



Portsmouth Project Research Report

Comparing and contrasting against previous Dansync research

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Dansync is a Dance Partners South East consortium and South East Dance project.



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Dansync was initiated in 2003 as Creative Dance Apprenticeships (CDA). It was renamed Dansync in 2005. This report was written prior to re-naming and therefore makes reference to CDA rather than Dansync, reflecting the focus of the project in its earlier stages.

1. Introduction – Including background to the Project

The Creative Dance Apprenticeships Portsmouth Project, which is the subject of this report, followed on from an initial pilot project (South East Dance Creative Dance Apprenticeships Project: Portsmouth Pilot), which ran during June and July 2003. This was evaluated by the Centre on the Body and Performance at Goldsmiths College. Overall, the project was found to be “successful in its goals of providing new educational experiences for ‘hard to reach’ young people and teaching them new skills” (p.11).

The Portsmouth pilot study was the result of a partnership collaboration between South East Dance and Hampshire Dance, which was delivered at the Spinnaker Pupil Referral Unit. The pilot study was funded by; Arts Council England, South East; Hampshire Dance, and Portsmouth Drugs Action Team. In order to build on the achievements of this initial project and develop the particular methods employed, a further project was envisaged. This was to have a wider scope in terms of delivery, with the Spinnaker PRU hosting the project, but being one of three centres receiving dance sessions over a more sustained period of time. Two other organisations were identified as interested in this delivery, Waterside School (educational and behavioural difficulties) and Sevenoaks School (Special Needs). In order to bring this to fruition, funding was sought to cover a part-time dance practitioner (2.5 days per week) who would work on the project for a six-month period.

Funding for the project came from a number of sources: Arts Council England, South East; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (for training); with partnership support from Hampshire Dance. Once again, South East Dance were concerned to monitor the project, using external, independent researchers, to evaluate its achievements, and carefully assess both its particular practices (with the view to developing a model for socially inclusive dance work with ‘at risk’ young people), and its observable benefits for those involved. This meant that the scope of the project included funding for a research strand to run alongside the delivery.

This report is the third in a series commissioned by South East Dance and undertaken by Goldsmiths College with Professor Helen Thomas as lead. The first (referred to above) was an evaluation of the pilot project (Tarr and Thomas, 2003), and the second an evaluation of the Epsom Dance and Video Project (Slater and Thomas, 2004). As such, we have chosen to follow the same report format. The two previous pieces of research will be drawn on to provide data against which to compare and contrast the findings from this lengthier project in Portsmouth.

2. Context

This report aims to set out and evaluate South East Dance's Creative Dance Apprenticeships Portsmouth Project, which targeted young 'hard to reach' young people. The report directs attention to Spinnaker PRU and Waterside School in particular. There is growing interest in the potential of arts activities to engage with young people deemed to be either 'at risk' of or experiencing the negative impacts of social exclusions, and to offer them constructive avenues through which to resist and dispel the many pessimistic indicators that their situations and experiences predict for them. For example, one of the key findings of the 2003 MORI Survey of youth offending states that "Exclusion from school is the most significant factor in offending levels, with permanently excluded children more than twice as likely to get involved in crime" (www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk).

While the positive impacts of involvement in a range of arts activities such as dance, drama, music, and multi-media, may not be news to arts practitioners and youth workers, the numbers of projects that consciously use arts to tackle social exclusion are growing. The current challenge is to find methods to evaluate and evidence the benefits and outcomes in ways that are tangible and valuable to those either outside of 'hands on' delivery, or the arts sector which has a bearing on policy making and funding streams.

The Creative Dance Apprenticeships Portsmouth Project under investigation in this report, like the Epsom Dance and Video Project, is "firmly situated within this stream of cutting edge policy and practice, by utilising arts activities with the aim of delivering a number of positive outcomes, targeted at groups of excluded young people." (Slater and Thomas 2004: 5)

3. Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the Portsmouth project delivery and the research element are separate, although clearly interlinked.

3.1 Project Aims

The Portsmouth Project comes under a wider umbrella project, Creative Dance Apprenticeships (CDA), spearheaded by South East Dance, and summarized as -

Creative Dance Apprenticeships is an adventurous dance project aimed at 'hard to reach' young people. With support from specialist arts and youth practitioners, young people involved will have the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge and develop their creativity

through dance, video and music-making and communications technology. Taking place within disadvantaged communities across seven local/unitary authorities, Creative Dance Apprenticeships aims to make a lasting impact on young people and teachers/ leaders.

(from Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Application 2003)

There are three key elements to the CDA scheme, identified as –

- **Training** – practitioners (dance artists and youth leaders) and young people's accredited training
- **Delivery** – of an incremental programme of projects made by and for young people: taster projects, next steps and training projects. The result will be the creation of products for live presentation, broadcasting and merchandising.
- **Research** – a comprehensive, longitudinal research programme led by Research Director, Professor Helen Thomas, Sociology Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London, to establish methodology for evaluation of dance activity with young people.

A fourth element comes into play by necessity, which is the organisation of the project and therefore involves partner organisations. Through a partnership approach to delivery of individual projects regionally, a network is developed which involves the sharing of information, expertise and resources, whilst building the potential for further joint working.

The Portsmouth project aims (against which, much of the project's success will be measured) are taken from the original document submitted to the Gulbenkian Foundation for funding. This application included both the initial pilot phase of the project, and the second phase of the work, with which this report is concerned. However, it must be noted that the aims stated at in the application are an outline of how the project was envisaged at that time, and that this was developed and adapted as the work rolled out. The completion of the pilot phase and its evaluation was a clear point of assessment and re-definition for future work. Therefore, for additional clarity in the definition of the project aims, the research has drawn on interview material primarily from the Project Manager at South East Dance, and the Dance Practitioner.

The Portsmouth Project sought to use dance and arts activities as tools of engagement with young people deemed to be at risk of social exclusion. Therefore, the work aimed to use methods that promoted and provided avenues of inclusion into participation and education / learning. The Project targeted groups of young people who were already working with specific organisations providing education and support outside of mainstream education.

Significantly, the delivery and training / learning involved in this CDA project, did not simply apply to the young people, but included all the participants in the project; practitioners, staff, and young people. The intention was that the learning process resulting from the project delivery should inform future work for all the individuals and organisations involved. As such, it assumes an evolutionary or incremental approach rather than being seen as a discrete piece of work.

It was intended that the practitioner's approach to the work with the young people should be participatory, and they were encouraged to have input into sessions. The clearest illustration of this was the fact that the project anticipated that each of the three centers would develop their own piece of work from the sessions, and that they would decide what form this would take

3.2 Research aims

The research had several primary aims. These were to further test and develop research methodologies employed on the two previous projects (Portsmouth Pilot and Epsom), whilst also observing and recording the progression of this piece of work. The previous projects also served as a useful comparison against which to understand the various elements of delivery. Thus, there was a concern to note similarities and differences between the Portsmouth project, under discussion in this report, and the two previous projects.

Thus, the Portsmouth project aimed to:

- “Further develop a working and flexible research methodology to enable future research in other dance and social inclusion projects
- Find ways of establishing and recording what, if any, beneficial changes and developments (for both groups and individuals) came about through the young people's involvement in the project and their inter-relations with the workers and staff
- Support the sustainability of similar projects with young people, through the comparison of outcomes with government agendas targeting social inclusion and encouraging active citizenship.
- Inform future dance and social inclusion projects through the development of a model of good effective practice that can be practically utilised and adapted. Integral to this are the opinions of those involved; the staff, practitioners, and young people.” (Slater and Thomas 2004: 7)

As the third in a series of research projects concerned with the South East Dance CDA scheme, an additional consideration was to:

- Highlight areas of commonalities and / or differences between this and the previous two evaluated projects

This latest research project built on the methods and findings from the Portsmouth Pilot 2003 (Tarr and Thomas, 2003) and the Epsom Dance and Video Project (Slater

and Thomas, 2004). The research was conducted by Imogen Slater (Research Associate), with Helen Thomas (Research Director) providing guidance and assistance where necessary. As with the previous two projects:

“... [T]he research model adopted was largely qualitative and was designed to be both experimental and flexible in its approach. This was in order to be able to test the efficacy of various methods in gathering research data, and to retain the ability to adapt to the issues and particular circumstances that the progression of the project might encounter. The plan was to be responsive to the individuals involved, who were likely to react differently to the various methods.” (Slater and Thomas, 2004: 8)

There was also a concern to:

“...find the most effective ways in which to give voice to the young people participating in the project, with respect to their experiences of their involvement. To this end, we sought to adopt a participatory methodological framework. The concern was to find ways of measuring and evaluating if and how the aims and objectives of the ... project were met, so as to inform future best practice.” (8)

The research was designed to be an active part of the project delivery through its participatory approach. This meant that the researcher (Imogen Slater) was involved as a participant in dance sessions, as well as in discussions with both the practitioner and South East Dance about the ongoing delivery. This had already been found to be a successful approach with the Epsom Dance and Video Project.

3.3 Partners Aims

The partnership structure was quite different from the Epsom Dance and Video Project, where a steering group made up of representatives from a number of interested organisations came together to oversee the project delivery. With the Portsmouth project South East Dance were solely responsible for the management and delivery of the project. Partners therefore took on other roles, either as host organisations or as regionally focused organisations therefore having useful local knowledge and connections. This means that the aims of the organisations involved in the project were synonymous with the overall project aims.

4. Methodology

The range of methods we employed were the same set as used on the previous two projects. The methods used in Portsmouth included –

- Participant observation
- Dance diary (researcher's)
- Filming

- Interviewing
- Informal discussion
- Session plans and observations (dance practitioner)
- Feedback sessions
- Final review.

As we will show, the Portsmouth Project clearly demonstrated the necessity of a range of flexible research methods. The young people in the Epsom Dance and Video Project (Slater and Thomas, 2004) were comfortable with verbalising their views and feelings about the project they were involved in. This resulted in a lot of written data from questionnaires and interviews. Compared with these research tools, the video record of that project was far less informative, and tended to serve as a means by which to corroborate other material.

By contrast, the group of young men at Waterside, an all boy's school, where the overwhelming part of the research was conducted for reasons given below, were far less willing to vocalise their experiences and views. There is some evidence to suggest that if the project had continued, or is continued at Waterside in the next couple of terms, this hesitancy may be somewhat overcome. However, during the research period the participants used physical expression as their central means of communication rather than verbal means. As a consequence, it was not appropriate to use either questionnaires or diary work with the participants which had both been productive methods in Epsom. This means that the video record is of fundamental importance as the key data source for the Portsmouth project. It must be noted that the majority of the participants are designated as kinaesthetic or visual learners, as opposed to auditory learners.

4.1 Background to the Portsmouth Research Project

Although the Portsmouth project involved three sites, Spinnaker PRU, Waterside School and Sevenoaks School, the intention, as indicated above, was for the research to focus on Spinnaker, in order to build on the pilot study. As we discuss below, this was not altogether possible and Waterside became the major research focus.

Imogen Slater, the researcher, attended the first dance session in late January, where she met with Maria (the dance practitioner) at the Spinnaker site. They linked up with several members of staff and a small group of young people. Concerns and issues noted at this original session continued to arise over the following weeks. These were primarily that: there was little continuity in terms of the attendance of both staff and young people; the young people were effectively compelled to attend; the venue was not ideally suited to the sessions; the group was mixed in terms of age and gender (and had different arrival times); there was very little interaction / communication between the centre staff and the dance tutor.

The researcher was not able to film until the fourth Spinnaker session in Portsmouth as consent had to be obtained from parents and guardians first.

After the first 3 sessions there was a two week break during which the practitioner tried to reorganise the sessions. The changes she implemented with the aim of making the sessions more engaging for the participants included: using a different room; working more closely with staff; getting the staff to be actively involved in the sessions; splitting sessions into two groups, advanced followed by everybody together; allowing particular participants to get involved with the music.

After this session, it was decided that the researcher should begin to visit Waterside School the following week as the practitioner felt that while little progress was being made at Spinnaker, the sessions at the other two centres were working well. The researcher attended the Spinnaker session straight after this, which had to be cancelled as there was no music equipment, plus only two young people had turned up.

As a consequence, the research for this project covers sessions at two of the three centres, with feedback from the third through the practitioner and Deputy Head. In terms of observing group and individual progress the research was limited to following this at Waterside. While it was useful to attend sessions at two centres the contrast between them was stark. It also meant that neither centres were attended fully by the researcher. As useful background material, the dance tutor gave the researcher her plans and notes for the Waterside sessions prior to the researcher's attendance, plus a useful induction booklet provided by the school. This included some information on each of the participants.

There were several notable factors which struck attention on the first research visit to Waterside; the calm atmosphere of the school, the good relationships that the staff had with both the young people and the dance tutor, and the engagement of the young people in the sessions. This was perhaps more surprising given that this group of young people are regarded as having greater learning needs and social issues than those at Spinnaker. It was decided that the researcher would continue to attend the sessions at Waterside and cease to attend the Spinnaker sessions at the Landport Centre.

This illustrates both the flexibility of the research approach and some of the difficulties that occurred, despite prior planning. The research had time limitations and therefore it was impossible to follow the developments at all three centres. It was hoped that following sessions in one centre would produce the best research data and results, through charting progress and building working relationships with the young people taking part.

Both groups of young people (Spinnaker and Waterside) were tangibly 'hard to reach' though in distinct ways. With the young people from Spinnaker there was an apparent wariness with all adults, as well as a resistance to anything 'educational'. During the first few weeks that the researcher attended, there was clearly a struggle to engage the young people in the session, which meant that it was inappropriate to make any kind of formal research approach. The intention was that relationships of trust would build over a period of time,

which would allow the researcher to talk with individuals about their experiences of the sessions. As a decision was made to move the research strand from Spinnaker to Waterside, this did not come to fruition. Interestingly, however, at the first and only session at Spinnaker that the researcher was able to video, the very action of setting up the camera to record provoked questions and discussion. It seemed to give the young people a different perspective on the sessions. At the end of the session, the researcher played back what had been taped and the young people clearly enjoyed this. The videotaping, again, proved to be a useful tool for initiating comments on the dance session.

At Waterside School, the young men involved in the dance sessions, seemed to be far more quickly receptive to the presence of the researcher as a researcher and as an unknown adult coming into their environment. For example, on the very first day one individual initiated an unprompted conversation with the researcher in a way that had at no time been possible with the young people at Spinnaker. This seems to be reflective of the overall ethos of Waterside and the generally positive relationships in existence between staff and pupils. Despite this, both the researcher and the dance tutor found that talking was not a method of communication that most of them found easy for any sustained period. Therefore, they quickly learnt to keep this to a minimum and ensured that information given to the young people was succinct and clear. Talking within the group was different from informal discussions with one or two members at the end of the project. There was limited opportunity to do this as the dance session was timetabled like other classes, and therefore there was no possibility of any extra time at the end. Everyone left rapidly as soon as the bell went.

In summary, the research was not able to take the original course that had been planned from the outset; following the delivery in one of the three centres from start to finish. With hindsight this has meant that the research in some aspects is not as systematically sustained as it might have been. Conversely, the research benefited from the partial involvement with sessions in two centres and the sometimes stark differences between these, despite having the same dance practitioner and delivery practices.

4.2 Participant observation

The participant observation took a number of forms. Primarily, it involved keeping a weekly record of each session, noting attendance, engagement, group work, behaviour, and the overall ambiance of the sessions. The dance tutor fed into this in several ways. At the end of each session there would be discussion with the researcher about their perceptions and insights. This added to the richness of the record, and at times helped reinforce particular aspects. The practitioner kept her own written record which was open to the researcher. The video record was used to check details, and as a reflective tool. Lastly feedback from staff also added to the wider picture of the individual participants. This information would sometimes include events that had happened in the previous week that affected behaviours of either individuals or the whole group.

4.3 Informal discussions

Informal discussions, as indicated above, were limited due to the short time frame for the sessions. Discussion mostly occurred at the beginning and end of the class. At the beginning, it frequently covered who would not be attending and why, and what they wanted to do within the session. Sometimes there would be fairly in depth conversations about various moves, and why they either liked or did not like different styles of dance. For example 'tutting' was not popular with most of the young men, despite the fact that several of them seemed to pick it and were able to perform the moves quite easily. There was also discussion about linking sequences together, and who needed to do what.

The researcher attended nine sessions at Waterside over approximately a three month period. There were a few breaks in this period because of, for example, half term or because the session had to be cancelled. It was only towards the end of this time, that individuals within the group began to feel comfortable talking in any kind of depth. The necessity of extended periods of research, particularly with this client group, is self evident.

When the researcher and practitioner tried to discuss the possibility of making a video of their dance sessions, it seemed to have the effect of discouraging dialogue. One of the intended aims of video making with the group was as an indirect way of prompting feedback and views on the sessions. This was extremely effective but with hindsight programmed too late. Several core members of the group had exams and after these left school. They were invited back both verbally and by letter to attend for filming purposes, but only two of them actually attended.

4.4 Video recording

Video tapes were made of all the sessions except one that the researcher attended at Waterside. A static camera was used which was situated at the back of the hall in the optimum position to capture the majority of the movement and action. The only session not recorded was one that involved playing the participants a selection of the tapes of them, plus some additional videos of other dance material.

In Portsmouth, In contrast to Epsom, the activity of dancing was the core of the project. The video material, therefore, is the primary source of data for the research. With the taped material at the centre of the focus, all the other material exists as support, triangulation, and additional information to this.

The researchers found the video material to be particularly important to this group as other methods involving talking, were less effective. The video material was immediate, while it was only towards the end of the project that some members of the group began to feel safe and confident enough to talk with the researcher and dance practitioner in any sustained and 'in depth' way. As a group the young men at Waterside express themselves very clearly through actions and activity. It has been found that developments both in the group and for the various individuals can be visibly mapped through this material.

4.5 Feedback and interviews with staff

There were two formal interviews with professionals associated with the project (the Project Manager and Dance Practitioner). These were semi-structured in that the interviewer prepared some outline questions / themes for the interviews. However these were intended to prompt discussion and allow the interviewee some leeway to direct the conversation. This enabled the respondents to raise what they considered to be the central themes and most important issues overall.

There were weekly discussions between the researcher and the dance practitioner after each session, and usually with the Project Manager also by phone. This not only meant that there was good communication within the project team, but in terms of the research that there was feedback throughout the duration of the delivery. These discussions tied together the practical side of delivery together with the organisational aims. It meant that there was a continuing evaluation of the project along with efforts to constantly develop its efficacy.

The research gained some feedback from three staff from two of the participating centres after delivery had ceased. This was from a one-off workshop session run by South East Dance. The research could usefully have gained from more direct feedback from staff but this was hindered by a number of factors; there were not consistent staff involved at either Spinnaker or Waterside who attended all the sessions; no additional time was set aside for the project outside of sessions, and staff were inevitably extremely busy. While staff at various times commented on the benefits of the project to the young people taking part, the ways in which this impacts on the rest of their educational experience on a weekly basis could be effectively monitored with programmed feedback sessions taking place with school and project staff.

5. Themes and outcomes

There were a total of 8 young men who attended the sessions at Waterside aged between 13 and 16 years, recruited from three different year groups (9's, 10's, and 11's). In relation to ethnicity, seven of the young men are categorised as 'White UK' and one as 'MOTH' which is an abbreviation of 'mixed other'. It should be noted that these ethnic groupings are those used by the school. For the purposes of the research all the pupils involved have been given aliases.

The participants who attended the dance sessions, did so on a voluntary basis. The school is a small one (54 pupils in total) and therefore the year groups are likewise small in number. For the first few sessions the researcher attended, the young men came straight into the dance sessions from football. Although they were fairly hot and tired this did not seem to affect their willingness to participate. Their PE teacher left after Easter and as a result of this it appears that none of this group continued with sports prior to the dance class. While this meant that they had more energy, it did not necessarily increase their focus.

Of the group of 8, 2 members decided not to continue with the dance towards the end. Their attendance had lacked continuity because both were frequently either not in school, or not allowed to attend. This left a core group of 5 who attended very regularly. It should also be noted that of the 9 sessions the researcher attended, four of these were after the year 11's had officially left school. However, of the regular attendees, 3 were year 11's and chose to continue to attend even when they no longer had to be in school. This illustrates the achievement of the dance tutor and her ability to engage with these 'hard to reach' young people in the sessions she ran.

5.1 Group dynamics

The dynamics within the group of young men participating are clearly observable in the video footage of the project, and are reflected in the written observations from each weekly session. As indicated above, the sessions were single gender because the school is for 'boys' only. Several professionals with experience of teaching dance have stated that they felt this resulted in the young men being far less inhibited than they would have been had the group included girls.

The dance practitioner did not at any time refer to the sessions as 'dance sessions', as she felt this was likely to be off-putting to them. Instead, she usually said 'hip-hop', which carries very different connotations, because of its associations with street and youth culture and pop-videos, unlike formalised dance genres, which appear to have negative connotations for this cohort.

That the group was a mixture of years / ages affected the overall group dynamics; the older boys tended to be more dominant. Age was also a factor that affected the attendance and commitment of the participants. The older

boys formed a core group; they attended regularly, and demonstrated enjoyment and concentration in the sessions. From June, they no longer had to attend school because of having exams and then being able to leave. This meant that the impetus of the dance sessions tailed off. It also impacted on the aim of making a documentary video with them.

As individuals in a small school, the young men knew each other well. There were also, inevitably, bonds between some and frictions between others. On the whole, they seemed tolerant of each other's behaviour. For example, one of the younger participants was frequently disruptive and while at times this might cause amusement, it was most usually ignored. Those who were focused on the dance continued to be so. It was with the activity itself and importantly, with the dance tutor that the central focus of the space resided. Other movements and activities were peripheral, usually brief, and were not given focus or attention. Although individuals at times could be or tried to be disruptive, the video footage often shows them 'coming back in' to the central activity. Not surprisingly the sessions that were the most productive, concentrated, and energetically charged in a positive sense, were those when the two young men with the greatest attention difficulties were not present.

As a group the young men at Waterside functioned very differently from the Epsom group, which was already extremely tightly knit and interlinked through social and familial networks (Slater and Thomas, 2004). Initially, the former was only a 'group' in as much as the participants had all chosen to attend the dance sessions. This changed and developed over the course of the project. A core group of five established itself, made up of those who attended most regularly. These were not necessarily only those individuals who were either most focused or found dancing the easiest. In fact, two individuals seemed in the initial sessions to be unlikely contenders, but with time, became more and more involved, moving from being uncomfortable to being confident.

Of these five, three were year 11's and two were year 10's. One individual was an outsider at the outset, and either ignored or was intimidated by the others. This is apparent in the video footage. Three of the young men (John, Sam, Anthony) actively play-fight regularly. One of them, John, is the most physically dominant and the most aggressive. When they play-fight with each other, it is a two-way exchange that both participants seem to enjoy. John and Sam use the same play-fighting actions with another young man, Karl, who does not willingly participate in their sparring game. Each time Sam or John makes an aggressive play-fight move on Karl, he is not only submissive in the sense that he moves backwards away from the action, but he can also be seen to cower. During dance sequences, Karl will distance himself and move position to be away from John, the most dominant participant and sometimes nearer to the dance tutor as a form of protection. The fifth boy (Liam) seems neutral and neither participates nor is challenged by the others.

Later sessions reveal that these tensions lessen. Karl who was at first submissive and observably nervous around other group members, becomes more confident and plays a more active part of the sessions. He can be seen

moving to the front of the dance space and engaging with the dance tutor, and is secure in suggesting and trying out moves.

The final session was attended by only Sam and Karl. In the video footage, they visibly work very hard in this session and benefit from the undivided attention from the tutor. They cover a lot of different moves and sequences and these are linked up. Part of this involves a piece where the two boys face each other in a mirror like way and then move across each other and exchange places. During this they actually dance together in a positive and energetic way and seem to be enjoying what they are doing. At the end of the session, they do a 'high five' handclap together in mutual acknowledgement of not only what they have achieved as individuals, but also together.

After the dance finished, the researcher and the dance tutor spent some time talking, under the auspices of filming for the documentary video. They both gave long monologues and seemed to forget that they were talking to camera. There was verbal recognition by Sam and Karl that they were now friends because of being involved in the dance sessions together. They expressed a respect for each other which they did not have at the outset.

5.2 Participation

The term participation is used here not to simply mean taking part in the activity. Rather, the young people's involvement is an active one requiring input, and the approach of the project is essentially participatory.

The dance practitioner planned each session carefully, building on developments and observations from previous weeks. Her session plans included 'before' and 'after' elements, so it is possible to glean from them not only what was planned, but how this worked in delivery, and how it might have been adapted. The plans are divided into sections and contain 'Aims', 'Outcomes', 'Content', 'Teaching', and 'Evaluation'. The 'Teaching' section refers to style and is usually categorised as either, 'directed', 'guided' or 'consultant'. The last refers to the tutor acting as a consultant to the participants' ideas and suggestions.

An important part of the programme for the practitioner was to encourage the young people to have a creative input into the sessions. This was done in a careful and considered way, and one in which they often did not realise that this was being drawn out from them. It also required time and trust to be able to come into play. They were consulted in a subtle way that enabled them to express themselves, or suggest a movement without feeling under pressure or 'put on the spot'. It became a natural and integral part of the sessions; one that the tutor monitored and nurtured.

The fact of the young men's participation in the dance sessions at Waterside was significant. They were given importance and respect by the professional consulting with them and taking on their ideas. This raised self-esteem and encouraged an ownership of the activity taking place. Instead of a formal

teacher / pupil scenario, the teaching was interactive or two way. This style of working also enabled young people to experience positive feelings of satisfaction and achievement. Through daring to show or express something, and being taken seriously for so doing, there were immediate rewards as opposed to derision. It was also an essential part of the way the young men learnt to work together, and be receptive to others ideas.

For future work of this kind, it should be central to build on this element of participation, and it could be one of the points in returning to a centre in a cyclical programme, as this would be likely increase accordingly over time.

5.3 Focus and concentration

The older members of the group generally displayed more focus and concentration. Two of the younger boys who were the least frequent attendees, were also the least focused. It is acknowledged that this might have more relation to their individual learning needs than their age. A number of the group are diagnosed as having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) or ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). These conditions mean that they can exhibit or be -

- “1. Overactive, excessively boisterous behaviours
- 2. Difficulty in paying attention and easily distracted
- 3. Frequently impulsive”

(Information and Guidelines for Managing Children with ADHD and Concentration Difficulties in School, Kate Olliver-Kneafsey, Primary Mental Health Practitioner, On-Track).

The above guidelines also note that for this group of children and young people self-esteem is likely to be an issue, “Children with concentration difficulties nearly always have low self-esteem and children with low self-esteem are less inclined to please the important adults in their lives, such as parents and teachers”.

Because of the nature of the activity and the singular approach of the tutor hyperactivity was not an issue in the sessions. It was either ignored or incorporated into what was happening. It is clear that a young man who has ADHD is likely to find a session in a large space with lots of movement easier than one that requires desk work. The practitioner often focused on some of the more easily distracted participants by getting them to show her movements. In this way, they frequently received her approval and encouragement.

5.4 Difficulties and achievements

The difficulties and achievements associated with the delivery of the Portsmouth project relate to the experiences at Waterside. The following summary and bullet points are drawn from all those involved in the project, and focus on the issues and outcomes associated with the actual delivery and the young people involved. Outcomes relating to the project in its widest sense are covered in Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

Overall, the difficulties at Waterside were minimal and had little impact on the success and achievements of the sessions. There were however some issues that could be usefully addressed for future programmes that would ensure both smoother organisation and greater positive benefits from such work. The delivery of this kind of dance programme in any centre requires a key person or gate-keeper. This is evidenced by the comparative experiences in each of the three centres, as well as with the previous two projects. The centre that had a single person attending the sessions, acting as a link between the dance practitioner and the host organisation, encouraging the young people, and dealing with any necessary organisational issues, was deemed the most successful in its delivery and in achieving an end piece of work.

Waterside was the median of the three. The staff were helpful, enthusiastic, and supportive, but there was no single person involved throughout. The main point of contact at the school was the Deputy Head, who already had a large workload. Different members of staff attended the sessions at different times, and some were more involved than others with the young people and the dance activity taking place.

There needed to be extra time programmed for the project with both staff and young people. This would have enabled better joint working, feedback, dealt with organisational hiccups, and essentially have helped the project develop further and integrate more fully into the rest of school life.

The idea of making a video came from the aim for each group at the three schools to produce a self-chosen and directed project. There were two main reasons for this. First, the success of this idea with the Epsom project, and secondly so that the young people involved had something concrete at the end to illustrate their achievements. Despite the reasoning seeming viable, the way in which this was put into practice did not work. It was tagged onto the end of the project with the impetus coming from staff as opposed to the young people. It also came at a point when energies were low, and the focus for most of the group was on exams and leaving school, rather than becoming involved with a new project. Lastly, for the group as a whole, the hub of the project was the activity of dance and not in the production of something recording this.

Difficulties -

- Keeping them focused
- Working on sequences that they found harder
- Having enough time with them
- Discussion and feedback
- Making a video
- Continuity
- Lack of key person

Achievements -

The achievements of the dance delivery for the young people at Waterside were significant. They have been divided into four groups -

A. Motivation

- Attendance
- Focus and concentration
- Engagement and responsiveness

B. Social and Group skills

- Working as a group
- Social Interaction
- Communicating constructively

C. Personal Development

- Self confidence
- Positive self image
- Beginnings of participation / empowerment through personal input

D. Educational Skills

- Experiential learning
- Cultural awareness
- Fitness / PHSE

5.5 Developing networks for delivery

This piece of work as a second stage of a wider project envisaged by South East Dance has very effectively built, and developed its links with partner organisations, and key people within these. The delivery of dance sessions in three host centres has involved a learning process for all those involved. The lessons and knowledge acquired could usefully be applied to future delivery, increasing the benefits and outcomes for all. It should also inform the ways in which delivery might be expanded into new environments, therefore making this a smoother process.

Much of the learning has involved the organisation of the programme rather than the actual delivery. The delivery was most successful in centres where there was a key person (or key people) responsible on a daily basis for dealing with organisational issues relating to the delivering the dance sessions. The centre in which there was a single dedicated person who attended sessions, and worked closely with the dance practitioner, could also be regarded as the most successful in achieving tangible outcomes. This key person acts as a gatekeeper between the dance and dance tutor and the young people / school environment.

There was some discussion with this programme about how the work and the young people in the different centres might be brought together (e.g. an event) but this was not feasible in terms of time or resources. This would require greater networking between the various educational organisations, and could be considered for future programmes.

The feedback from staff in the schools pointed to a desire to play a greater part in the delivery, and the planning and execution of this. In particular it was felt that the dance sessions could benefit other parts of the curriculum from being better integrated into a school programme as a whole. This would require greater levels of planning, organisation and liaison before the onset of delivery.

6. Keys to success

This research identified six main reasons for the success of the project. This is drawn from observations made from attendance at Spinnaker and Waterside, and from feedback on delivery at Sevenoaks. It should also be noted that useful comparisons were made between the three host centres, two of which (Waterside and Sevenoaks) are deemed successful in their programme and outcomes, while the third (Spinnaker) was not. In terms of the research, the reasons why the delivery was hindered in one of the three centres provide some important pointers as to what are the requisites for success.

6.1 Voluntary participation

Each centre took a slightly different approach to how the dance sessions were 'sold' to the young people. Two centres (Waterside and Sevenoaks) incorporated the dance sessions into the pupils' weekly schedule while one centre (Waterside) viewed the dance sessions as a 'treat' or reward which was dependent on the pupils' good behaviour. The centres decided who was eligible and therefore the make up of the group in terms of age and gender. However, the factor that appeared to affect how the young people viewed the sessions (positively or negatively) was whether they had been able to choose to attend the sessions, or whether this decision was made for them and deemed to be compulsory. The young people who had 'chosen' the dance sessions as an option, had a far more positive attitude from the outset. At Spinnaker, by contrast, where the young people had no choice but to join, it was extremely hard work for the dance practitioner to get them to take part at all, and attendance was also inconsistent and poor.

6.2 The Vernacular - Using Hip hop and street style dance genres

The delivery in the Portsmouth project used particular dance styles, such as hip hop and street style dancing, which young people find attractive. This approach had already shown success in engaging with young people in the two earlier CDA projects (Tarr and Thomas, 2003; Slater and Thomas, 2004). There are several components to this, which, in part, explain this undoubted attraction. To begin with, these dance styles are a part of popular youth culture and as such, are familiar to young people. As a consequence, they carry associations which mean that they are seen to be desirable and 'cool'. They are accessible to young people and link into their lives and experiences elsewhere, particularly through music and video.

That the dance styles are known to most young people means that they may already have tried to imitate them. The dance tutor selected movements and

parts of these styles that were non-gender specific. This meant that young women and the young men in particular, were not 'put off' by them. Therefore, they did not feel uncomfortable when performing the movements. Music was also a vital part of the sessions and the tutor encouraged the young people to bring in and select music tracks. This meant that there was an immediate link between the music they chose to listen to in their everyday life and the dance moves they were learning in the sessions fitted quite naturally with this.

6.3 Offering something not easily accessible elsewhere

This simply refers to the fact that regular access to dance sessions is something that is not readily available to most of the young people participating in this project. Even if their situations and resources meant that it was possible to attend (outside of school), it is unlikely that most of them would have done so. This is partly linked to ideas about gender and dance and partly because it would require both self-confidence and sustained motivation on the part of the individual. This is not to imply that all the young people involved do not possess these qualities. Generally speaking, their experiences of life and / or schooling to date mean that these are qualities which they are in the process of acquiring. Having attended the sessions, we would suggest that given the opportunity, many would take part again. One young woman from Spinnaker asked the tutor about other places where she teaches. The young men at Waterside who were still in school felt that they would like to do more dance sessions in the future and that these should be made available to others in their school.

6.4 The dance practitioners' skills

The research recognises that the project relies heavily on the dance practitioner having special skills and expertise and this is supported by the experience of South East Dance. There are a number of necessary qualities and skills without which this kind of work would be impossible.

First, the tutor needs to have the ability to teach hip hop and street styles. Secondly and perhaps most importantly, the tutor needs to have an understanding of young people who are characterised as being 'at risk', and to be able to respond to their specific needs and behaviours. This is played out through an ability to be aware of the young people as individuals and as a group, and to respond flexibly to them within sessions. The dance tutor also requires reflective abilities so that s/he is able to analyse the work s/he does, focusing on how individuals and dynamics operate within the dance sessions, and finding ways to respond creatively to these.

The Portsmouth Project was fortunate in that it managed to find and recruit a dance tutor who had the skills we have outlined above. Interestingly, the tutor herself felt that she had learned a great deal from her involvement in this project. She described herself as having moved from being a 'dancer' to being a 'practitioner' and feels that now she is really ready for this kind of work. She said for her the realisation of this breakthrough came when she realised before a session that she was thinking about the individual young people that she would be working with, rather than thinking about steps.

This project also required that the practitioner have good organisational, administrative, liaison, and IT skills, as the role required setting up the programme in each of the three centres and maintaining this on a weekly basis. South East Dance acknowledge that it is extremely difficult to find good dance practitioners who also are proficient in these areas. The practitioner in Portsmouth found this side of the role far harder than that of delivery, and during the programme made efforts to improve her IT competency. It would be useful to review how best to support and manage the organisational aspects of delivery in the future, and whether these responsibilities should be the practitioners, or alternatively if the roles might best be divided.

6.5 The support of the host centre

The support of the host centres was clearly essential in order to be able to deliver the dance sessions at all. However, the forms this support took and how the dance provision was regarded meant that this is a more complex issue than it might initially appear. Verbal agreement was given to hosting weekly sessions from the Heads and Deputy Heads of the three respective schools. The Deputy Heads at all three centres took up the role of having ongoing involvement with the project.

However, the Deputy Heads' ability to focus on the project may have been different in each centre due to workload levels and current issues within their particular school environments. In one school, the Deputy Head was able to dedicate time to the project and actually attend sessions. In the other schools where this was not feasible or possible, with hindsight what was needed was the nomination of another member of staff to take on this role. The research clearly found (as with Epsom and the Portsmouth Pilot) that a nominated person who acts as the primary link between the project and the school is a vital element in the success of the project. This key person needs to establish a good connection with the dance tutor and communicate on a regular basis. The ideal is that this person should attend the dance sessions and become actively involved in the dance activity. They can also be a conduit for linking the dance sessions into other parts of the school life.

The support given to the project had a philosophical and a practical angle. How the sessions were regarded seemed to influence the ease of delivery. For example, in two of the schools the dance delivery was viewed as a positive and beneficial resource for the young people, which, effectively was being 'given' to the school. The more difficult side to this was that it meant staffing, programming, finding space, and generally supporting the work. These issues were dealt with accordingly, as the project was considered to be worth the extra work that was required.

6.6 A non-educational activity?

The dance sessions were seen as non-educational and as such were attractive to the young people. They were a break from the usual programme, and had appeal as something unusual. Some of the teaching staff noted that the dance tutor had a 'special' status in the young people's eyes, as she was not seen as a teacher, and was associated with a culture and an activity that they were interested in, in the first place.

The use of dance and music seemed particularly useful with young people who have kinaesthetic / visual learning styles, and / or other characteristics that mean formal educational methods can be problematic. The environment, the activity, and the approach adopted in the sessions allowed them the freedom to express themselves without censure, to take part despite concentration difficulties and to direct their often high energies.

While the sessions were not formally educational it was clear that there were outcomes for the young people that involved developing education and social skills. There was some awareness of this expressed by several of the young men at Waterside who said that it had positively affected their relationships with each other.

7. Areas for development

The delivery itself was extremely high-quality which was due to the individual dance practitioner. The practitioner demonstrated an ability to be both flexible and extremely responsive to the individual young people and to the different environments that the project operated in.

While this project has highlighted some the lessons or formula that have been vital for successful delivery, there are also areas in which the project can develop and grow. Overall, these relate to the organisation of the project and improving its integration into the educational host centres.

7.1 Working with host centres

The primary recommendation of the report is the importance of the effective integration of the organisation of the project with host centres. If this is put in practice, then the other areas of development discussed below would be explored as a matter of course.

The project would have benefited from a lead-in time before it commenced. The lead-in time needs to be carried out in conjunction with host centres and staff dedicated to the project. This is important because it allows time for better planning. The planning should include discussion and agreement about the details of delivery such as suitable space, recruitment of the young people, sharing information about young people, pinning down links between the project and other parts of the curriculum, etc. In this time, necessary parental consent for filming etc. could be sought so that the project would not face being hindered at a later stage, as we reported in the discussion of one centre (Spinnaker).

With regard to space for dance activity, this was seen to have a significant impact on the sessions in Portsmouth. Issues around space include privacy, size, flooring material, sound, distraction / interruption, and light and air. It also affected participants if there was an 'audience', i.e. people who sat at the edges and observed through windows, rather than actively joining in. The

participants needed to feel free to express themselves, to sometimes struggle, laugh and so forth, unobserved.

Essentially, communication and good working relationships between practitioner/s and staff need to be established early on, along with an understanding of the aims and interests of each contingent. This would also open up the potential for the tutor to pass on teaching methods as was originally intended for this project, but was not feasible during this stage of the work.

Communication needs to be maintained throughout the project and should include feedback sessions with both staff and young people programmed in from the start. This would create an arena for the expression of ideas and opinions that could very usefully be fed back into the work and allow time for dealing with practical issues.

One of the main issues seemed to centre around programming. Staff at Waterside said that after the sessions the young men were “buzzing”, and therefore that the timetabling would have worked better if it had taken place just before the lunch break.

7.2 Key staff / gatekeepers

The discussion of key staff/gatekeepers clearly follows on from the previous point. In the Portsmouth project, as was evidenced in the Epsom project, having a ‘gatekeeper’ was crucial to the success of delivery. A host centre needs to nominate one or two (ideally one) members of staff to take on this role, who will be involved with the project on a weekly basis throughout its course. This role entails planning in the early stages, and linking into the rest of the school life and curriculum. Vitally, it also offers a consistency in working with the young people through the relationship this key member of staff already has with them, and their ability to encourage and monitor progress.

The role of the gatekeeper is also important as the first port of call for the practitioner. As discussed earlier, one centre in the Portsmouth project did not identify any key person in this role. This meant that the practitioner had great difficulty in addressing issues arising from delivery, and therefore the response was critically slow.

7.3 Recruitment of young people

The project in Portsmouth was usefully instructive regarding the ways in which young people are recruited to take part in sessions, due to the fact that comparisons could be drawn across the different approaches in each of the centres of delivery.

This research found that it was fundamental to individual and group outcomes that the young people themselves were able to opt to be involved. Where the young people were able to choose (or not) to participate, the attitude to the project was significantly more positive from the outset. Research findings also point to a more positive approach if the project is seen as a part of the young

peoples' normal week, as opposed to a reward for good behaviour. However this is not necessarily the only way to proceed. How the project is 'sold' to the young people, and what the terms and parameters of this are, needs to be agreed with the host centre at the beginning. It also should to be clearly established with the young people.

A longer lead-in time would allow for the possibility of 'marketing' the project idea with young people, for the practitioner to begin to get to know them, and for the staff and tutor to encourage them to 'give it a go'. They could also be informed about the possible benefits for them if they take part (for example, accreditation, a performance or video, etc.). It might be beneficial to run a taster session at this point, if it is possible within school programming limitations.

7.4 Curriculum and accreditation

The feedback from staff at two of the centres made clear the cross curricular potential of this type of project. They made suggestions about how it might profitably connect with other parts of the curriculum, such as IT, and Design and Technology (D&T). As we have already stated, this would require careful consideration and planning involving staff and practitioner/s. The energy that was created by the delivery of the Portsmouth project at Waterside for example, could then be directed into enthusiasm about associated learning. It is worth noting that this was also observed in the Epsom project.

One of the outcomes at Epsom was accreditation for the young people's participation and skills development arising from the project. We have seen how this was particularly valuable for young people outside mainstream education. This possibility could be fruitfully explored further in relation to other projects, particularly if the delivery in Portsmouth is to be continued.

7.5 Exploring ways of developing the project

Many of the issues below have already been noted in the report, or link into what has been covered in sections 7.1-7.4. They form the recommendations for the direction and considerations of future projects. Some of these could also be seen as part of an ongoing dialogue during the rolling out of future projects. It is likely that the professionals and young people involved will themselves influence and inform the shape of their individual project.

The organisational issues that this project encountered suggested a number of areas of development which are summarised as -

A. Structural / Organisational Issues

- Planning and programming
- Looking at structures for liaison and management
- Longer lead-in time
- Looking at how the work might be followed on – what outcomes hard and soft
- Looking at what kind of delivery / timescale is most effective
- Reviewing how best to operate and manage the organisational aspects of delivery.

These have been expanded into a number of tasks, or areas of responsibility for either the Lead Agency or the Host Centre, or of both.

B. Lead Agency and Practitioner/s

- Improving understanding of the education system
- To look at how the practitioner can best be supported to develop and maintain the organizational / administration side of the role, or finding alternatives to this i.e. dividing the roles
- Understanding the needs / parameters etc. of educational organisations
- Better links / weekly feedback sessions with staff and young people to understand how this work impacts on the rest of the participants educational experiences. This should then feed responsively into the sessions.
- Exploring possibilities for and delivering accreditation where appropriate
- Developing inter working between centres
- Developing work that links the different parts of the project / institutions
- Consistency and continuity

C. Host Organisations

- Identifying key person / people within organisation
- Better planning, organisation, liaising with staff and practitioner/s prior to delivery
- To link it into other areas of the curriculum
- To use the energy and excitement it produces to feed into other areas
- Exploring working with a number of different groups of young people within an educational setting
- Looking at what kind of delivery / timescale is most effective
- Looking at how the work might be followed on – what outcomes hard and soft?
- Better links / weekly feedback sessions with staff and young people to understand how this work impacts on the rest of the participants educational experiences. This should then feed responsively into the sessions.
- Developing possibilities for inter working with other centres
- Consistency and continuity

8. Conclusion

Wheelworks, an organisation that promotes and delivers participative arts programmes for young people aimed at their social and cultural inclusion, state that in their experience this achieves the following -

- Increases problem solving ability
- Improves communication skills
- Develops aesthetic judgement
- Nurtures intellectual and imaginative growth
- Increases self-awareness and self-esteem

They also are of the opinion that “Youth arts can contribute to more than just personal development - it can provide a medium for young people to explore their own world and be given a voice to express it.” (www.wheelworks.org.uk/information)

At Waterside, the research was able to observe a number of the positive outcomes listed above including developments in self-confidence and communication. The significance of the kind of cutting edge project we have examined in Portsmouth is twofold, it embraces the importance of arts activities for young people, and combines this with the ability of arts practices to provide effective tools with which to tackle the negative impacts of social exclusions. The research found that the specific dance and music activities employed in the project are an effective way of engaging and working constructively with young people outside mainstream education for the following reasons -

- They are seen as enjoyable and not directly educational
- The styles of dance and music employed were of the vernacular and therefore both familiar and attractive to the young people
- The activities are particularly suitable to those who have special educational needs – e.g. kinaesthetic learners, those with short attention spans due to ADHD etc.

Evidently, this type of project is successful at promoting group work and delivering social skills outcomes, as well as a range of positive educational and social outcomes for the individual participants. The work in Portsmouth project therefore, corroborates the findings of the original Portsmouth pilot and the Epsom Dance and Video project.

The project in Portsmouth initiated by South East Dance, set out its aims for development in years 2 and 3 in the original application to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation -

“Beyond year 1, Creative Dance Apprenticeships in Portsmouth will target new groups and host organisations to access the incremental programme and training course, as well as sustaining activity with groups and teachers/assistants from year 1. We also anticipate

developing and offering committed young people the opportunity to undertake training courses accredited by the Open College Network.”

This research regards year 2 of the project as successful in achieving what it set out to do, and the aims stated above continue to represent a relevant and appropriate course for future development. Year 2 has seen a range of positive outcomes from the work carried out and vitally, a process of learning for all those involved, individuals and organisations, young people and adults. On the basis of what has already been achieved and established it seems essential that the work should continue in order to consolidate its lessons and successes.

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