understanding why and how this came about
would be worthy of further exploration, in particular working with a multidisciplinary team of health professionals to explore the potential of dance to work in dementia care settings.

4.4 Five Ways to Wellbeing

In identifying connections to the Public Health Framework, similar connections to the Five Ways of Wellbeing are evident in the work and findings of the VitaliSE Step Change project.

**Connecting to others** appears vital for all participants in the projects, the artists and for staff and mentors at Dance Up. The process of connecting appears to create meaning and support for all concerned, where relating to others and feeling part of a group allows individuals to feel like their efforts are noticed, are worthwhile and have value to themselves and beyond.

**Being active** perhaps speaks for itself in a dance context and whilst empirical data collection of physical health improvements was not the focus of this project, numerous project participants and the reports of the projects themselves have identified that being active improves flexibility and range of motion, lessens stiffness and provides a greater sense of confidence in dancing whilst also acknowledging that this can transfer to other parts of their lives.

In particular the artists have **taken notice**, to question and frame their practice within a research-based framework and to thoroughly reflect on what they notice to carry this forward as they develop their dance skills. It is difficult to ascertain from the reports from the artists the extent to which the participants noticed, although this is perhaps more tangible in the descriptions of work with the older participants. The artists noticed subtle differences in behaviours as suggestions of change within their research parameters, co-workers were able to notice new things about those they care for everyday and the participants themselves in many cases were able to recall and realise that this was happening.

The process of dancing with others, being active and for many being in a new context means a context of **learning** is implicit. Amongst the more traditional learning contexts such as schools, the impacts of learning outcomes are more clearly articulated by the artists - developments in body awareness, listening and sharing skills. But clearly being in a new context with new people and working through new ideas means that there is a learning opportunity available. What is less clear here is the explicit realisation of the project participants of their involvement in a learning process. However, the artists themselves reflect very clearly on the outcomes of the project in developing their skill sets, and of sharing new ideas, experiences and knowledge with each other as an explicit learning process. Some also reflect on the more metacognitive processes of learning whereby they have understood more about how they learn, the trust needed in the learning process and affirmation of skills and values which underpin practice.

The principle of **giving** is clearly explored. The artists reflect on the reciprocal nature of practice, whereby one gives, facilitates and guides an experience, which brings about responses from the participants given back to the artists and so begins a cyclical process of giving and receiving which can be adaptive, responsive and person-centred; this coming from both the artists and in some cases the participants as well.

And so clearly, the VitaliSE Step Change project has brought about clear outcomes for all involved in the project. Thirteen artists have interacted with the project, with ten participating in the entire training, delivery and mentor process. They have acquired new skills, practiced these in a supportive and exploratory framework with mentoring and guidance as needed by them, and are now equipped to be able to research and evaluate their work in light of specific practice concerns, professional development aspirations, political and research frameworks. As key stakeholders in
the process of commissioning, developing and delivering projects in a dance for health setting, the artists possess a toolbox of multidisciplinary skills to move their work forwards.

187 participants took part in the project and contribute to these health and wellbeing findings, contextualised and reported on by the artists with rigour, but importantly retaining the person-centred focus of this type of work. We know more about individuals’ experiences as a result of being involved with the VitaliSE Step Change project. This in itself is significant. Previous research in dance for health has focused very much on the collection of empirical data to generalise about experiences, health improvements and perceptions of wellbeing. Whilst useful, this documentation adds to the growing body of literature which captures the personal experiences of artists and participants, whilst building a case for the place of dance for health. Thus, the work of Dance Up and all associated with this project continues to pioneer new ways of working within the sector.
5. Bibliography and Sources


Appendices

Appendix 1 Training Course Evaluation Report authored by Jo Basham and edited by Sophie Amstell

VitaliSE Step Change – Training Course Evaluation Report

Over-arching Project information:

VitaliSE Step Change is a professional development opportunity for Community Dance Artists interested in developing their skills and experience in dance and health.

The VitaliSE Step Change dance and health programme is part of the chances4change portfolio of health projects supported by Big Lottery Fund, and will build on the legacy of the previous three-year VitaliSE scheme delivered by Hampshire Dance. Further funding was secured through the Supporting Change funding stream to provide dance artists with professional dance training in autumn 2012 followed by delivery of a number of dance projects over a 12-15 week period, in spring 2013. (The delivery programme will be evaluated separately.)

The lasting impact of the Supporting Change funding will be the creation of a group of 12 highly skilled dance artists able to deliver dance projects with health outcomes in a variety of community contexts.

Course Description:

The VitaliSE Step Change course was designed to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for dance artists to deliver health focused dance work in a variety of community contexts. The course content included:

- successful planning & delivery
- the impacts of dance on health and how they can be measured
- health & safety/safe practice/protection of children and vulnerable adults
- working as a freelance dance artist/legislation/insurance/tax
- methods of research & evaluation

12 artists were recruited to undertake the training. The less experienced artists were paired with those with more experience. The course was also offered to four reserve artists and one of them took up the opportunity to take part in the course free of charge. The professional artists selected for the course offered diverse teaching styles and experience with a mix of both performers and full time community dance practitioners. The course was free of charge to the selected artists.

Course Dates: 12/13/14 and 19/ 20/ 21 October.

Planned Outcomes for the Course:

- 12 dance artists will have successfully undertaken the training course
- They will have increased their skills and confidence in initiating, delivering and effectively evaluating community dance programmes focussed on health outcomes

They will also have the potential to form themselves into a new social enterprise with the ability to initiate their own projects and respond to tender opportunities.
**Course Leader:**

The course was led by Rachel Liggitt who will also mentor the selected dance artists during the delivery programme. Rachel has significant knowledge and experience of leading projects with a dance and health focus. Rachel has a BA in Dance, MA in choreography and is a qualified Relational Dynamics Coach. She has extensive experience in performance, movement and BodyMind Techniques which integrates and informs all her practice. She has worked as Dance Artist in Residence for Ludus Dance Company and Primary Care Trust, Hull and has been the Education and Training Coordinator for Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company for the last six years. She is currently the Associate Artist DASH, (Disability Arts in Shropshire).

**Guest Speakers:**

Dance Scientist, Elsa Urmston provided a half-day session on research methodologies for dance and health projects. The content of Elsa’s session included devising data collection methods (quantitative and qualitative), observation protocols for less formal modes of collecting data, devising workshop strategies for data collection of project aims, hypothetical project briefs and handouts of case studies.

Physical Activity Expert, Paul Jarvis provided a half-day session on physical activity and public health. This included an overview of national health agendas and how physical activity fits within them.

**Recruitment:**

27 dance artists applied to take part in the course. 12 were selected and four were offered additional reserve places (only one of the reserves took up the opportunity.) Applications were made by submitting a C.V. accompanied by one A4 side of information outlining the artists’ reasons for applying for the course and their current understanding of dance and health. Although selections were successfully made using this process it did prove to be quite time consuming for Hampshire Dance staff. In the future, it may be better to use a standard application form to speed up the selection process.

**Venues:**

A number of different venues were used for the delivery of the course to suit both theoretical, practical and discussion based learning. The benefit of changing spaces throughout the course was that it provided a new energy as the course developed.

At The Lights in Andover we had the use of The Dance Studio and Studio One for days 1, 2 and 4 of the course. The venue also provided plenty of informal breakout space in the foyer which served well for small discussion groups. At the University of Winchester we had one of the large studios for day 3 of the course. On days 5 & 6 we used The Wessex Dance Academy in Winchester which was probably the best of the three venues because it provided a large studio, break out space and on-site self-catering facilities.

**Catering:**

Lunch and refreshments were provided for the artists on days 1, 2 & 4 of the course at The Lights. This worked particularly well on day 1 as all artists were able to network through lunch and the group became a close working unit very quickly.
Evaluation Methods:

Artists were provided with various opportunities to give feedback throughout the course. These were:

- A written questionnaire on each day of the course.
- A postcard evaluation reflecting on days 1, 2 & 3 with two questions to consider:
  1. What will you take with you from the last three days?
  2. What will you leave behind?
- On the last day artists were given ‘Post its’ and were asked to write up as many responses as they felt necessary on:
  1. What have you gained during the course?

Evaluation results:

The course proved to be very successful in creating a strong networked group of artists in a short space of time. This was evidenced by the fact that the artists themselves set up a Facebook Group so that they can continue to support each other beyond the life of the course. They have also set up a Drop Box account so that they can share resources amongst each other.

The artists repeatedly told us how enriching it was to have the time with other artists to develop their practice. An increase in confidence and new skills they had gained were mentioned often in all of the feedback. All 13 artists said that they would recommend the course to others if it ran again.

The questionnaires completed on each day of the course asked the artists to select a number on a scale to determine the usefulness of the session:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
</tr>
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Feedback on the Course Leader, Rachel Liggitt

*How would you rate the course leader’s knowledge of the subject?*

All of the artists who completed a questionnaire on this day rated Rachel’s knowledge as ‘5’. (Two people were absent and two people didn’t complete their forms that day.)

Feedback on Guest Speaker, Paul Jarvis

*How would you rate the guest speaker’s knowledge of the subject?*

All of the artists who completed a questionnaire on this day rated Paul’s knowledge as ‘5’.

*How useful was the subject matter of Paul’s sessions?*

38% of the artists rated the subject matter a ‘4’ and 30% rated the subject matter a ‘5’. (Two people were absent and two people didn’t complete their forms that day.)

Feedback on Guest Speaker, Elsa Urmston

*How would you rate the guest speaker’s knowledge of the subject?*
85 % of the artists rated the presenter’s knowledge at ‘5’

How useful was the subject matter of Elsa’s sessions?

46 % of the artists rated the session ‘5’ and 38% rated the subject matter a ‘4’
(Two people were absent that day)

Comments from the artists on Elsa’s session included:

- Exceptionally informative and very relevant to dance and health
- Too much emphasis on ‘research’
- I enjoyed how in depth it was, even if our evaluation will be much simpler – it’s good to be reminded of how to research
- It was useful to learn about how our evaluation fits in the wider context, but was quite daunting!
- I found the content very interesting and helpful to me but was overwhelming to the project context (sic)
- It was fast but we have the slides to refer back to

General Feedback on the Course:

What has been the main benefit of attending the course to you as an artist?

The answers to this question can grouped into five main themes.

1. The opportunity to network with and learn from other artists. Comments included:
   - The interaction with other artists, the context and insight to practice
   - Creating a community of shared interested and knowledge with a wonderful group of artists and feeling a sense of greater autonomy in reflecting on my practice.
   - Meeting other artists and gaining valuable skills and knowledge through either them teaching or speaking.
   - Meeting other artists with different specialisms and sharing their experiences. The newly found support network of other freelance dance artists.

2. Increased confidence. Comments included:
   - Built confidence in my ability to deliver dance in health sessions, feel like I am equipped to do so now and have more self-confidence.
   - Personal confidence to facilitate sessions through learning more about the field.
   - I feel more confident.

3. Rachel Liggitt’s input as course leader. Comments included:
   - Rachel’s presence as experienced artist.
   - Rachel has been fantastic and I couldn’t have asked for more.
   - Being given the tools by Rachel to develop as a dance artists.

4. The opportunity for self-reflection and analysing one’s own skills. Comments included:
   - The chance to self reflect at the same time as expanding the possibilities of what I can do as an artist. I felt there was a real openness to different interests, skills, backgrounds and dance styles.
   - Realising I still have and can add and have added – I’ve not lost it. I want to develop my mentoring – life coach training.
5. Specific knowledge about working in health contexts. Comments included:
   - Learning about a health context. Networking.
   - Opening my eyes to a more creative led session and inclusive practise not being limited to one group/culture.

Are there any learning goals that you identified at the beginning of the course that have not been met?

Some artists responded that their learning goals had been met through the course. Example comment:
   - Not really I came with an open mind and have come away with a lot. I’m excited to put it into practice.

Some artists described the course as just the beginning of their learning in this field. Example comment:
   - I feel like it is a continuous thing and my learning will carry on over the next few months.

Some of the experienced artists felt that the course had covered old ground for them. This was a problem that the course leader anticipated in advance and because of this the course was planned carefully to accommodate artists with different experience levels. However, it was difficult to strike the right balance. In future it might be necessary to split the artists in sub-groups so that they can, when appropriate, learn at different paces. Comments included:
   - I wanted to develop further practical ideas and feel the most of the course I have done was not new but I would of liked the opportunities to do the development.
   - I don’t feel I have covered any new ground, just reaffirmed what I know which at times has been a struggle personally but also great to work with new people and reflect.

What hasn’t been covered in the course that you would like to have further information on?

It has proved difficult to group the responses to this question into themes. Comments included:
   - Teaching Strategies (It is hoped this will be covered through the placements)
   - Marketing skills and knowing about language or phrases organisations or agencies would like to hear. Selling yourself. (All of the artists have been offered a free place on a half day marketing course for dance artists in April 2013.)
   - Would have liked more time with the experienced artists to share more of the groups own experiences.
   - I would really like to see or find more approaches for sessions for older people
   - More practice time on planning a session and a project – a series of sessions and how they develop.
   - Team teaching and delivery – more physical creative ideas. Psychiatric /hospital location work.
   - It was touched on but I would like more information on setting up a project from scratch in term of logistics
   - Certain specific areas of health settings
   - Brainstorming themes or workshops for different client groups
   - Specific examples of groups in the community and how this differentiates from the academic/private sector in line with expectations of students
   - More time together

Postcard Evaluation – Reflecting on Days 1-3 of the Course:

What will you take with you?
The answers to this question can grouped into four main themes.

1. Increased confidence. Comments included:
   - Realise that I am confident in delivery of community dance and have knowledge to pass onto other people.
   - Being prepared to be unprepared!
   - Confidence, knowledge, curiosities and constant questioning of my practice and what I want to deliver.
   - Confidence in self to deliver.

2. Enjoyment in their practice. Comments included:
   - That I enjoy working with a co-teacher, even when it comes to planning!
   - Enthusiasm for my practice
   - Look at what you have enjoyed and try new things to find more you enjoy!
   - Value of peers – support, experience, advice, discussions.

3. Working with other artists. Comments included:
   - Peer discussion and feedback.
   - Meeting and hearing other artists. Their perspective on teaching in community, their experiences, people’s strengths and weaknesses. Hearing ideas, supportive feedback.
   - That there are different ways to approach things. Not all community dancers have to be the same style.

4. Additional Comments included:
   - Paul Jarvis – who's interested – selling your project and how it works etc.
   - Liz Lerman method x3.
   - Importance of contracts and agreements working with support workers
   - Bigger gap between Community Dance and Public/ Private than I thought including expectations of dances and providers.
   - Practical note that I need to look into access requirements in every session taught
   - Identification of what I want to achieve through teaching/ facilitating

What will you leave behind?

Comments included:
   - Always moving/entertaining / filling the space –use stillness.
   - The focus on teaching for me and my personal habits and strengths but instead for the students.
   - The ‘trying to reach everyone’ – the self judgment that can easily hinder what I am trying to do or say.
   - My openness.
   - Connection to others with direct.
   - Negative self criticism on delivering and ideas for lessons
   - Trying to work with all/everyone.
   - Guilt.
   - Thinking that I cannot do this (being a dancer, being a dance teacher.
   - Negative reactions to feedback.
   - Judgment of self.
   - Doubt of self competence.
‘Post it’ Evaluation gathered on the Final Day of the Course:

What have you gained?

The answers to this question can grouped into five main themes.

1. Working alongside other artists. Comments included:
   - A sense of community and a growing senses of belonging within the group
   - A group of supportive dance artists to draw upon in the future
   - A fantastic collective or like minded artists
   - Fed immensely by the group. Fuel for my practice
   - A lovely network of experienced artists who I can gain from and contribute to
   - A support network of practitioners interested in what I’m also interested in
   - Appreciation of others-backgrounds and skills, knowledge. New friendships.
   - Make great connections with the group, and potential friends for life!
   - To be in a space with others and feel connected
   - Meeting other artists
   - Working with like minded people
   - Networking
   - Chance to work with an amazing group.

2. Self confidence. Comments included:
   - Confidence
   - A renewed drive to go further in my dance practice
   - Confidence in my ability and knowledge-self belief
   - A chance to reflect
   - Taught me the importance of listening, responding and self reflection
   - An appreciation that there is a place for all of us to dance if we want
   - Confident in the knowledge I’m doing everything covered
   - Confidence in my own ability (x2 comments)
   - Encouragement to be different

3. Specific Dance and Health Knowledge. Comments included:
   - Contextualisation and knowledge of dance and health
   - Knowledge and confidence in facilitating dance for health and wellbeing

4. New skills and learning. Comments included:
   - Sharing of ideas, experience, knowledge
   - New creative ideas to implement and differentiate
   - The basic structure of my artists/facilitators tool kit
   - Knowledge and skills in applied situations
   - Recommendations and theory’s or names to research further for CPD use.
   - Community dance and professional dance are on the same page
   - Trust in an ‘unfolding’, ‘new’ and ambitious process/course

5. Future planning. Comments included:
   - Clarification of my goals and where I would like to be
   - Really sitting down and thinking about goals
   - To know my resources – want to get on with it – patience
   - Gaining the advice “prepare to be unprepared” (x2 comments)
Certainty and uncertainty and know why this ok.
To be directed to what I need to focus on for balance

Summary of Outcomes:

The feedback gathered from the participating dance artists suggests that the VitaliSE Step Change Course helped them to revisit, reflect, learn, refuel and gain self confidence in their practice.

**It has built my confidence in my ability to deliver dance in health sessions, feel like I am equipped to do so now and have more self-confidence.**

**Increased knowledge by self evaluation and being given the tools by Rachel to develop as a dance artists. I feel more confident.**

92% of the artists commented that the course has given them more confidence to carry out and evaluate health focused projects. The remaining 8% said that they were confident but would like further support during the delivery phase of the programme.

Since the course the artists have continued to support each other’s learning. For example:

1. An experienced artist is mentoring a less experienced artist on an unrelated schools project in Adur until July 2013.
2. Two of the artists are now working together within a professional dance company on delivering community projects and professional dance performances.
3. A less experienced artist in now working as a performer within another artists’ professional company
Appendix 2 Project Evaluation Documents

Appendix 2.1 Judith Adams Centre for Older Adults with Dementia: Jo Cone and Kat Davis

1. Context of project:

**Venue:** Judith Adams Centre for older adults with dementia. Project was hosted in lounge.

**Length and time of session:** Approx 1hr, weekly for 13 weeks on a Thursday morning 10.45 start. 10th Jan - 4th April 2013 (including celebratory event)

**Population:** Participants ranged from 65-90 yrs old. We also had 3 participants visiting from Wrenford Centre, a day centre for adults with learning disabilities.

2. Aims:

Our initial aim was to support participants’ mobility. This was decided within the planning meeting prior to meeting the group. However after the first 2 sessions with the group it was decided by us and in discussion with our member of support staff that our aim would change to:

‘To support social interaction and therefore enable individuals to feel a sense of relatedness to others in the group'

We adopt the definition of Social Interaction as: ‘*The process by which people act and react in relation to others*’ (E. Palispis, 2007)

We adopt the definition of Relatedness as: ‘*The need to feel belongingness and connectedness with others*’ (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 73).

We chose this aim as it is believed that relatedness is the need to feel connected to others, to feel a sense of belonging, and to feel like you belong to a larger community. Thus it is the opposite of loneliness and isolation, which is something far too often experienced by the elderly and by those suffering from dementia.

See literature review for supporting evidence of why this aim has been chosen.

In our opinion and from previous experience working with similar groups we agreed that the following behaviours would be evidence of social interaction/relatedness:

- Positive body language
- Physical interaction between individuals within the group and increase in physical consented contact
- Eye contact
- Sharing of empathy
- Open posture towards individuals within the group or towards group as whole
- Ask to work/dance with someone in the group
- Verbal interaction and discussion between individuals and within the group
- Positive encouragement/support to fellow participants
- Physical expressions of joy and happiness
- Interest in the instruction within moment of activity or throughout sessions
- Finding out new things about each other and their experiences
- Interest towards future sessions
3. Objectives:

Each session had a theme with an umbrella theme of reminiscence. Sessions would be guided by the participants and would encourage discussion to inform movement choices.

4. Literature review:

Local: Taken from minutes of the Health and Well Being Board, West Sussex - Mrs Rogers (Director of Adult Services) reported her business plan highlighting work to determine an holistic solution to ensuring patients (older adults with and without dementia) are to move from acute settings in hospital to care settings into the community and to address social isolation. The following account expresses the concern of the daughter carer about her father (from alzheimers.org.uk) to reiterate the issues surrounding social isolation amongst people suffering with dementia: "there is the social aspect of his life...he does not have the confidence or ability to go out and socialise...this causes a low morale and even depression."

National: The following statement (Ofby, 2013) evidences why community activity like we have provided is so needed. Limitations in daily activities together with other changes in circumstances such as loss of partner or losing touch with friends as age increases are likely to contribute to the increase in reported feelings of loneliness in the oldest age groups. (http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_304939.pdf)

5. Rationale:

Artist approach: a number of factors affected our artistic approach
On meeting the group and their specific needs, we realised that a movement based approach would not be appropriate. Individuals had different mobility needs and although participants spent time together, our support staff highlighted that they don’t often talk about their memories, stories and past experiences, and that there was a lot she did not know about them. Certain props were used to support eye contact, physical connection and working together, and sense of whole. These included parachute, scarfs and large elastics. A combination of the props and need for rest in the session was influenced by one participant with a particular physical disability of the hands. With lack of grip and also not wanting this highlighted, it was important to have a balance of prop and non-prop based movement. Visual aids, props and music were used to stimulate reminiscence and following session themes were often inspired by these responses.

Content: Each week we started with a welcome gesture which allowed names to be recalled and all to be welcomed. We moved onto warming up the body using circle, up down, or thematic influenced movements. We used self massage as well as offering gentle massage to participants. We used supported movement between artist or staff and participants (supporting the limb underneath and responding to direction of movement). We included gentle stretches including rotation, single limb reaches, seated cat stretches and sway to encourage engagement of the torso. This was important as we were chair based. We moved onto creating movement inspired by either prop, visual stimulus such as postcards, photos or scrap books. We also had moments of resting of the body when we would encourage reminiscence through group discussion, one to one or when we performed for the participants. This was then used to carry on the creation of movement. This was shared as whole or split groups. We ended with cool down of gentle movement, stretches and relaxation. The group were then asked for their thoughts on the session and this was recorded and written on labels to be displayed on a potted tree in room. These have been collated in the evidence section of this report. Some weeks we ended with refreshments.
6. Evidence:

The project has supported participants to socially interact and this is evidenced by the following examples:

**Artist Observations**

**Case Study 1:** participant A started the session later into the project showing high levels of anxiety (wringing of wrists, rocking, tearful). Over the weeks he showed little or no anxiety in sessions and this resulted in him dancing in contact with staff and other participants. One particular session it was witnessed by our support staff that as soon as the session started A's anxiety reduced and he said 'This is lovely.' Additionally in the penultimate session a fellow participant held A's hand and helped him to move, in a supportive and caring way. Due to A's anxiety he is often not interactive with others but his reduction of anxious behaviour allowed someone else to freely connect with him, evidencing a sense of relatedness with the other participant also. This was further evidenced when another participant asked to take up hold and have a dance with him. One week he also offered ideas when we asked what did he work as/enjoy doing when he was younger. He answered "chasing the girls" resulting in a running movement for the group to copy.

We also found that as well as the use of the music having an impact on participant A, so also did the use of language. Participant A responded positively and consistently when we asked the specific phrase 'would you like to dance' and dancing with him in partner or with connecting props like the elastic really focused him. These particular activities in the session reduced his anxiety and this was what allowed him to socially interact and dance holding hands with other participants, staff and ourselves. The anxiety and how he expresses this is his main barrier for relating with people.

**Case Study 2:** person B showed an increased level of engagement in the session after sharing a story about her skipping. This also informed the content of the following session as we used scarfs to reinact some of her movements. This carried on throughout the project allowing participant B and another participant to share stories of being at a cinema. This was something they did not know before of each other. This evidences being connected to another in the moment. This conversation also inspired a following session using torches as a prop like the 'usherette'.

**Artist Reflection**

24/1/13
- One participant was trying to assist a fellow participant who has difficulty in using their hands/arms, they were making verbal suggestions that they felt might help.
- Another participant expressed how nice it was to share their experiences with the group, the rest of the group including the staff did not seem aware until now of the participants’ past as a member of a skipping group and her past performance experiences including at the Albert Hall

31/1/13
- One participant who on numerous occasions before and after sessions expresses a worry that they are lost, did not once express this concern whilst engaged in the sessions.
- 2 participants this week stood up voluntarily to demonstrate a move to the rest of the group

7/2/13
- A participant commented on how they 'enjoyed talking'

14/2/13
- Participants seemed to really enjoy discussing with each other and the group their past job roles and hobbies, and a lot was learnt about individuals that was not known before; by us, fellow participants and the staff at the centre
7/3/13
• Participant noted a Case study 1 initiated movement today when dancing with Jo Cone,
• Another participant stood up, danced and sang in the middle of the space

14/3/13
• One participant was assisting another to get both feet flat on the floor today, this was very supportive and helpful

21/3/13
• Two participants decided they would like to ballroom dance with each other in the space today, they previously had not made physical contact in the sessions.

**Participant Feedback**
After each session we would ask the staff and participants to write down how they felt about the session: Some of the responses received were:
• ‘Lively and alive and using my energy’
• ‘Happy’
• ‘supercalafragalistickexpealadoshes!’
• ‘Enjoyable’
• ‘It made me feel hungry!’
• ‘It’s nice to remember’
• ‘Fine - Everyone was playing’
• ‘Everyone happy- lovely feeling when everyone is smiling’
• ‘beautiful-nice to be here’
• ‘I really enjoy it in a group- but can’t move my arms much’
• ‘Being part of a group is very good’

**Support Worker Feedback**
During the sessions I have noticed that Andy is much less anxious, he is not tearful and he is engaged the whole session, laughing and joining in. He usually paces the floor but he has been settled and interested, enjoying the movement and music. He has responded well to instructions such as ‘tap your feet’ and he gets up and has a dance when encouraged. He finished one session with the words ‘it was great ’In one session Andy was anxious and tearful before the session, but as soon as it started he said ‘this is lovely’ and proceeded to join in with the session. Last week Gladys held Andy’s hand and helped him with a move which was a lovely moment.
Joseph has been relaxed and engaged for the whole hour in every session, he has joined in on the clapping game, and the parachute although he is not so keen on using other props. Jo and Cat recognised this fact, and so brought Joseph in at the end of the interactive sessions which he has responded to well. These sessions have kept Joseph engaged and happy. He often paces the floor and is very unsettled, this hasn’t happened once in these sessions.
Cecelia’s arm movement has increased as she does the exercises; she is chatty and happy in the sessions. She is always pleased when she realises it is Thursday and time for the music and movement session.
Gladys joins in fully and is very aware and engaged. She thoroughly enjoyed the sessions.
Brenda loves the sessions; she is moving well during them and is chatty about her childhood. I have got to know Brenda more in these sessions, she has enjoyed the reminiscence as well as the movement.
Margaret is less anxious (‘I’m lost’) and is fully engaged and happy. She has made us laugh on a few occasions with her comments. She said at the end of one session ‘what a lovely feeling with everyone smiling’.
Joyce loves the sessions and has fun with Cecelia. She has unfortunately broken her hip so will not be able to attend the last few, but she has had a lot of fun.
All of the customers responded well to the reminiscence sessions which included making up movements to their story.
The music chosen for the the activity was excellent – upbeat, fun and quirky and all participants loved it.
The women from the Wrenford Centre have really embraced these sessions and look forward to them. One of the girls – Jan, is writing a report on how much she has enjoyed them, to give to Jo and Cat.
Jo and Cat interact brilliantly with the group and lead the sessions well. We have even had some mini ‘shows’ with dances and interactive movements for ‘singing in the rain’ and ‘summer holiday’ – which we all loved.
All in all these were fabulous sessions and we will miss them, and the girls.

7. Variables:

- We were not aware of all other activities that participants were involved with at the day centre or outside the centre/home
- Dementia itself can impact upon and change participants day to day feelings and mood
- We did not always have all participants each week due to fall/illness and those coming to Judith Adams from different centres (Wrenford Centre).
- There were different support staff for last few weeks, as our main contact was on leave
- The age of participants and nature of the group meant that participants could be experiencing a degree of pain/unease one day, and feel better the next session which could affect the social outcome of the sessions
- The space itself became a variable as one week we were asked to lead the session in a larger hall, which had other people wandering in and out - this change impacted upon participants and distracted focus

8. Other outcomes:

The music played a big part in keeping participants who had anxiety issues calm and relaxed. This was particularly evident in case study 1.

The sessions as a whole also had an effect on reducing the anxiety expressed by another participant who when having refreshments before or after the sessions would consistently say ‘I am lost, can you help me, I don’t know where I am’ However we noticed that when this participant was engaged in the sessions they did not express their feelings or worries about being lost but seemed relaxed, enjoyed participating, particularly enjoyed working in contact with a member of staff/dance artist and often offered ideas to the group.

9. Evaluation:

To implement a similar project we recommend that pre-project training could support the ongoing need that some participants required. For full support to be given funding bids could also contain payment for extra support staff as this can not always be provided by the centre for an activity that does need higher levels of support to provide physical safety. Future projects could also contain an element of recording/filming of reminiscence as this could provide further dialogue and stimulus outside of the sessions and therefore positively affect relationships further between staff and older people with dementia of carers and their loved ones. It would also act as further documentation for the project evaluation.

It was also felt that to further support the work within other centres, or other groups that the sharing of the work and the benefits needs to be of high priority. In this project Jo witnessed a moment of overhearing the 'annoyance' of 'what are they doing down there' and that the use of the
lounge impacted on other members of staff being isolated from the project. This came out of a sense of the unknown, and staff not being involved with full planning, or not having the opportunity to witness the "wonderful sessions" (expression from the support staff attending). When a particular member of staff who had expressed some negative feeling attended a session her enthusiasm and approach to the artists changed to be very positive. It would be recommended that staff could be better informed of what is happening or a future project to be filmed to create a sample session film which could be shown to staff, or training or taster sessions to be available for staff. This could also be available for carers if possible to show them the benefits of the work.

10. Implications

A member of support staff commented that our person-centred, reminiscence and movement approach also meant that she learnt so much about the participants that she did not know beforehand. The Alzheimers Society recognises that 'social isolation' is also a big issue for carers of those with dementia. ‘Currently 600,000 people are providing unpaid care many of these are spouses or partners in later life who face health and social care challenges themselves.’ Individuals caring for people with dementia can experience high levels of stress, depression, social isolation and physical health problems." It is this that leads us to consider future dance projects to include carers to support their own wellbeing. Respite is so important for carers and it maybe that dance could also provide some gentle exercise, sharing or stories, relaxation and social inclusion for carers at support groups.

The use of dance could support the ongoing skills, strength and ability to do daily tasks for those suffering with dementia - this could be further researched with a dance project that focuses on using props and stimulus of daily tasks, and builds in reminiscence linked to this, and also working alongside occupational health and physiotherapists to support the specifics of functionality.

On the final note; Our main member of support staff from Judith Adams who worked closely with us on this project mentioned that she would like further training to add to her existing circle dance training. Furthermore an increase in funding needs to be found for this to be ongoing, resourced, refreshed and sustained.
Appendix 2.2  Appleby House led by Maxine Phillips and Vicky Frayard

VitaliSE Step Change - Final Report for Appleby House, Surrey

1. Context: Over a 10 week period, two groups of 10 took part in a 30 minute seated dance and exercise class at Appleby House; a Care UK residential home and day centre for older people with Dementia and other associated conditions such Parkinson's. The participants ranged from 62 – 92 years old and though not all came regularly, there was a core group of 10-12 people who came to the majority of sessions. It is this group whom we will discuss in this report.

2. Aims: To improve participants’ general wellbeing and improve their confidence with relation to movement and a reduction in falls. Can teaching seated dance and exercise to a group of patients with dementia aid an increase in stability by improving participants’ confidence with movement?

3. The sessions: Each session started with saying names in a circle, this was a way to introduce the dance artists and ease into the session. Then two short warm up songs proceeded, consisting of basic coordination movements and stretches. After this the class included an exercise for the legs and feet as well as an exercise for the arms, shoulders and torso. Both of these were 4 minutes long. After these set structure exercises we would do a freestyle dance, where participants were invited to dance with the teachers standing, or join in from their chairs. The session finished off with a fun strengthening exercise where participants stretched elastic to music. The sessions followed the same structure each week and after the initial few weeks the exercises stayed the same.

4. Findings: Over the course of the project the participants progressed from not joining in, falling asleep or being disengaged during the session, to joining in with all or the majority of the exercises. The majority of participants improved their coordination, stamina, range of movement and began to remember the movements from week to week. Although this memory recall was not to be the focus of the project it has proven to be one of the main positive outcomes of the classes. This has an enhanced bearing as all of the participants suffer with Dementia and during the session they would not only rely on their muscle memory to remember the movement in class, but they started to remember the dance artists coming in each week.

The participants enjoyed the class and would tell the artists how much they loved dancing to the music, therefore taking part in such a session was not only a great work out physically and mentally but it helps to give participants a sense of achievement which will help to improve their confidence. Other class members started off by saying that the sessions would be ‘ghastly’ but by the end of the project they came regularly and joined in more and more each week.

Comments noted throughout the course:

• “It's great to get my joints moving” (Pamela, week 2)
• “Thank you, I enjoyed that” (Cassie, week 5)
• “I do love coming here” (Daphne, week 7)
• “I love coming [to the sessions] every week” (Sylvia, week 7)

Feedback from the senior carer at Appleby House suggested that the participants have ‘improved and become more iterative as the weeks have gone by.’

Many participants would recall memories of themselves, or their family members, dancing from earlier periods of their lives. One participant told us about the dance competitions she used to compete in and another told us her mother used to be a glamorous flapper girl in the 1920's. This shows that the dance and music within our session has had a strong connection to reminiscence which could be a powerful tool within the realm of dementia.
A further indication of improved confidence was during our upper body exercise. We asked the group to tilt from side to side with arms stretched. During this exercise we used the three planes of movement so we could monitor over the project how the range was improved. As the weeks progressed the group would take greater risks in how far they would stretch over to the side. This was not only increasing their range of movement in the frontal and transverse plane and using their core stability, but shows a great achievement in their increased confidence with movement.

Case study 1: Barbara
Barbara has attended the sessions from the start but was arguably our most reluctant participant. She would arrive confused and be very vocal about the fact that she did not want to be in the session as it was 'ghastly' and 'a waste of time.' Regardless of this, she would stay for the duration of the class. For the first three weeks Barbara watched the class, by week four she would tap the arm of her chair in time to the music. In weeks 5 and 6, she would arrive smiling and joined in by tapping her feet and following the lower body exercise led by the artists. This involved moving their feet side to side and front to back, which Barbara copied well. Her ability to follow the dance artists improved considerably from week 7 onwards. By this point in the project, one of the carers said that she had spoken about 'looking forward to the dance sessions' and that we should interpret this in a very positive way as Barbara is known for being difficult to engage in social activities.

Case study 2: Ken
Ken attended the sessions from the start and he was enthusiastic and cheery. Between weeks one and four he required constant prompting from either the carers or dance artists to sustain his concentration and follow the exercises. From week 5 onwards Ken required less prompting from the dance artists to join in and less assistance from the carers with the movements. He began to concentrate for longer periods and engage with the group as a whole. From week 6 onwards Ken would join in with the freestyle dance, this showed a progression in his confidence as he would stand without his walking aid and dance with a carer. Similarly, Ken used to arrive to the session with a carer however, as the project progressed he would arrive on his own confidently walking with his frame. Ken’s range of movement improved with the course of the project, this was especially noticeable in his upper body. Examples of this would be the ability to roll his shoulders forward and back and reaching up with fully extended arms and reaching to the floor by utilising his torso.

5. Conclusion: Although we did not have the same participants each week our core group of participants improved immensely in confidence, range of movement, ability to copy and remember movements. More participants joined in the freestyle dance as the project developed, this would indicate increased stability and confidence with balance whilst standing. In relation to the original aims we have not gathered enough evidence to predict the indications of our dance sessions on the number of falls however, this was due to the delicate nature of the group. What has been documented are the significant improvements in the physical health and fitness of the group as well as implications on improving general wellbeing by increasing their confidence. This has been clearly supported by comments from the participants, the carers and the dance artists.
Appendix 2.3  Pinehurst Care Home led by Claire Tyler and Kat Davis

1. Context
1hr sessions per week on Tuesday mornings 11am-12midday at a Residential Care Home in the communal area. Ranging from 10-20 participants

2. Aims & Objectives from a Health View
Increasing mobility: ‘The ability to move or be moved freely and easily.’
Developing co-ordination: ‘The organization of the different elements of a complex body or activity so as to enable them to work together effectively.’

3. Literature Review
English National Ballet and scientists from Roehampton University, headed by Dr Sara Houston, collaborated on Dance for Parkinson’s; a term worth of ballet classes for 40 people diagnosed with the disease to see whether there are beneficial effects relating to ballet in people with Parkinson’s.

Over the course of 12 weeks Parkinson suffers took part in dance classes with the ENB, the project documented how dance could have a positive impact on participants mobility, strength and general physical well being.

"The ballet did make me urgently want to move more, and move better and hinted at how this might be possible." – Participant

BUPA’s report into ‘The health and well-being benefits of dance for older people’ also identifies a number of issues around exercise for older people and highlights the positive physical and emotional benefits dance can have upon older participants
The report states its executive summary and key finding that ‘Dance has physical health benefits including improvements in balance, strength and gait, which help reduce the risk of falls, a significant health hazard in later life. Dance has been shown to be beneficial in the direct treatment of a number of conditions including arthritis, Parkinson’s disease, dementia and depression.’
(http://www.bupa.co.uk/jahia/webdav/site/bupacouk/shared/Documents/PDFs/care-homes/general/shall-we-dance-report.pdf)

4. Artistic Approach & Rationale
Using Ballet & Contemporary exercises including props to encourage the use of repetitive exercises in order to see if the participants progressed in line with the aims and objectives of the project.

5. Relevance
Links directly to Domain 2:2.13 & Domain 4:4.16 of the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

6. Content
Comparison & development
Lesson Plan 1
Warm up worked through the body in a generic sense
Basic ballet moves testing the ability of participants
Cool down similar to the warm up
Lesson plan 12
5 set warm up exercises
Ballet exercises including arms, legs and headlines
The use of scarfs to encourage the dynamics required for ballet
The use of stretchy bands to help assist the cool down and develop muscles where required around injury
Using a soft ball to assist the recognition of a cool down
7. Evidence

**Case Study 1 (Ch)** Stiff in the upper body specifically neck & shoulders but otherwise strong and independently mobile.

**Practitioners Observations:** Ch’s posture was slumped into his chair relying on the back however when asked or prompted he can occasionally sit forward on his chair to extend his spine. In the first session he struggled to open arms out to 2nd position and hold them up in 5th position, however, this improved with time including the dynamic quality behind each movement and required less rest for his arms. There was obvious restricted movement in his wrists, but he was able to move his fingers freely, this developed throughout the 12 weeks into large circles with the wrists. He was able to do restricted springs from foot to foot, but managed to increase the size of his springs within the 12 weeks. This linked to his ability to lift his leg to 45degrees including changements. It took him up to 15mins to warm up into the session.

**Host’s Observations:** Ch kept up with all of the moves, which he does not normally do in my exercises now. Ch was very stiff in the second session and joined in where he could, he probably only did about 50% of the exercises, he appeared to be struggling, especially with his right shoulder. He gets tired very quickly, but he enjoyed the music and watching the session. In session three Ch had a good try, but couldn’t get his arms up above his head for a while, although this did gradually improve. He gave up on the leg exercises, but legs seemed better than arms, a slight improvement on last week. He is very stiff and in some pain, but he doesn’t like to be defeated and he is very competitive, especially with R. It was evident in session four that his co-ordination and confidence are slowly improving. He tried hard, but with very slow and small movements. He improved on the back roll down but wouldn’t do the twist, he also took a while to put one leg above another. In week five Ch really struggled with his hands and co-ordination, as he couldn’t rotate his wrists. During the session in week 9 Ch doesn’t put his arms up very high during the exercises, but he can with the ball above his head. In the last session Ch said that he enjoyed the sessions, but found them a bit long. Ch’s health is very up and down, he has good days and bad days, which were reflected in the sessions. He tried hard and enjoyed the sessions, but said he found them a bit long.

**Case Study 2 Ma;** Nearly blind, severe osteoarthritis, in chair with legs elevated & covered with blanket at all times.

**Practitioners Observations:** Inconsistent participation, only joined in at the end of the session with the ball for the first 4 sessions. When the family member was present she told us that she wouldn’t be able to join in, but she did join in with the ball and some foot/leg work. Half way into the project she joined in with the 3rd arabesque arm exercises and using the scarf in one hand, this was a huge development for Ma. Additionally she developed her mobility from small circles of the ankles to being able to lift both legs off the foot rest of her chair. Communication was very restricted in the first half of the project, however she was very chatty by the end of project event, thus for this participant it was important for her to grow in confidence as it meant that she then joined in more fully with the sessions which in turn led her to show an improvement in her mobility and strength. The more Ma grew in confidence and conversed more with us as practitioners the more she physically participated in the sessions.

**Host’s Observations:** Mab visibly loved the music, but wouldn’t join in with the exercises in the first weeks. She used the squeeze ball at the end and managed to lift her arms up quite high. Mab only joined in at the end with the hand and squeeze balls which she is familiar with demonstrating the strength in her arms and especially her legs. Mab looked intrigued and watched most of it, but wouldn’t join in and fell asleep for a while. She enjoys the music. Mab developed throughout the sessions getting involved in more and more, in particular some leg and foot circles, heel lifts and
stretches. Mab enjoyed waving a scarf around and moves her feet around to the music. Mab picked the squeeze ball up with her legs on her own in the last session, which proves how strong her legs are.

**R;** Very fit & loves exercise. 100% attendance

*Practitioners Observations:* R did all of the moves in the first session and clearly enjoyed himself. In the second session R was very enthusiastic and matched all of the moves. His co-ordination and flexibility are improving along with his stamina. In the third session it was obvious that R is very capable and enthusiastic. During the fifth session it was obvious that R can point his toes, he is the only one apart from C.

There was a key moment in the project for R where in week 8 he started to take his slippers off so that he could fully point and flex his feet, this is supported by comments from the host stating ‘His feet seem more flexible now’ (week 9)

During the ninth session R's feet seem more flexible as he is able to use them more without his slippers on. R took advantage of the extension exercises available to twist with the ball rather than just lift it. In the tenth session, he joined in with all exercises, he didn't rest at all.

In week 11 said that he loved to dance, he is extremely agile and these sessions have helped him to be more flexible. During the last session R said that he really enjoyed the sessions and noticed that the stiffness in his calves had improved after each session.

**Host’s Observations;** R was very capable and enthusiastic. He became more flexible and could point his toes and his legs seemed to become stronger. R really enjoyed the sessions, which surprised him. He noticed that the stiffness in his calves improved after each session, which is a major plus for him.

**C;** Very fit, Ex-dancer, almost completely deaf, Age 97

*Practitioners Observations:* There was clear isolation in joints and clarity of movements in balletic positions, although she did initially struggle with the seated jumps when introduced, but she built up strength as the weeks increased. She offered to help at other projects for us and took advantage of the arm exercise which was offered to be standing for an extension. Although she was the fittest of all participants at the beginning of the project she definitely improved her confidence evidenced through using her head and eye lines to enhance the balletic movements.

*Hosts Observations:* C obviously loves ballet and matched the demonstrated moves perfectly with the tutors. She positively flourished, like a flower blossoming. In week two C helped both ladies on either side of her, Alice & Joan. She was very proficient and it gave her a purpose. I think she is becoming even more confident. In the third session C was synchronised with Claire (tutor), but also did a bit of her own thing. She is becoming even more confident and flourishing. In the fourth week C did extremely well as usual, but wouldn’t do the twist this week. During session nine C is the only one that will stand up for some of the exercises now, as she has been invited to do so and is very capable of it. In the penultimate session C was matching Claire again and seems even more graceful and eloquent. C explained in the last session that she loved the sessions and said she had looser limbs and there were improvements all around. She said she had relief from stiffness, especially her bottom. She said it was very enjoyable and beneficial and she would definitely recommend it.

**General Participants’ Notes**

General feedback about the sessions included participants commenting on their increased flexibility. The host noticed that initially some participants were reluctant and slow to join in, but after a couple of sessions they became more likely to follow. Some of the participants can want to be fast with everything and impatient due to their experience with Zumba, but the music seems to
have calmed them down. Some participants were not enthusiastic about exercise at all, but they loved the music, which kept them engaged and in turn encouraged them to participate in the slow methodical moves, which they found easier to follow than faster moves. The fluidity in the movements helped with stiffness from sitting in a chair too long, and therefore the host thought that this aided their flexibility. This could have been helped by the seated sit ups that were done near the end of the six weeks to encourage the dancers to sit forward in their chair. The twist and the roll down exercises are excellent for Parkinson’s and this helped those participants in particular. They all worked hard throughout the sessions, and found that they ached afterwards, which put some of them off, and some commented on the fact that they preferred shorter sessions. Certain participants clearly enjoyed working together as they were able to encourage each other, and generally make them happy, one participant said that it is the highlight of her day. One participant seems to have 10 minute bursts of energy and then stops, this seemed quite common. Alternatively participants enjoyed receiving a goal from the host, for example they had a day out planned so they knew they needed to keep their mobility up.

8. Evaluation

There was evidence of increased mobility and through this developed stamina, participants grew more confident with the exercises by midway through the project and through this developed their co-ordination through familiarity of the movements. All of the residents thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and the most popular comment was that there had been an improvement in stiffness. Mau who had a fall is using some of the exercises and stretchy bands that we introduced on a weekly basis and intends to keep this going after the project. This is also something that could be implemented elsewhere as and when the hosts feel it would be beneficial. Participants all became far more confident with the moves and their flexibility, i.e. R taking his shoes off so that he had more mobility in his toes and Mar with her feet and legs. Generally the regular attendees all had more confidence in their abilities.

There also seems to have been a link between confidence and the participants’ involvement and achievement within the sessions. As the participants got to know us as practitioners more they became more at ease with the sessions and the material being delivered. They then began to try new movements that they had perhaps felt before that they could not do; such as trying the more challenging version of the exercise offered. Therefore perhaps confidence was partly holding them back at first and as they became more confident in their own abilities they found that they were perhaps more mobile, flexible and stronger than they first perceived.

9. Variables & Limitations

Other classes running although not regular or specific including Zumba Gold and Marie’s own exercise class. Mau had a fall in the 7th week. Group varied in size and who was there. Participants ranged in tiredness depending what they were doing or had already done that day or week.
Appendix 6.3  The Fordway Centre led by Nikki Watson and Hayley Ovens

**Dance Artists:** Nikki Watson and Hayley Ovens

**Setting:** The Fordway Centre, Surrey – Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Key stages 1 and 2
The Fordway Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit for pupils aged from 4-11, (Foundation Stage, KS1 and KS2), who are presenting with BESD, (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties). Pupils follow the National Curriculum and a specific behaviour management programme, with the view to be integrated back into a mainstream school or take up a place at an appropriate special school.

**Delivery:** 3 x 30 min sessions, 2 classes KS1, 1 class KS2

1a) **Aims:**
- To maintain a focus on engagement as an aspect of social wellbeing within children in a PRU.
- To find out how dance might encourage positive social functioning and positive behaviour within children that normally have difficulties in these areas.

1b) **Objectives:**
To provide dance sessions that encourage, or help to improve engagement, responsiveness and concentration in participants towards dance and physical activity.
To investigate whether the skills developed in dance activities might support children to continue their engagement and concentration in other areas.
To encourage positive social functioning and positive behaviours within dance sessions, by providing a positive social environment for teamwork and creativity.

2) **Definition of Terms:**
In this section, definitions of the key terms for this project are given. They have been compiled by a focus group of dance artists working on the Vitalise Step Change project, and relate specifically to community dance contexts. Definition of terms can be found in the main body document, and for the purpose of this evaluation we are referring to the following:
- Engagement in dance;
- Social Wellbeing inc. Positive Social Functioning;
- Responsiveness

3) **Literature Review and Rationale**
Youth Dance England (2010) discusses the benefits of dance within PE programmes in schools in that; “it develops team working, creative and reflective thinking skills; it provides a means of expressing identity and of understanding other identities.” (YDE, 2010, p8). The case studies at Fordway PRU show increased levels of team working and creative skills, which support these claims. We will develop this argument further within the evidence section of the report. Dance is an appropriate activity for children within a PRU that are presenting with BESD, as it provides a non-competitive and unintimidating form of physical activity and outlet for creativity.
Bond & Stinson (2007) attempted to provide possible definitions for the words engagement and disengagement. They include fear, lack of confidence, and dislike of hard or easy work, with disengagement in dance. On the contrary, Bond & Stinson (2007) also stated that many students find engagement with hard or easy work. They stated that engagement in dance occurs when students have: an emotional or personal connection with dance, when students feel challenged to put forth effort, and a sense of autonomy.
Stinson (1997) alluded to engagement being about the amount of ‘fun’ a student has with the particular subject. She also pointed out that engagement can be determined by the following factors being present: focus and concentration, self-gratification through dance, freedom, and transcendence. Burkhardt and Rhodes (2012) stated that:

*Research Findings showed a statistically significant increase in self esteem pre to post indicating that by participating in the dance classes the young people’s general sense of*
Participants generally demonstrated a very positive attitude towards dance with the majority choosing words such as ‘Fun’, ‘Interesting’, and ‘Energetic’, to describe how they perceived the dance classes (p.12)

Improving engagement was decided as an appropriate focus for the children at Fordway, in discussion with the headteacher, Sue Simpson. Within this report, we (the artists) refer to ‘social wellbeing’. Social wellbeing, in particular, is an appropriate focus for children in a PRU presenting with BESD. Although the reasons vary for each child being at Fordway PRU, they have difficulty functioning within mainstream schools. Children presenting BESD often have an inability to display appropriate behaviour and communicate positively with others. There are many knock-on effects of this, including decrease in confidence and self-worth (as evidenced in discussion with staff at Fordway, 2013). The aim of this project is to improve overall social wellbeing by encouraging positive social interaction within a safe environment, allowing participants to develop their social skills.

4) Artistic Approach
Our artistic approach came from our aim of creating engaging dance sessions for the participants. Our approach was also person-centred, drawing on the needs of the participants. The decisions made are supported by literature on the subject, as discussed above.

Ownership linking to engagement:
Throughout this project, we have felt it appropriate to deliver each class on the basis of what the children talked about during our “coming together session” (a short period at the beginning of class where we gather them all together as a group); often having to capture a creative task from what their interest that morning seemed to be. Having a personal connection to the subject seemed to give the children more engagement with the dance activity. This is also supported by the literature of Bond and Stinson (2007), as discussed above. Evidence for a link between personal attachment to the content/themes and engagement in the activity is provided in the case studies later in the document.

Creative Exploration/Improvisation:
Sessions for the KS1 pupils normally began with creative improvisation, led by the artists. As discussed above the impetus for this often came from the interests of the children. We would then lead the class in exploring different ways to move using that particular theme. For example, one participant showed a particular interest in transport and vehicles. We used this to explore journeys, different modes of transport and their speed, shape, etc. Other creative tasks came from the energy or behaviour being displayed by the children. If the children showed high or low energy, we often went with this, giving creative imagery for their movements, and therefore focusing their energy into the session and group. For example, one child was showing resistance at the beginning of the session being curled up in a ball. We encouraged the other children to curl up too, as did we. We then asked, “What do we look like?” another child said “seeds!” We then explored growing from a seed, bringing the resistant child into the activity and giving them a sense of ownership of the activity.

Structured/Teacher-led Sessions:
For KS2 children, we began sessions by leading more structured sessions. We made this choice as the participants displayed a self-conscious attitude and were much more self-aware than the younger children. Structured sessions meant that they were all working towards a shared goal and minimised judgment between peers. As the children become more comfortable in a dance class environment and developed their skills, they were able to complete more independent tasks and improvise together.
Repetition:
We ensured that any movement created during the session was repeated to a high standard, to reinforce the importance of engagement in the dance activity and allow the participants to feel a sense of achievement in mastering skills. The students portrayed ownership over repeated movements. Beetlestone (1998) said that ownership is another part of the creative process and is cause for motivation in children. We believe that having ownership over work produced and motivation to participate, both increase engagement in the dance activity. This belief comes from observations made throughout the project (as detailed in the evidence section of the report) and literature reviewed.

Personal Reflection:
Throughout the project, we encouraged the children to think about their thoughts and feelings about the dance activities and express them verbally. Both positive and negative thoughts were, of course, seen as valid, but we also encouraged the students to think about why they felt that way. At the end of the project, we asked them to think about their own feelings and experiences of the project, and of performing and sharing their work.

5) Content
Sessions generally took the following basic structure. The specific content was constantly adapted according to many different factors, including special needs of participants, age and ability of the participants and the overall ‘energy’ of the session.

• Check-in – quick discussion in a seated circle, checking in to find general feeling of the group and ask about the day/week.
• Warm-up – normally included group activities that subtly introduced different components of dance such as space, dynamics with contact, with constant support from artists. By the end of the project, two groups were able to complete a more challenging aerobic dance warm-up.
• Creative exploration and/or creating routines – these activities were initially artist-led, by feeding in creative ideas and providing consistent support and encouragement. Throughout the project participants started to feed in their own creative ideas more regularly and showed independence in exploring movement.
• Repetition
• Cool-down – creative imagery (fed in from artists and participants), stretches with deep breathing, and relaxation used.

Although we worked towards a sharing in the penultimate session, this did not affect the content or progression of the sessions, as it was set up as a chance for parents to witness the normal dance session.

6) Evidence for Aims and Objectives:
Positive social functioning and behaviour and improving responsiveness and concentration towards dance/physical activity:

We sought to compare behaviour within the children before and after dance activity, but as the head teacher also noted (interview March, 2013) that in such a short-term project, and with many other factors influencing their behaviour, it is difficult to comment on comparisons before or after dance activity. So we chose to comment on their behaviour and social function during the dance activity, there are positive notes to be made which is backed up by class teacher observations.

Having had discussions with the Head and other teachers at the school, we were led to believe the children would “act up” in the class and “wouldn’t want to be involved in the dance classes” (initial meeting, 2012). In order to address this, in the first session, we allowed the children in the classes to set their own ‘dance code of conduct’. This immediately set up a situation in which we were engaging with the children, setting boundaries and giving them ownership over the dance classes. This developed a working relationship and something we were able to refer back to over the weeks,
with the importance being on the fact that they had created the rules. This also gave us means by
which to positively reinforce the school's behaviour management sticker system.

In week 8 one child in KS2 class had not been given his medication in the morning and was very
disruptive. We encouraged the other two children to focus extremely hard on their task and block
out the distractions around them. With positive reinforcement, a challenging creative task, and
continual encouragement from the artists and the school teachers, the others in class were able to
ignore the distraction around them.

In week 4 there was an issue in class (KS2) before the dance activity, the mood was low and the
children were lacking in their usual interaction with each other. We noted the change, and adapted
the class accordingly, using team working creative tasks. The mood of the class lifted and “by the
end of the lesson they were all friends again” (interview with teachers, end of project March 2013)

In week 8 in KS1 class, our aim was to encourage team work and social interaction with each other
as this was something that the teacher had commented was seriously lacking amongst this class
and the children in it. By using imagery of bridges and transport, we were able to get them to
interact physically and encourage team work to give each person a turn at the different roles. We
noted an improvement in working together and being able to take on board each other's ideas as in
previous sessions their individual input resulted in arguments and them not listening to one another,
our observations were backed up by their class teacher who commented that “today in Thames
class it was really nice to see them interacting together and working as a team, particularly in
something physical as usually the physical things in team result in them hurting each other....them
taking on each other’s ideas is a massive thing for them to be able to do” (Interview, March 2013).

Improving engagement towards dance/physical activity and Teamwork and Creativity:

By focusing on the interests of the children in the class, we encouraged them to engage in dance
as an activity that the teachers initially said “these kids won’t get involved in dance, if you are lucky
they may stand at the door and watch but they won’t want to dance. We’ve had dance before and
they didn’t enjoy it and refused to get involved” (initial planning meeting, Dec 2012). In the first
week one of the KS2 class children stood around the walls of the room and appeared to look like
they wouldn’t even join the circle on the floor. However, by taking the dance element out at the very
beginning of this lesson, and initiating the lesson with “code of conduct” we were able to engage
the whole class in discussion, and get to know their interests. They became very animated in
talking about sports and in particular football. By initiating movement from football and sports, we
were able to get them to start moving, without them realising we had started to dance. By week 2
this class were showing an advanced level of creativity, pride and ownership over the dance they
had began to create, by week 4 they were able to work independently on movement creation,
sharing their work with each other, and by week 5 were very animated about wanting to perform "to
an audience of 2000 people, with lights and a band" (class discussion, Feb 2012).

Stinson (1997) alluded to engagement being about the amount of ‘fun’ a student has with the
particular subject. She also pointed out that engagement can be determined by the following factors
being present: focus and concentration, self-gratification through dance, freedom, and
transcendence. Throughout the project, all three classes began to show pride in their work, and
used words such as “amazing, fun, enjoyable, really good” to describe their experience of dance
(end of project questionnaires). Burkhart and Rhodes (2012) commented similar findings in their
study Participants generally demonstrated a very positive attitude towards dance with the majority
choosing words such as ‘Fun’, ‘Interesting’, and ‘Energetic’, to describe how they perceived the
dance classes We observed an increase in pride and ownership over their activity and the want to
share their work with their peers and to their parents and teachers. Class teachers commented on
an increase in self-confidence in the children, and a pride in their own ability. Bukhardt and Rhodes
(2012) stated that:
Research Findings showed a statistically significant increase in self esteem pre to post indicating that by participating in the dance classes the young people’s general sense of self-worth was improved. (p.12)

The KS1 class teacher stated that one participant in her class had shown an increase in self-worth through dance. The class was asked to comment on what they thought they were good at during PHSE (Personal, Health and Social Education), and one participant stated “I am good at dance”. The teacher commented that this was a huge step as the participant had previously stated “I’m not good at anything” (Interview, March 2013).

During the first half of the project, the children in the second KS2 class, displayed negative reactions to physical contact and trust exercises. We continued to engage the class in creative tasks that encouraged being in close proximity to one another, and as the weeks progressed, we moved on to other types of contact improvisation and trust exercises such as counter balances. The class began to explore these ideas more creatively, and in week 8 were able to do small lifts with each other. During the class the teacher congratulated the children on their work and explained to them how well they had done as they were showing an advanced level of teamworking, and trust building. This was further commented on by the class teachers during the end of project interviews “I was particularly surprised by [participant’s name], as the lifting involves a lot of trust and physical contact and you could see his face he seemed a little uncomfortable by the very close contact but you see him smiling when he achieved it and it felt for me such a huge value [in the dance classes] just for that and nothing else” (interview, March 2013).

7) Variables/Limitations
As discussed previously, this study is limited in being able to discuss positive functioning behaviours outside of the dance activity as “there are so many external factors affecting these children and their behaviour” (Interview March 2012), so a focus was made on the behaviours and social functioning within a dance class for pupils in a PRU.

8) Recommendations and conclusions
This project has shown clear evidence of dance as an activity that encourages positive social functioning in a PRU setting. The artists (us) and the teachers have noted improvements in concentration, focus and creative engagement through dance. With a short term study, we are unable to comment on dance as an activity for positive functioning outside of said activity, but teacher observations show evidence of increased self-worth in one pupil in particular being accredited to her engagement in dance, with teachers noting an increase in trust being alluded to creative tasks carried out during dance sessions.
Appendix 6.4  The Wellington Centre led by Maxine Phillips and Kim Rumary

VitalISE StepChange - Final Report for the Wellington Centre Placement, Andover

1. Context: During a 10 week period creative dance sessions of 30-45 minutes were co delivered at The Wellington Centre in Andover. The participants were aged between 5-16 years old with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties. The session was run as part of an existing after school club at the centre, which is run by Mencap. Due to the nature of the session the participants could choose whether to join in with the creative dance class or do another activity such as the computer or sensory rooms, therefore the attendance for some pupils was not regular but others joined in every week. The sessions were mostly 40-45minutes, however, on occasion this was shortened to 30-35minutes, this was due to the mood and level of focus within the group as some weeks a member of the group could be very disruptive and distract the whole session.

2. Aims: The aim of the sessions was to improve the participants’ wellbeing, both on a physical and mental level. We aimed to improve participants’ concentration, engagement and to improve balance through engaging with a fun creative dance class. Can taking part in a weekly creative dance class improve concentration and balance, when working with 5-16 year olds with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties?

3. The sessions: Each session incorporated an introduction in a circle, a fun name game and then cardio based warm up games. The session then progressed to use props to bring a creative and sensory element to the class and travelling and choreographing was explored. The participants often worked in pairs and they verbalised what they liked and disliked about each session which allowed us, as the dance artists, to tailor each session. Each element of the class was 5 minutes long as we found that shorter exercises were the best way to retain the group’s attention. Balancing was a focus and built into the sessions developing the participants’ awareness of alignment of the body, to measure any progress a stork test was undertaken at the beginning and the end of the project.

4. Findings: The stork test results show that balance has improved for Participant 6, however for Participant 3 it has regressed, this was a participant who did not always join in with every session, whereas Participant 6 joined in the whole program of sessions. For participants 4 and 2 the readings show that one foot improved whilst the other foot regressed, an improvement could be down to only practising on one leg however this would not explain a regression. More participants took part in the stork test, however, due to absences on the last session we only have 6 participants who took part fully.

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The name game was played at the beginning of each class. The group told us each week that they wanted to play it and they enjoyed working as a group with this particular game, it was simple and
allowed everybody to express and move to their name and the group copied and repeated it. The group took ownership of this game and as the weeks progressed they would display bigger, more creative dance moves using their full bodies to express themselves. This game saw the whole group interacting, listening to each other and engaging with the whole task.

**Case studies:** One pupil has Severe Global development delay, speech and language delay and gross hypertonia. She has no verbal communication however she does make noises to indicate her mood. She did not join in with the dance sessions at first but as the project progressed she joined in with certain aspects of the class. This started with her joining in the name game then as the weeks went on she would do parts of the warm up, creative tasks and also play pass the clap and be part of the closing circle. As a result of her joining in the creative sessions, exploring and playing with props both the dance artists and staff noticed her levels of concentration and engagement to improve. As well as this her nonverbal communication increased in expressivity in her body. For example when dancing down the bubble wrap she expressed an excited emotion through her body and through nonverbal noises, after this session she gave us feedback which was written with a member of staff (Please see Appendix C). Her ability to copy movement in a circle and to engage in the group task to other member’s names revealed progress in memory recall through repetition and gives a strong indication that concentration and engagement progress as a result of joining in with the sessions.

One male pupil has downs syndrome and has attended the Wellington Centre’s afterschool activities regularly. After the first session his family changed his day so he would no longer come on a Wednesday, however, as he enjoyed the creative dance class so much he came every Wednesday especially to be part of the StepChange project. He joined in fully with all of the sessions and his confidence with the tasks improved as the weeks progressed, this was shown through his increased creativity and full embodiment of the movements. Over the course of the project he became more passionate about dance and he regularly gave his feedback and answered questions we might ask the group. Both dance artists noticed an improvement in his coordination, range of movement and reaction times.

6. **Conclusion:** The group of participants benefitted from the use of dance, to channel their energy and improve their concentration and engagement. Through using creativity within a structured dance class environment the participants were encouraged to express emotion, build social skills and team building amongst one another, strengthening their interactive skills. The group grew to be more committed and take ownership in their creative input, especially when sharing their partner work amongst their peers, this allowed them to work together to aid to their individual growth and development impacting positively on their wellbeing. Their physical fitness increased through high energy activities, developing, stamina, strength, coordination and balance. To see an increased improvement in both balance and engagement a project would benefit from a longer time frame or more regular sessions, however, it is certainly evident that there have been noticeable progressions in the participants.
**Register**

**StepChange Project: The Wellington Centre - After-School Club Register**

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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**

- ✓ Joined in the session
- x Absent
- ○ Attended the Wellington centre for after club but didn’t join in the session.

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**Stork Test Results**

**Wellington Centre – Stork Test Results**

Below are the results of the Stork test we carried out on Wednesday 23rd January 2013 and again on Wednesday 20th March 2013.

The figures are measured in seconds and are standing on the right foot and then left foot – two readings for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Right 1</th>
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<th>Notes 20/03/13</th>
<th>Right 1</th>
<th>Right 2</th>
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<td>2.4</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>He did it with his eyes closed</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Did it with his eyes closed again</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>He did it with his eyes closed</td>
<td>12.4</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>He did it on a rise</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>9.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mia - I loved the bubble wrap.

(Mia made excited noises and clapped herself.)
She has no verbal language.

[Hand-drawn face]

2 Smiles from Mia.
1. **Context:** During an 11 week period creative dance sessions of 45 minutes were co delivered at The Lights in Andover to pupils of Icknield Special School. The participants were 13-16 year olds with severe learning difficulties and of the 14 pupils in the class there were 8 boys and 6 girls.

2. **Aims:** To improve participants’ general wellbeing, particularly their confidence and balance through engaging with a fun creative dance class. We aimed to improve the pupils’ physical fitness by improving their balance, as well as improving their general wellbeing with a focus on confidence. Can taking part in a weekly creative dance class boost pupils’ confidence and balance, when working with 13-16 year olds with severe learning difficulties?

3. **The sessions:** Each session began with an opening circle to check-in with participants and ask them if they remembered last week’s class. Then everyone would say their names in the circle. A warm up followed this, which was a mixture of creative and follow along in style, this would follow the theme of the session and work on general cardiovascular fitness, motor skills and balance. The session then progressed to use props to enhance the exploration of the theme and creative movement, this brought sensory element to the class and travelling and choreographing was explored. The participants worked solo, in pairs and as a group. Each theme was worked on for two to three weeks to allow pupils to build confidence in the class and development and explore their individual movement style. Each session ended with a calm stretch in a circle and some group feedback, where the participants verbalised their favourite parts of each session which allowed, us as the dance artists, to plan the next class according to what the group enjoyed the most.

4. **Findings:** Balancing was included as part of the warm up activities and throughout the body of the class. To measure the participants’ improvement in balance, a stork test was taken at the beginning of the project and 9 weeks later at the end. (For full Stork test results please see Appendix A).

   The results show that pupil 12 has not only improved in terms of balance but also confidence. He only did one leg of the stork test, as after the first leg of the initial stork test he got very upset with himself that he had not balanced for very long. Therefore when we carried out the second test the fact that he had the confidence to come to do it shows a great increase in confidence and self-efficacy, similarly his balance had improved considerably. Similarly pupil 9 on the stork test shows a great improvement in balance, however, other pupils have not improved from the results. The results cannot show what the dance artists witnessed throughout the progression of the project as the whole group became more confident and able when balancing. Many of the pupils also stated that they enjoyed the balancing within our sessions (this can be seen in Appendix B). This would suggest they enjoyed the challenge of improving their balance and felt confident that they themselves were improving.

   The physicality of the session provided an outlet to challenge their balance and an opportunity to increase in their own physical development; the participants enjoyed this challenge and often worked hard on this during their individual choreographies.

   In terms of confidence each individual in the group overcame a barrier, this may have been social; saying their name to the group, or physical; working on balance. The group grew to take ownership of every task given and as the weeks progressed they grew more confident to stand as individuals or in partnerships to share their work with the group, this would suggest an improvement in self-efficacy as they became confident about their abilities as dancers. This is supported by Jones who
states “we need to provide a range of high quality opportunities for people to collaborate, share their work and take ownership of it.” (Jones, 2010)

The memory recall of the participants, remembering the themes and the movements increased as the project developed and enhanced their engagement during the session, by the end of the project we could leave pupils to explore a task longer than at the beginning.

During a celebration session to congratulate the participants on all their commitment and hard work a break dancer came in to lead the group in basic fundamentals of hip hop and break dancing. The group was able to replicate the movement, stay engaged and join in confidently.

**Case studies:** When the project began one male pupil’s confidence in class was low, his demeanor was internal and his gaze was at the floor. The creative dance sessions created a safe space to explore and play with props and this opened his creative expression in his body and movements. The interactive play when working in partnerships allowed him to begin communication and find true responses in connection with others, for example giving eye contact when sharing to the group dances created in the session. His confidence and self-esteem gradually improved over the course of the project. When given the opportunity he was stepping out and finding the freedom to share his individual voice in dance with the group. Another endearing quality that the sessions allowed him to demonstrate was his ability to rise to the challenge of balancing on one leg, as he confidently demonstrated this throughout the session when he was choreographing movement material.

One of the girls of the group has downs syndrome and an underactive thyroid. When she started the project she would sit at the side and often face away from the group. As the project progressed she would come and join the group when we worked from a circle and eventually she began to say her name in the opening circle. This was a huge achievement for her and shows that her confidence grew throughout the project. She developed her confidence further by joining in with the class and also sharing in front of her peers.

**5. Conclusion:** This project provided a process of encouraging and building the participant’s confidence through the discipline of creative dance, which in turn aided the development of physical fitness, particularly balance. The safe space created by the dance artists’ inclusive teaching style has allowed each participant to find their own movement repertoire. The group of participants was so unique in their individual needs and abilities which made the experience of finding their expression through dance to be such an impacting health benefit in strengthening their confidence and wellbeing. The sharing of dance work with peers gave participants a sense of achievement of overcoming physical limitations in their body and this aided the participants to be more confident in their social interaction with others.

**Bibliography**

Stork Test Results

Here are the results of the Stork test we did on Wednesday 16th January 2013 with Icknield School and again on Wednesday 20th March 2013.

Measured in seconds. When the table says “Right” that means standing on the right leg and left is standing on the left. The group were mostly holding their leg at calf height, unless otherwise stated.

<table>
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<td>2.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>He was on a rise</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>On rise again</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>She held her leg higher at the knee</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Eyes closed again</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Held his frame with both hands again</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.9</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
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<td>6.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>He held his leg very low and didn't complete left side as he got upset.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Pupil Feedback

Likes, the balancing
I like working in pairs.
Dear Maxine and Kim,

I like dancing.

I liked dancing in the tunnel.

I liked dancing with Kieran.

I liked the balloon games.

Thank you!
dance
cênc
e
balancing

Luke

class
class

at the
Vitalise Step Change Evaluative Report
Glenwood School, Emsworth

1. Context of project
Venue: Glenwood School, Emsworth, Hampshire PO10 7NN. Glenwood is a school for secondary aged pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

Session Delivery: Weekly sessions of approximately 1 hour 20 minutes. The sessions were held on Thursday afternoons from 1:20pm.

Dates: 10th Jan – 28th March with one week half term break.
The session on 28th March consisted of a one hour rehearsal of a set dance piece, followed by a sharing to peers and school staff. The dancers performed twice – once to years 7 and 8, and again to years 9, 10 and 11.

Population: Pupils across all age ranges participated (school years 7-11). There was a core group of 9 participants throughout the project.

2. Aims and Objectives
Our aims and objectives were decided upon with the aid of Glenwood’s PE teacher, Steve Boyland. We made use of his insight into the behaviour and personality of the students to decide which objectives would be most suitable and beneficial for those particular students.

Aims:
• To maintain a focus on social interaction as an aspect of social wellbeing.
• To use the theme of ‘teamwork’ to support positive social interaction within this particular environment.

Objectives:
• To find out how creative dance might support and encourage effective teamwork skills within a school for young people with moderate learning disabilities.
• To investigate whether the encouragement of teamwork and positive social interaction has benefited the general wellbeing of participants. This will be measured by asking the students how they feel about their own achievements and their involvement in the activities.

3. Definition of Terms and Literature Review
The following defines key terms used in the aims and objectives of the project from our perspective as dance artists, the understanding of participants and in a wider context.

Teamwork: During the first session, the young people were asked to compile a list of features that they feel makes up effective teamwork. These are as follows:
• Working in different groups – pairs/duets, larger groups
• Listening to each other – verbally and physically
• Enjoying together – same energy and focus
• Using props together
• Watching each other
• Recognising individual ability/skill
• Patience
• Helping each other

The formal definition of teamwork, in the Oxford Dictionary is as follows: “the combined action of a group, especially when effective and efficient”.

Positive Social Interaction:
- The ability to experience connections with others and engage in communication effectively with others.
- The ability to develop meaningful relationships.
- The ability to interact and integrate positively. i.e. behaving in a way that is appropriate for the particular situation and people around them.
- Having previous positive experiences of social interaction could help towards a positive association with social situations - important for us as facilitators, as we can work towards creating a positive and safe social environment for participants.

Social Wellbeing:
- Having a sense of belonging.
- The feeling that a person might experience during social interaction and whether that is a positive one.
- A person having the confidence that they possess the social skills to be able to make meaningful connections with others. i.e. if a person feels confident in their ability to communicate, engage and connect with others effectively they will have an overall sense of social wellbeing.

Within this report, we (the artists) refer to ‘social wellbeing’. This is an important part of overall mental wellbeing as outlined by the NHS; “it means feeling good and functioning well” (2006, NHS Scotland). The NHS outlines “five steps to wellbeing” (2011). All five steps can be seen to relate to dance activity in some way, however, the following step relates to social wellbeing in particular:

“Connect: When it comes to wellbeing, other people matter. Evidence shows that good relationships – with family, friends and the wider community – are important for mental wellbeing. Building stronger, broader social connections in your life can increase your feelings of happiness and self-worth.” (2011, http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/connect-for-mental-wellbeing.aspx)

In Youth Dance England’s publication, *Dance in and Beyond Schools* (2010), dance is identified as having many social or “life” (p9) benefits including: “communication and negotiation skills; experience in giving and taking feedback” (p9) and “skills in working with others and in building consensus to achieve goals” (p9). The skills named here can be attributed towards achieving effective teamwork, therefore, developing these skills in young people could lead them to have positive experiences of social interaction. *Dance in and Beyond Schools* (2010) also names the following factors as benefits of dance to general wellbeing: “increased trust” (p12), “better social skills” (p12) and “reduced isolation and exclusion” (p12). The publication recognises that dance provides opportunities for social integration and allows the development of social skills. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that dance aids “confidence and self-esteem” (p9). A combination of the above factors allow young people to gain confidence in their ability to make meaningful and effective connections with others, so that they might achieve positive social interaction and gain a greater sense of social wellbeing.

4. Artistic Approach and Rationale
A number of factors affected our artistic approach, coming directly from the needs of the participants:

**Teamwork focus:** Various props were used to support eye contact, physical connection and working together. For example, during the first few sessions we used a large circle of elastic altogether, then smaller elastics in smaller groups. This prop requires 'listening' to each other’s physical responses to effectively manipulate it and move together.
Behavioural Issues: 'Company' agreements were made and positive behavioural management was adopted, due to the possible disruptive behaviour of the group. House points were awarded at the end of some sessions to motivate positive behaviour.

Ownership and Motivation: Pupils were able to have their own creative input, bring skills previously learnt to the sessions and select their own their own music choices. Peer teaching of ideas, directing and editing and compromise all allowed for teamwork to still be a central theme, but with enough individual dance style preference to differentiate for all students abilities and likes.

Learning Difficulties: The group had varying levels of sequence memory and this effected how much memory focused work could be done therefore structured improvisation was a key approach. A repeated structure was adopted with a variety of content to maintain attention and motivation but to allow students to feel secure and develop skills through repetition.

Developing Dance Skills: Importance was given to the furthering of skills and development of artistry within the individuals. This was achieved through warm-ups containing specific movement skills, which enabled the main tasks to be achieved.

5. Content
Example structure:
- Check-in – recap of work so far, introduction to new work, gain understanding of the feeling of the group and individuals.
- Circle based warm-up – names, changing places, size and scale, mobilising body parts (facilitator led or student led).
- Traveling using whole space – pathways, partners, leading/following, response cues (stop, start, shape, contact)
- Improvisation tasks – e.g elastics, push and pull, contact, trust, landscapes and explorers, dynamics, narrative.

This led to a focus on 'the urban landscape', including narrative, character and physical structures (contact). This developed into a journey to a dance studio where each room showcased individual solos/group work in preferred style and approach.

6. Evidence
Evidence has been collected through individual evaluation forms filled out by each student with the help of the support teacher Mrs Eddy, who was present at most of our sessions. We have also collected evidence from her observations. We have collected our own observations as well as the information received in our evaluation meeting with the school, which focused on the outcomes of this project, as well as furthering our relationship with the school with the aim of developing future projects or workshops.

Case Study 1: Evidence for the benefit of dance on social wellbeing of participants. Participant (1) started the first two sessions with a lack of enthusiasm towards participating due to anxiety. This was observed through:
- not contributing to group discussion,
- hiding behind hair
- down-turned posture.
Specifically to the dance activity the participant was not confident to explore movement ideas and travel around the space independently.

As the project developed (1) increased confidence and independence. This was observed by:
- an increasing contribution to ideas and discussion,
- a more external/outward posture,
- increase in scale of movement,
showing enthusiasm and high energy throughout the sessions,
- showing enthusiasm on welcome, in corridors outside of session.

Observation from deputy head: Ruth witnessed a boost in self-esteem within (1). She believes that this is extremely valuable as (1) can use her improved self-esteem in other areas of school and outside life. Ruth also believes that self-esteem is an important aspect in increasing independence of pupils.

Case Study 2: Evidence for the benefit of dance on social skills of participants.
Participant (2) started the project with high needs of 'attention', and varying moods which often led the participant to leave the class. She removed herself to the timeout area often (this being an area where it was encouraged that the young people took them self if they needed to calm their own emotions and for everyone else to respect the person to be left alone). Within one activity Jo noticed her really observing one group with interest from the timeout area and suggested that she might have ideas she could offer them. She did and this developed into her peer teaching a younger participant and directing further ideas. This was the way in. Case study 2 then became engaged, and this encouragement through peer teaching, directing persisted with both artists and led to eventually a partnership between participant 2 with participant 1, mentioned above. Participant 2 worked for a number of weeks creating in partnership a duet, which fitted within a group of 4. It led to the dancers rehearsing outside of the sessions, and an ongoing friendship has developed.

Observation from Mrs Eddy (support staff for project): "In particular, the team of Participant 2 and Participant 1 led to a new friendship between them. Participant 2 struggles with developing friendships so this was good for her"

Summary of evidence:
The artists believe that the evidence from teachers, participants and their own observations clearly demonstrate that positive social interaction took place through using creative dance with the focus of teamwork. This was achieved with an approach of ownership of aims from the beginning of the project (see list of effective team work features at beginning of report). This approach continued through the project with choice of music, partner grouping and the theme evolving through the project. The impact of this focus showed an increase in social wellbeing; fully expressed in the delight and confidence in their end performance but also throughout the project with an increase in self praise of achievement (shown on participant evaluations), group praise, working with confidence with new people, supportive peer teaching, increase in confident postural expression and an overall positive feeling. We witnessed and heard this directly from the group at all opportunities (including in the corridors on our return for our evaluation meeting!)

7. Variables/Limitations
• Length of session – Affected by staffing issues. Not starting on time de-motivated students to enthusiastically begin tasks.
• Absences – school trips, mentor sessions. Some students missed all or part of the sessions due to school related activities. When students entered part way through the session they missed warm-ups and skills tasks, this meant that much of the planning we had done was inappropriate.
• Staff changes – at the beginning of the project, various support staff were supplied. Mid-way through the project we explained to the deputy the impact of this, and after that the sessions were made more of a priority in relation to staffing. (see evaluation)
• Illness
• Outside influences/home life – one participant had a difficult situation going on at home which led to high levels of absence and when attending sessions would often not participate due to worry and upset.
Other Outcomes

8. Gifted and Talented
We felt that some participants showed outstanding potential in dance and have signposted the school towards youth dance opportunities in the local area.

After school club – Within the evaluation meeting, we have been asked to return for an after-school dance club, subject to funding.

9. Evaluation/Recommendations
As practitioners we worked within the time constraints of the project and adopted effective communication methods that led to a positive team teaching relationship. This, along with our artistic approach, resulted in a successful outcome in meeting our aims. However, for future projects we would recommend allowing for more time for face-to-face planning and reflection between the co-teaching team. This would enable artists to further their skills, as well as impact the effectiveness of the project.

Within the evaluation meeting with the deputy head, it was highlighted that the pre-project planning needed to be done earlier to allow for organization of staff and timetabling. This would allow for sufficient and consistent support staffing. In future projects it is our responsibility as artists to communicate the importance of consistency within staffing, timetabling, student attendance and explain that the nature of dance for health impact is progressive within a class and from week to week.

10. Implications
At the end of project evaluation meeting Ruth Witton (deputy head of Glenwood School) brought up an implication of the project further to the focus on developing teamwork. She had noticed that the dance activities aided young people that normally have difficulty with the flow and efficiency of movement. Ruth went on to explain that people with learning difficulties, such as those at Glenwood School, also often have problems with their motor skills. This could provide impetus for further research, into whether dance might be able to improve physical coordination in people whose cognitive delay affects their physical ability.

Ruth also identified dance as a particularly effective way of delivering physical activity to young people with moderate learning difficulties. She stated that dance provides a “non-competitive way of getting physical activity”. She explained that this is particularly beneficial to people with learning difficulties, as competition can be intimidating and damage self-esteem when success is not gained. Furthermore, these young people often have a negative association with competition, as they may not have been able to achieve highly in sports, therefore, a negative connotation is attached to physical activity in general. The fact that dance provides an alternative way of getting physical activity, that allows young people to achieve in an unintimidating environment, had important implications for dance practice. It should be recognised that dance is valuable in schools and the community for the discussed reasons.
Appendix 6.7  Haselworth Primary School led by Vicki Hargreaves and Kim Rumary

VitaliSE StepChange Evaluation Day: Final Report

1. Time and length of session
During an 11 week period creative dance sessions of 60 minutes were co delivered at the Haselworth Primary School in Gosport. The participants were aged 4-5 year olds and have a higher ratio in boys than girls and there are 30 pupils in the class.

2. Aims and objectives
The health focus aim was to see the Children understanding physical changes to their bodies when dancing – what exercise does to you. This is linking with the Early Learning Goals for YrR within the school curriculum which includes moving and handling skills, motor skills, health and self care. Looking at these key areas below:

- Body awareness
- Building creativity
- Confidence building
- (Plus children learning to dress for PE themselves – using fine motor skills before starting the class)

The following objectives were set out at the beginning of the project to see how in 11 weeks the children develop through repetition and understanding of own self. Will 11 weeks of structured movement give them a better understanding of their own bodies and what exercise can do. As a group will confidence grow and will imaginative ideas develop through trusting the group and others around them.

3. Findings
The participants have responded to the creative dance sessions through the use of weekly themes including song, props, storytelling alongside imaginative movement explorations. The group has grown and become more established through the creative pair work, developing social and interactive skills with one another. The positive changes that have occurred during the sessions are the group’s ability to take ownership of the themes by sharing their own dance ideas and imagination with the other members of the group.

The class teacher has been able to observe the children within the sessions and monitor any changes seen within the classroom setting.
“As the class teacher I have been delighted to see the effects this weekly hour long session has had on the class as a whole. Within the class of 30 children there is a high percentage with behavioural and social issues. In particular there are many children with low self esteem who have taken a long time to settle into the school environment. The children were surprisingly engaged from the start of the project. I was particularly impressed with the reaction of some of the quieter, more timid children. Each child took part, showing visible delight at times.” When asked about any behavioural differences in the children, within the sessions the teacher commented on some of the less confident children:

“I saw children who rarely speak in class, confidently expressing themselves through music, able to make up their own moves and even share them with the rest of the class. This confidence transferred to the classroom at times, for example I found a group of children in the garden, reciting *We’re going on a bear hunt* to music while improvising dance moves. One child in particular who is extremely reserved in most situations took to pretending she was the dance teacher back in the classroom. She would often organise one or two of the other children to mirror each other’s moves or wave a scarf around their bodies. This project has been extremely worthwhile in helping with the children’s physical development as well as their personal, social and emotional development and creativity.”

**McKenzie case study**
McKenzie responded to the creative dance session with little participation at the start of the term and would sometimes refuse to take part. In the classroom context he is known for being disruptive and not engaging in day to day curriculum activities such as maths and literacy. As the project progressed McKenzie began to engage in the creative session by confidently sharing props when working in partnerships and actively wanted to get up and share what he had created. His general awareness of instructions and levels of concentration continued to build through his active listening and participation. McKenzie’s energy levels would be channeled in the right way during the sessions allowing him to release any frustrations and bring him to a calming place to continue his day at school.

**Elijah case study**
Elijah was new to the school and integrated into the class a couple of weeks into the creative dance sessions, this was challenging for him as he was attending a new school and having to experience dance for the first time. Initially saying his name in front of everyone was difficult and participating in group activities was hard as he had not established himself within the group. As the project progressed the creative dance sessions allowed space for Elijah to feel accepted and begin to find himself through being socially interactive with other members of the class when working in partnerships, beginning to build trust and friendships. The more he felt valued in integrating with the group, the more it enabled him to find confidence to take ownership of creative tasks and be
confident in his own body awareness when expressing and sharing the movement he was exploring in the sessions.

**Rosie-May case study**

In the first three weeks Rosie-May didn’t engage with the sessions, tutors or other participants. When asked to say her name in front of the class she chose not to and when following dance movements and instructions she would stand and observe instead. Her behavior within the dance session was the same within her classroom environment, interested in the activity but not confident in joining in. By the third week the structure was very set with the children confident in knowing what was to be expected. This routine changed Rosie-May’s outlook on the session and when asked her name she replied. She also participated in the majority of the class copying the teacher and wanting to work with the teacher rather than other pupils. By the fifth week she was fully integrated within the session and worked confidently on her own, with a partner and in front of others. She particularly grew in confidence when props were used – possibly because the action was directed at the prop moving rather than her, allowing her to move more freely. In the last session she confidently volunteered verbal information to us and offered to share her dance to class. The class teacher commented on how shocked and pleased she was that Rosie-May took part in this way, joyfully and confidently dancing in front of her peers.

The impact of dance and health for this particular group of participants was the ability to aid the physical development of moving and handling skills, motor skills, health and self care. By the end of the project the group have found a level of awareness in their body when moving together and as individuals. The project has opened their imagination when moving with props and themes, developing their creative confidence. The sense of team building and care for one another and encouragement when stepping out and performing in front of each other has grown throughout the 11 weeks and by the end of term, even the most reluctant of pupils has felt secure and confident to show their work and every child's contribution has been valued.
1. Time and length of session
An 11-week period of creative dance sessions lasting 45 minutes
They were co-delivered at the Yellow Dot Nursery in Chandlers Ford
The participants were aged 3-4 year olds and have a higher ratio in boys than girls and there are 26 pupils in the session

2. Aims and objectives
Initially, the health focus was to see a development in the children’s confidence. Over the course of the 11 weeks, it became clear to us as deliverers that we needed to define confidence and in what capacity we were measuring that confidence. At first it was noticing and observing the children as individuals and how they interacted within a group. We also observed their relationship with us as teachers.

However, it was not until we were in week three that the children’s confidence within their self as well as with us was easy and clearly confident in their approach and attitude to us. So we specified our focus within the framework of confidence to solely look at their understanding of their own body awareness when dancing. As characters they were confident, but their movement and spatial awareness were underdeveloped.

Observations included moving and handling skills, independence within the session, working with others and motor skills.

Looking at these key areas below:

- Body awareness
- Building creativity
- Confidence building in terms of dancing
- Listening and sharing skills

These objectives were set out at the beginning of the project to set a measurable factor for us throughout the 11 weeks. Through repetition of a structured class, the aim was to see that over the 11 weeks, the children would gain a better understanding of their own bodies. This in turn affects individual’s confidence and approach to dancing, as well as overall assisting in the group’s dynamics. Through developing trust and using imagination as a tool, the children will want to move in an imaginative way and through praise confidence should flourish.

3. Findings
The participants have responded to the creative dance sessions through the use of weekly themes including song, props, and storytelling alongside imaginative movement explorations. The group has grown in confidence through the creative pair work, developing social and interactive skills with one another. Through a structured session the participants have gained confidence in taking ownership of the themes by sharing their own dance ideas and imagination with the other members of the group. To do this, they worked on their own, in pairs and then shared ideas in front of the entire group.

The Nursery Manager has been able to observe the children within the sessions and monitor any changes seen within the classroom setting.
“The dance session was a huge success the children learnt new songs and routines. The children physically were able to express and motivate themselves. The lesson plans worked really well with considering our theme for the week. The children were encouraged to use new movements and were able to move their bodies in different ways. They have increased knowledge of spatial awareness and balancing. It was lovely to gain knowledge of using new movements and ideas and was great the adults were able to join in.”

The children’s physical development has also grown over the 11 weeks, with some of the high achieving children understanding their own coordination and developing balance and movement memory as well as their personal, social and emotional development and creativity.

**Jack case study**

During the first couple of weeks Jack didn’t engage with the sessions. When asked to say his name in front of the group he grew obviously nervous and started to cry. This was a new experience for him and he was unsure of what to make of it. When following dance movements and instructions he would observe instead and stay close to one of the nursery workers. In the next few weeks he showed interest in the activity but was not confident in joining in fully. By the fourth week, the structure was very set with the children confident in knowing what was to be expected. This routine supported Jacks’ integration into the session and when asked his name, he confidently replied. He continued to participate in the majority of the sessions, copying us and wanting to confidently work with the props supplied. By the sixth session Jack confidently worked on his own, with a partner and in front of others. He particularly grew in confidence when props were used. In the last session he was vocal, moving freely and enjoying the session fully – showing newfound confidence in his body awareness and socializing with others in the group.

**Emily case study**

Emily was new to the nursery and was not present in the first 2 sessions. So by the third week many, if not most, of the children were responsive and at ease with us. However, being in a new environment with new adults and teachers unsettled Emily. Similarly with Jack, she would not speak confidently with the group and would not participate within the activity, even when offered a prop. It was around the 6th week, so after the half term break, that she began to accept us within her structure for the week. She would say her name, very quietly and to the closest adult. This particular week was a turning week for majority of the children in terms of their confidence in dancing. This week focused on pop music as a theme. We also used pom-poms, which facilitated the children’s dancing in a way we had not observed in the previous weeks. This was also the first week that a set routine was taught, remembered and shared. Emily in this week fully participated in this session and thoroughly enjoyed moving to the music. By week 10 and 11, Emily was happy to join in and even share her movement at the end of the class with the others in the group.

Often, we found the dynamics of the sessions changed in relation to the set up of the space and children before we arrived. This sometimes helped and sometimes hindered. When the children had their shoes off and were already in a circle prepared, settled and ready to start, the atmosphere was calm and resulted in an easy and flowing class. When the children or even staff were unsettled or unprepared, their focus and commitment to the class was distracted and it became difficult to progress with the class. With these distractions, is became difficult as observers to notice any changes with children’s confidence in terms of moving as they became engrossed with something unrelated to the class.

By the end of the project, the majority of the group did find a level of awareness in their body when moving together and as individuals. The project has opened their imagination when moving with props and themes, developing their creative confidence. Throughout the 11 weeks, a sense of support, care and encouragement from the group to individuals who offered to share their contribution to the task, was evident and encouraging to observe and be a part of this support network. By the end of term, even the most reluctant of pupils had felt secure and confident to show their work and every child's contribution had been valued.
Appendix 6.9  Aldertots led by Nikki Watson and Vicky Frayard

VitaliSE Step Change: Final report for Aldershot Garrison – ‘Aldertots’

1. Context
Dance Artists: Nikki Watson and Vicky Frayard
Setting: Connaught Community Centre, Aldershot Hive, North Camp, Aldershot
Group: Toddlers aged 10 months to 4 years and their parents/childminders
Number of participants:
• Toddlers - average attendance of 16 young children
• Parents / carers – average attendance of 10
Delivery:
• 1 x 1.25hour session in creative dance and play
• 12 sessions over 11 weeks including one taster session
Focal activities in sessions:
• movement to stories
• copying set dance moves to Disney songs
• imaginative story-telling and action
• parents/childminders socialising
Aim of sessions:
• To encourage inter-regimental social engagement at Aldershot Garrison
• To promote gross motor skills in early years children
• To encourage social interaction in early years children

2. Focus: Modelling behaviours, qualitative refinement in gross motor skills, social development
How might dance encourage positive social development and inter-regimental social development in a garrison setting?
How can dance encourage the refinement of gross motor skills in early years children?
How can dance encourage modelling behaviours to encourage positive refinement in gross motor skills in early years children?

Definition of terms:
Engagement in dance:
• Being in the room during the dance activity
• Taking part in the dance activity
• Being involved in creative tasks
• Developing the quality of movement
• Suggesting games or “adventures” for the rest of the group to try out
• Level of enjoyment in the activity
• The ability to focus and concentrate throughout a dance class
• Level of responsiveness to teacher’s cues or instructions

Gross Motor Skills:
• The development of physical skills that use large body parts (Oswalt, 1998)
• The ability to recall movement phrases and creative tasks
• The ability to mimic the facilitators movements and follow oral and physical instructions

Social Engagement/Social interaction:
Social Engagement: the ability to work constructively within and between social groups to create more resilient and sustainable communities. Juliet Millican, Community University Partnership Programme, University of Brighton
In this context, we are seeking to engage military families from a variety of regiments across North Camp, Aldershot Barracks that may not have otherwise interacted with others across the Garrison previously.

4. Evidence:
Social engagement in regiments within Aldershot Garrison through dance classes
According to our pre-project questionnaire, 75% (15/20 people interviewed) did not engage with services at Connaught Centre and the other 25% (5/20) only attended Stay and Play toddler group or regimental coffee mornings at the centre.

“It’s nice having just moved into the area, its nice to come and meet other families and see the little ones enjoying themselves and getting active” (Sarah Marston, BFBS Interview, Jan 2013)

Only 20% (4/20) said that they regularly engaged with families from other regiments. Despite this, at the first session we had families from the following regiments: Irish Guards, Welsh Guards, 27 Reg, Royal Logistics Corps, Grenadier Guards, Royal Military Police, Royal Army Physical Training Corps, 251 Signals, Duke of Lancaster and Coldstream Guards.

In the final session, we interviewed 9 families on social engagement. 78% of families said that they now attend other inter-regimental groups across the garrison.

“Believe me army groups like this with so many different regs are not always so welcoming and friendly but Erin and I looked forward to our dance session every Thursday, every time we drive or walk past the Connaught Centre, Erin shouts 'dance! dance!' it definitely made an impact with my little girl and encouraged me to try other army funded groups which I probably wouldn’t have done before in all honesty.” (Lorna Oldham, post project interview, March 2013)

Social engagement between early years children taking part in dance classes at Aldershot Garrison
Using the Erik Erickson scale of development, toddlers in the autonomy versus shame and doubt stage (ages 1 to 3 years), either develop the confidence to try new things; or become unsure of their abilities and withdraw from initiating new activities. Engagement in or withdrawal from new activities depends on the type of support and nurturing the child received from caregivers. During the initiative versus guilt stage (ages 3 to 6 years), young children either develop a healthy sense of eagerness to tackle new tasks, join in activities with peers, and try things without the help of adults. This project aimed to encourage engagement in a new activity and with peers which supports and promotes early years developmental studies. We noticed a change in the group as a whole during the latter part of the project, and in particular one participant; Sophia in week 5. She was more engaged with dance as an activity and was eager to copy movements whereas before she had only been running around or staying by her mother’s side. It appears her confidence and ability began to grow in the latter part of the project. This is further evidenced in case study 1 later in the paper.

This is backed up by comments from the participant’s mother: “Sophie is due to start nursery in April and I didn’t feel like she was ready as she is going to a nursery where she doesn’t know anyone. Since she has been coming to the dance classes, she seems a lot more confident in being around other kids she doesn’t know and I have no worries now about taking her to nursery. The dance classes have made it much easier for her to get on with and interact with other kids her age.”

Kelly Young, Sophia’s mum (Session number 9).

According to our pre-project questionnaire, only 15% (3/20) had attended dance, play or movement based sessions previous to Aldertots. This feeling of “loneliness” was expressed by other parents at the beginning of the project too:

“We moved here 8 months ago and Lydia doesn’t have any friends here. So this chance to get out and socialise is fantastic. We moved from Colchester where she had lots of friends and has been really lonely since being here, so this is great for her to get to meet new people.” (Amanda Smith, Session 2)

With feelings of improvement being expressed throughout, being accredited to the project:

“I had started to imagine her being a little loner at nursery/school etc but the dance class was brilliant in bringing her out, showing her how to follow instructions and participate within a group” (Lorna Oldham, Participant’s mother).
At the end of the project, 100% of parents/carers questioned said that their children had made new friends through the project and some parents had as well.

Team working, interaction and creative development, engagement as dance as an activity

With continuing reference to the Erikson scale of development in early years, we have encouraged group and team work in many creative tasks. Throughout the project we have observed an increase in their ability to work together collectively and stick to the same tasks for an increased length of time.

We noted comparisons between beginning weeks and final weeks of the project. Weeks 1-5 the group was quite fragmented during creative tasks. Whereas, from week 6 onwards there was a turning point within the group as a whole, and they now show “group solidarity” by ‘sticking together’ during adventures and focusing on the same idea for longer. The group have begun to show empathy for each other and if one of the others goes to sit down and we start a new task, they will often ask “shall I go get [name] so they can join in too?”

Oswalt (2010) also claims that “exercise time can also help young children to develop good social skills such as sharing, communicating, and empathizing”. This is supported by the aims of this project. We observed an increase in group empathy, whilst the parents observed an increase in interaction and their children “making friends” and being more confident around other children. “The dance classes have made it much easier for her to get on with and interact with other kids her age.” Mother of participant (interview, 2013)

The group has developed creatively throughout the project; being able to identify creative tasks and recall exercises. The group as a whole has started to “risk take” with their creativity. For example, when we go on “adventures” the young people are keen to take the lead and make suggestions about “what can you see?” They engage in imaginative play exercises where they can take the initiative with movements such as different ways of “looking out for something in the jungle” or “sailing in the boat”. They make many suggestions about types of animals we might meet on our adventures.

Engagement and interaction: Case study – Erin:
Erin would only engage in activities if her mother joined in and did it with her at the same time. “If she sees me [joining in]…this is the first toddler type group she’s been to so I really want her to get into it. There’s not been that much that I can take her to so this is really good.” (Lorna Oldham, BFBS Interview, Jan 2013)

In week 4 she rolled on her tummy for the first time without the help of her mother. She was copying us.

A number of reasons may contribute to this:

- This was the first session in which we used the mats from soft play
- She arrived at the centre 10 minutes before anyone else and we were able to spend one-on-one time with her without other distractions
- “Erin got to week 4 and was still not participating but Vicky and Nicky worked so hard in making Erin feel comfortable and seeing the fun all the other kids were having I was really despairing and tempted to not go again but then on week 4 Erin started dancing and following everyone else and doing it all herself without me beside her!” (Lorna Oldham, Participant’s mother)
- It appears that the mats act as a security net for the children – almost like a “home-base” at school. Whenever we gather together, we gather on the mats. The hall is large so it reduces the size of the space we are working in. It brings the group together and gives them a more comfortable (both physically and metaphorically) place to sit.
Refinement of gross motor skills
Recollection: Case study - Ashley
Ashley was always enthusiastic from the first session but has improved greatly in his ability to retain muscle memory and recall movement material. From week 6 onwards, he was able to begin movement with a music cue, with no explanation or visual cueing from facilitators. He is very aware of the exercises and structure of the class and often asks if we can do the next task when we have finished on exercise. For example – “can we do pirate adventure next?”
In the last few weeks, he was able to correctly identify that when we curl into a ball we are getting ready to do the “gingerbread man” exercise and when we got out the ribbons, he held it on his hips ready to being the “Lion King” dance.
“Can we come here all the time?” (Ashley to his mother, BFBS Interview, Jan 2013)

Mimicking (artists’ observations)
• The class as a whole are now able to identify using the large blue fabric to “go on the boat”
• Week 9 was a key turning point at which every child in the class joined in the entire “Lion King” dance, copying and taking part the whole way through.
• The change in being able to copy the dance came in week 5 when we introduced the ribbons and used big circular movements to describe “swinging your tail” and “hold the ribbon high above your head in both hands” to get them to stretch to their kinesphere. In future, I will be using ribbons with early years classes to ensure a full range of movement is achieved within each movement. It clearly increases the range of motion and the effort level of each movement.

Parent/carer observations of benefits for the children participating in regular and routine based activity (Information gained from post project questionnaires)
• Increased confidence, increased interaction outside of class,
• Not as shy in social situations, easy transition for building social skills, better at playing and sharing with others,
• Improved concentration
• Improved motor skills and speech development
• Learning and copying
• Coordination and balance - more steady on their feet

5. Overall conclusions
The project aimed to engage families from across a variety of regiments in a Garrison setting. The sub-aims of the project were to evaluate how dance can help promote the development of gross motor skills in early years children, and to encourage social interaction in early years children.
When we asked the parents/carers in the post project questionnaire whether or not the sessions had made them more likely to attend similar group, 100% of them said yes. One mother commenting additionally “everyone has been so nice especially the other wives which I didn’t expect.” It had been made apparent to us from Army Welfare Service staff that they struggle to get good attendance inter-regimental events therefore they were interested to see how this group developed. Having seen the impact it has made on the families involved, they have offered to continue supporting the sessions and help with funding application to expand the project.
Whilst we can note changes in ability to recollect and mimic movement, without a longer term scientific study it would be difficult to comment on changes in gross motor skills of the children participating. We can however link the improvement in recollection and mimicking to an improvement in range of movement as demonstrated in specific tasks repeated over several weeks.
As we are hoping to continue the project in the future, we have thought about how it could run differently to engage new participants and develop existing ones further. As the project was set up to engage toddlers and adults using different methods, we could consider having a portion of the class dedicated to family learning. This would most likely entail the group coming together as a
whole and participating in shared activity. This is something we piloted in a few sessions when we had fathers attending and was well received by children and adults alike.

“Meeting people from army families is important as the husbands are away a lot so its good to keep the kids entertained…makes time fly and be enjoyable as routine is important to help family through the time without daddy.”
Appendix 6.10  The Garage Youth Centre led by Aimee Symes and Claire Tyler

1. Time and length of session
Two day intensive - running from 9.30 - 17.00
They were co-delivered at the Garage Youth Centre in Totton, Southampton
There were 8 female participants, aged 5-16 year olds.
Totton as a district is considered industrial and a hard area, especially within educational and social contexts.

2. Aims and objectives
Initially, the health focus was to see a development in the participants’ attention and also attitudes to dance. As we were only there for 2 days, the focus and goal was to achieve a performance piece that the participants would perform in front of an audience. Aiming to create a performance piece would allow the group over the 2 days to find time and space within their movements to find attention to detail. ‘Attention’ also spans into physical and mental attentiveness within the day. With the age range being so broad, as well as the fact that many of the participants had never danced before, it was interesting to observe when they became attentive and absorbed within their movement. This attentiveness could echo through into attitudes to dance, especially contemporary dance. Through absorption in a task, we could observe their attentiveness and attention to detail, which in turn may have altered their perceived thoughts of contemporary dance.

3. Limitations
The nature of this placement differed significantly from others in relation to the programme. Rather than a weekly session that ran for 11 weeks, we had 2 days with these participants. The youth centre offered this 2-day intensive to everyone and anyone who wanted to be involved. This meant that we had an age range from 5 to 16 year olds. The participants’ experience of dance also ranged significantly; some would not normally participate in extra physical activity outside of school to a participant who is currently doing GCSE Dance. Also, we were co-teaching with someone we had never co-taught with before. So not only were the participants getting to know us, as individuals and teachers, but we were also getting to know each other. This slowed the progression of the day in places, and at points the harmony and dynamics between both teachers and also teacher-participant was challenging. Finally, the expectations from the youth centre and teachers differed in places. The youth centre wanted the students to have free rein over tasks, yet we as teachers had to drive the tasks towards a performance and also our health and well-being outcomes.

4. Findings
The group’s attention was generally good at beginning of day and reduced when most tired. We found that by changing the activity, especially if it did not involve physically moving, the group responded well when asked to move back into dancing. Sustainable attention was better with the older participants; the younger participants would have bursts of energy throughout the day. 14.00 or 15.00 were the most tiring parts of the day. Participants wanted breaks that lasted longer and more often as the day progressed.

Attentiveness was high when they were doing their own choreographic tasks. They enjoyed taking ownership; there were a few individuals who thrived in being strong figures in terms of decision making. Attention to detail was difficult to establish in all movement – ours and even their material. It seemed that larger continuous movements were easier to grasp over smaller detailed versions. We also found that they did not choreograph smaller detailed movements, we had to offer these when they were in the middle of their task. We did go through movement to clarify, and once shown the movement again it would be done fully initially but was lost through repetition. The details did peak again during their performance. They did initially find our abstract movements
difficult to copy and maintain but through repetition they were beginning not question or doubt our ideas/movement – perhaps their attitude to dance/contemporary dance was altering?
Appendix 6.11  Rowner Youth Centre led by Hayley Ovens

Vitalise Step Change Evaluative Report
Engagement in Young People within Community Dance Settings

Dance Artist: Hayley Ovens

Settings: The Fordway Centre PRU, Surrey; Glenwood School, Emsworth; Rowner Youth Centre, Gosport

1) Aims and Objectives:
This report details how dance might prove to be an engaging activity for children presenting with various behavioural, emotional, social and learning difficulties. Then in turn, how the benefits of dance activity might contribute to overall psychological wellbeing of such participants. It also aims to investigate how dance artists can support and encourage children to become engaged in dance activity within community settings, by analysing my (the dance artist) practice and delivery of dance sessions throughout the Step Change project.

2) Literature Review
Engagement towards physical activity is described as related to a person’s attachment to the particular activity and the level of motivation they have towards it (Stinson, 1997). Vocabulary such as: interested, involved, excited and stimulated are also used within texts that describe what it means to be engaged (Gardener in Brandt, 1987). All of these factors suggest that in order to be engaged, a person would have a certain level of concentration and commitment to the activity, as they would be motivated to achieve within it and would be experiencing a sense of enjoyment when participating in it.

In Youth Dance England’s publication Dance in and Beyond Schools (2010), some benefits of dance for young people are outlined, which correspond with the idea of engagement. It is suggested that participants improve, “attention, focus and bringing whole self to the moment” (p9). The document also claims that participants of dance activity can gain, “enjoyment, motivation, inspiration, aspiration and achievement” (p9). Therefore, it can be seen that, if a young person is able to engage fully with an activity, many benefits can be gained towards psychological wellbeing.

As affirmed by Miulli and Nordin-Bates (2011), “teachers have the major responsibility in creating a healthy environment” (p5). The dance facilitator should provide an environment where the participants are suitably challenged, guided and praised, in a way that is appropriate for the needs of individual participants and the group. This is known as the “motivational climate” (Miulli and Nordin-Bates, 2011, p5). By looking at Epstein’s TARGET Model (1989), it can be seen that teaching strategies involving the “mastery” of skills rather than emphasis on the end product, can be beneficial in such settings as mentioned in this report. The mastery principle, is non-competitive, involves personalised challenges and targets, recognises individual achievement and effort, and involves the participant in decision making. These factors allow participants to become autonomous in their responses, aiding feelings of independence and value of their role within the group. This kind of strategy, is also acknowledged by Miulli and Nordin-Bates (2011), identified as a “task-involving climate” (p5). Research has found that “task-involving climates contribute to healthier athletes and greater overall enjoyment” (Miulli and Nordin-Bates, 2011, p5). Furthermore, studies indicate that motivational climates matter, and can play a significant role in dancers’ well-being” (Miulli and Nordin-Bates, 2011, p5).

3) Evidence
The following statements detail my observations of students displaying improvements in engagement throughout the Step Change project.

At The Fordway Centre in particular, evidence was seen towards personal attachment to the activity contributing to enjoyment and engagement. At the start of the project, many participants expressed that they were not interested in dance, saying, “I’m not dancing” and “I’m not joining in”.

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We were able to draw the students into dance session, by asking them about their interests and incorporating them into the activities. One notable example was in using football movements to create a sequence. The children showed an immediate change from being completely resistant to being fully engaged and visibly showing enjoyment towards dance.

Within Rowner Youth Centre, the children particularly struggle with engagement in activities for any extended period and display extremely high energy. Although participation has not been consistent enough to record any improvement in engagement, it can be seen that the young people are able to continue in one session and stay in one space for a longer time than usual when tasks are changed quickly. This can be acknowledged as a teaching strategy for such groups. They also responded well to tasks with an element of risk or high difficulty. For example, I demonstrated break dancing tricks, which the children associated with being “cool” and “fun”. As they could not complete the task straight away, they became engaged for a longer period of time in trying to master the ‘trick’. When they were able to complete at least one stage of the trick, they experienced pride in their achievement at learning something new and exciting.

In Glenwood School, some of the pupils already had an interest in dance. For a section of the sharing, we encouraged them to explore their own interests and dance styles with others. This allowed them to become autonomous in their response to the task, showing initiative and independence to make work, for an extended period of time, with very little prompting needed. It was exceptional for the students to show this behaviour, as various staff reported that they normally struggle to show continued concentration and focus for a long period of time.

The following details an example of when a facilitator might be able to improve engagement and enjoyment within a group through changing the atmosphere of a session. Within one session at The Fordway Centre we recognised a change in the energy of a group to how they normally behave. The group was very withdrawn, quiet and displayed down-turned postures, in contrast to their usual high-energy and upbeat nature. Although we did not dwell on the reason for this behaviour, we subtly reminded them that they were in a dance session now and they should leave previous worries at the door. As facilitators, we picked up our energy, being light-hearted and humorous, in order to engage them with the enjoyment of dance. The participants soon picked up on this energy and were able to move on from their low mood, smiling and happy at the end of the session, having made significant contributions to the activity.

4) Facilitating Engagement

The following points outline strategies that can be employed by a dance facilitator to encourage engagement within groups of young people facing various psychological challenges. These are skills that I have developed through delivering on the Step Change project, and relate to theories of motivational climates (1989).

Judging the ‘energy’: Here, I am referring to the mood or atmosphere of a particular individual or group. In settings were there are various external and internal factors affecting the young peoples’ ability to engage, it is important to ‘judge the energy’ and respond appropriately. Possible responses vary according to whether the energy is constructive for the success of the dance session or not. It can be judged whether the energy needs to be sustained, brought down or brought up.

Providing a safe and positive social environment: For young people within these kinds of settings, they may not always have experiences of positive social environments or have positive connotations towards social encounters. It is therefore particularly important that the facilitator assures that sessions are non-judgemental and that participants are always supportive of each other. This can be achieved by outlining ‘agreements’ at the beginning of sessions that all participants should abide by. They should also be reminded throughout sessions about which behaviour is appropriate and positive towards others.

Praise/Motivation: I have found it important in these settings to give consistent positive reinforcement for good behaviour and effort within the dance session, by giving praise and
affirmation. As explained above, Epstein’s TARGET model (1989) encourages recognition of individual achievement and effort within the mastery motivational climate. This allows the participant to be assured that any contribution is valuable and that they are achieving. It also allows distinction between behaviour that is appropriate and inappropriate.

**Allowing creative input:** Allowing the participants to have creative input into the sessions, helps the individual feel that they are making a valid contribution. As previously mentioned, allowing autonomy of response in participants is an important element of a successful motivational climate. I have found that this improves self-worth and aids engagement, as the participant gains a sense of ownership over the activity.

**Thinking on your feet:** This point includes, having a ‘creative artillery’, i.e. a wealth of ideas that you can call upon at a moments notice. It also involves being able to let go of negative thoughts, to not force activities that are not working or providing frustration, and being able to move quickly between tasks.

5) Conclusion
I have been delivering dance sessions to the above groups on a weekly basis. Although the needs and abilities of each group of young people varied greatly, I noticed a commonality within their responses to dance, in that it provided engagement and a ‘coming together’ of individuals. The young people within these particular groups displayed varying degrees of behavioural, social and learning difficulties. Therefore, they might have had problems with processing information and following instruction, controlling their behaviour and acting appropriately, or working effectively with others. They may have difficulty in expressing feeling, emotion or creative ideas and finding a positive channel for their negative or excess energy. What I witnessed within my dance sessions was that dance provided an engaging activity for some children that normally struggle in these areas, allowing them to have a sense of achievement and outlet for expression. It should be noted that all young people vary greatly in their interests, abilities and behaviour, so this report does not claim that all children will benefit in this way from dance activity. However, evidence from my observations, case studies and, participant and support staff feedback, point to the conclusion that dance can be particularly beneficial to the wellbeing of certain young people. Perhaps most importantly, dance provides a form of physical activity with much less of a competitive element than other forms. Thus, relieving pressure on individuals who might perceive themselves to be ‘under-achieving’ and allowing them to enjoy physical activity in an engaging and creative way.

6) Recommendations
Within youth group settings it would be beneficial to work out a system where the participants show more commitment to attending the sessions regularly. Then, gradually increasing the length of tasks and seeing whether they are able to focus for longer periods of time, could measure improvements in engagement. In the future, there would be value in recording differences in participants’ perceived self-esteem, self-worth and perceived levels of achievement in dance activity. Although improvements to these factors can be seen through observation, it is necessary to record these findings as qualitative and quantitative data. This could then be compared to data from other activities and sports, further finding the value of dance to individuals that experience difficulties in other areas.

References