

PROOF OF THE PUDDING

PARTICIPATORY ARTS EVIDENCE FOR ARTISTS

Tools to help tell your story, attract new partners for your work and access funding

Part Three: Case Studies



Image: People Dancing Summer School. Photo: Rachel Cherry



**People
Dancing**
the foundation for
community dance



ArtWorks Alliance



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



arts
fundraising &
philanthropy

The following case studies have been contributed by members of ArtWorks Alliance or members of the individual alliance organisations.

Case studies are one way of telling a project story.

These particular case studies have been chosen to represent a range of art forms, participants and settings. Although they use a similar format, they highlight different aspects of project storytelling and between them, also help demonstrate the range of partners that can be involved in a participatory arts project; the variety of funders; the different evaluation methods that can be used; and the wider research and evidence context in which work takes place.



Image: Art as Life. A Practice for Everyday Life. Photo: Kaja Nisha Patel

Example 1: Melva

Delivered by: Mortal Fools & Children North East

Partners: Gosforth Civic Theatre (Liberdade Community Development Trust)

Funding partners: Northumberland County Council, Arts Council England, & NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group

Summary:

MELVA is a creative intervention for schools which centres around a play, MELVA, for young people aged 7-11 years old. The project tackles mental health and anxiety in children and young people. It teaches children and teachers alike how to talk about and better understand their worries and develop better mental health practices. KS2 students get pre-visit classroom activities before Mortal Fools' production team sets up a full studio theatre in their school hall. The students watch the performance and spend the rest of the day participating in workshops which explore the lessons learnt in the play.

Evaluation:

- Surveys based on the Five Steps to Wellbeing and PERMA (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement) framework created by Martin Seligman were completed by students before and after the project to track tangible impacts on emotional wellbeing.
- Each school selected at least three students to monitor as case studies. The project data is substantial and is currently being analysed by an evaluator.



Image: Katie Powell as Melva and Stan Hodgson as Gideon in Melva.

Photo: Sound Ideas MediaCaption

This case study is particularly useful as an example of:

- Partnering with a children's charity and another arts organisation
- Securing commissioning funding from the health sector
- Reaching a wide range of individual schools
- Describing project impact on participants and what they learned
- Supporting teachers' continuing professional development
- Using a range of evaluation methodologies including surveys, case studies, observation.



Outcomes to help tell the story of the impact of the art on the partners and funding partners objectives:

- **2,800 children across North East England participated** in Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020
- In each school, the production team built a full-scale theatre set with professional sound and lighting. When students walked in, their regular school hall had been completely transformed. This was acknowledged by many of the teachers as one of the most impactful elements of the project. Many students had never been to the theatre before and some of the most **difficult to engage students were fully engrossed in** the performance.
- After the performance, students participated in 4 x 40-minute creative workshops, facilitated by Mortal Fools and Children North East practitioners and featuring four characters from the play. Students met the characters and **learned practical ways to manage their anxieties**. They learned how to recognise and tackle the negative voice in their head, and understand the physical symptoms of heightened emotions. The final workshop **provided an opportunity to consult with the students about how adults can better support children with their worries**.
- Teachers reflected that **the intervention provided their students with a fun and relaxed opportunity to talk about their mental health**. They told us it has **given school staff new vocabulary and practices for supporting their young**
- Observations already made by teachers include: **increased confidence to ask questions; increased willingness to support and interact with others; and more readiness to try new things**.

Feedback:

'I learnt that keeping your emotions hidden is never good.' Participant

'The emotions workshop was my favourite because we were so active. We learned about the signs of different feelings like scared, anger, and happy.' Participant

'When I get a Worrit, I will do meditating or other relaxing things to make the Worrit go away. Those silly old Worrits won't stop me!' Participant

'The children were very mature, and were open about their worries and emotions, when usually it is hard to approach the subject.' Teacher

'Some of our most difficult to engage students found the performance riveting which was wonderful to see.' Teacher

'I thought this was a very accessible medium to introduce children to the cognitive model and dealing with anxiety. The children found it very entertaining and the workshops followed on logically from the performance, giving the children a chance to practise the methods that Melva learns to reduce her anxiety.' Teacher

Example 2: All Dance

Delivered by: Deda, Arts Derbyshire & independent dance artist **Sara Rose**

Partners: Local day centres and existing providers in Derbyshire districts

Funding partner: Arts Council England

Summary:

All Dance was a project funded by Arts Council England to encourage greater engagement in dance by participants with physical and cognitive challenges. It was identified that this demographic rarely engaged in dance activities. The project consisted of a series of creative dance workshops leading towards a professionally staged performance and five follow up legacy workshops. Each workshop was held at the day centres that participants already attended to ensure best accessibility.

Outcomes to help tell the story of the impact of the art on the partners and funding partners objectives:

- Participants reported **improved motivation, empowerment and improved engagement and tolerance of others in their groups**
- Participants reported that they **felt stronger and fitter**
- Participants showed **improved self-esteem and confidence in decision making**
- Participants had **improved autonomy in decision making**
- Support staff **developed their confidence** to continue to support dance development activities with their participants.
- Support dance artist who worked won the project **continued develop their own project independently.**



Image: Sara Marshall-Rose, Sidmouth Folk Festival Children's Workshop 2019. Photographer: Phil Rose

Feedback:

'When I watch them dancing I see a different side to them – it's like a whole new person emerges – they light up somehow. And the light doesn't stop when the lesson stops – it keeps glowing.' Centre worker

'What Sara manages to achieve in the workshops is amazing. DV doesn't really like to stand, but when Sara comes in he's up on his feet straight away. And D, well, she's more vocal, clearly shows excitement – shows her feelings, which we don't usually see. She wants to join in all the time and M has really come out of his shell.' Centre worker

'They talk about it all week long, so there's more conversation and they work together more, and it's better, they work together better.' Centre worker

'Participants were initially 'encouraged' in the sessions to 'follow' any movement that I did rather than making up their own. I had to work hard to encourage support workers to participate and role model rather than physically and verbally prompting participants to move. It was important to me that the work came from the participants and not from their support workers or from me. Once the support workers understood my intentions, the participants began to engage in a deeper and meaningful way. I facilitated opportunities for them to contribute their own ideas: the development work was participant led and I brought movement exploration and music choices into the session to develop those ideas. The performances were created collaboratively. I invested my energy into improving self-esteem and confidence to empower participants in decision making. I believe that each person felt that their voice and ideas were recognised.' - Sara Rose

A full evaluation report is available here, with more evidence of improvement to participants' wellbeing and communication. This includes recorded observations of how one particular participant significantly developed their creativity and confidence over the period of the workshops in relation speaking, eye contact, demeanour, interaction, ideas, reaction to props and music, and 'newness' i.e. showing originality and invention.

This case study is particularly useful as an example of:

- Writing by the lead artist with a strong focus on reflection
- Describing participant-led work in detail, with resulting impacts
- Conveying the experiences and perspectives of staff
- Referencing a full evaluation report covering much more detail
- Showing how project success can inform future work.



Example 3: Art as Life. A Practice for Everyday Life

Run by: Lightseekers - Kajal Nisha Patel (lead artist) with additional delivery by David Booth and Lee Richards (Upcycled Creative)

Partner: Derby_Quad

Funding partner: Derby Quad through Arts Council England National Portfolio funding

Summary:

Art as Life. A Practice for Everyday Life created an artistic intervention to initiate new relationships the local arts venue, Derby QUAD, local community groups and artists. This was a time-limited project during which it was anticipated that the lead artist would create an artistic intervention which could initiate new relationships to be formed between Derby QUAD, local community groups and artists. conceptual departure point for this project was art and its relationship to industry, with particular reflection on the loss of regional and individual identity. Participants included members of a local mental health charity, artists, volunteers and members of the public. The workshops explored the theme of deindustrialisation, collective and individual identity by bringing together individuals from various backgrounds and facilitating processes during which people could explore ideas and work together in the venue.

Outcomes to help tell the story of the impact of the art on the partners and funding partners objectives:

- **A collaborative environment was created** within the workshop sessions, **bringing together members of the community to learn alongside artists, professional sculptors and makers alike**
- 'Art as Life' functioned as a space to reconsider the importance of artisanal craftsmanship and for participants to **learn new skills while engaging in the creative process**
- The prospect of working collaboratively provided **new pathways for individuals to share resources, understand and support each other**
- The project is imagined as part of an ongoing process to form **new, collective identities within the region**
- Such socially engaged processes seek to envisage **personal creativity to be re-imagined as a valuable resource** within the emerging new era of automated work
- **Many of the participants requested further workshops, which they were willing to pay for.**

Feedback:

'There's a general calmness about the exercise. People helping each other with their inventive minds. It's very therapeutic.' Artist

'I've been doing it at home. Just easily sitting on the settee making bits of wire. All I can say is that I hope they run lots and lots more courses because it's the fact of meeting people, apart from reigniting my artistic side.' Participant

'One of the things I really enjoyed about the group was the different people that came and the different skills that people brought. It was nice in the introduction when I got to know the people that came and we chatted out about their backgrounds. Some were textiles and painting. Some had got sculptural backgrounds and they were on courses. It was nice to know that and to find the value in those elements. As people were creating their pieces, I could see that the textiles background was informing the work.' Participant

'As lead artist, I also reached out to the Derby Museum, with a view for them to acquire some of the community's artworks, which I felt would make an important legacy for the project. While unfortunately this has not been realised, the project itself is scalable and I would very much like to develop it as a pilot project which could be delivered within community spaces.' Kaja Nisha Patel



Image: Art as Life. A Practice for Everyday Life. Photo: Kaja Nisha Patel

This case study is particularly useful as an example of:

- Reflection by the lead artist
- Describing the concept behind the project, which was rooted in the locality
- Involving targeted participants to meet particular needs along with being open access
- Sharing creative work produced as well as process.



Example 4: Dance and Parkinson's Oop North

Conceived & led by: Helen Gould (LPM Dance Theatre) & Melanie Brierley (Conscious Bodies)

Partners: UCLanDance students and staff; University of Central Lancashire

Funding partner:National Lottery Community Grants

Description of the project:

Dance and Parkinson's Oop North. Since depression and loneliness are common issues for people with Parkinson's, this project explored the dance class as a space for personal expression, communication, and participation. Taking place in the dance studios at the University of Central Lancashire Preston with UCLanDance 3rd year students and staff, weekly sessions were held over a nine-week period and contributed to the students' 3rd year studies in dance facilitation. The Dance and Parkinson's Oop North Project extends across Lancashire encompassing hubs in Morecambe, Blackpool and Blackburn.

Context:

Research identifies that dance increases participation in the Parkinson's population (Foster et al., 2013) After participating in dance classes, people with Parkinson's are more likely to take up and join in with new hobbies or activities. Compared with other forms of exercise, dance has high compliance rates, with people with Parkinson's regularly returning to dance as an activity of choice. Dance and Parkinson's research at English National Ballet demonstrated that when led by an expert, dance supports people with Parkinson's to develop strength and may bring temporary relief from physical symptoms such as abnormal gait and balance. It also enhances psychosocial experience (Houston and McGill 2013; 2015). Dance is an enjoyable activity (Hackney et al., 2007; Volpe et al., 2013; Rocha et al., 2017). It helps to reduce social isolation (Hackney and Bennett, 2014) and improves mood, apathy, depression, self-confidence and self-esteem in the Parkinson's population (Westbrook & McKibben, 1989; Lewis et al., 2014; Hashimoto et al., 2015; Heiberger et al., 2011). It is in the dance class that these elements interact (McGill, 2016), with the therapeutic process helping people to experience improved health and well-being.



Image: Victoria Sedgwick/UCLanDance Studios, Preston

Outcomes to help tell the story of the impact of the art on the partners and funding partners objectives:

- Students **benefited from taking part in a community class in action** and were able to **use this experience to enhance their community dance module**. The project allowed them to **explore new ways of moving and supporting others** – and they also found out **how important tea and biscuits were in supporting the sense of group and community**
- A **valuable link has been forged between the project and the University** and it is hoped that, depending on future funding, this connection can be maintained and developed
- For people living with Parkinson's the sessions gave an opportunity for **social interaction and wellbeing**, the sessions **supported mental as well physical health**
- Family, friends and caregivers were encouraged to attend classes to **enhance sociality and promote participation** in dance
- For participants with Parkinson's, their families and caregivers, the support and guidance from experienced dance students was invaluable as they helped to **create a lively atmosphere** in the dance studio and participants were able to **try out different forms of partnered dancing**
- Participants also enjoyed improvising with students and this dance engagement **encouraged fun and laughter** all round
- The studio itself was an important factor supporting the success of the project as it **enabled people to enjoy moving in a safe space and to experience working in a professional environment**.

Feedback:

'I felt fantastic after class.' Participant

'I've found a new way to express myself in a safe, friendly atmosphere...becoming more fluid in my movement is joyous.' Participant

'The students have been supportive and encouraging...they boost morale and self-esteem.' Caregiver

This case study is particularly useful as an example of:



- Conveying a robust, referenced research context
- Showing how training opportunities can be integrated
- Describing how everyone involved benefited, not just participants
- Developing higher education and community links for future work.

Example 5: Caban Sgriblio

Run by: Peak and independent artists: Tessa Waite, Sion Marshall Waters, Richard Greatrex, Gweni Llwyd, Jenny Valentine, Uschi Turoczy & Emma Beynon

Partners: Schools in South Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen, BlaenauGwen and Monmouthshire. CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Brecon, Tros Gynnal Plant (Builth Wells), Brecon Library, Gypsy Traveller Education Officer: Blaenau Gwent, Skyline (WTOW)

Funding partners: Children in Need & Ffilm Cymru

Summary:

Caban Sgriblio comprised weekly sessions using creative writing and digital media to promote positive mental wellbeing. Activities enabled children and young people based in mid and south east Wales, aged nine to 18 years, to gain confidence, improve their communication skills, make friends and have their voice heard. Those taking part were facing challenges such as poor mental health, family break up and rural isolation. The project aimed to improve the self-expression, confidence and ability of the young people participating to interact positively with peers and adults.

Evaluation:

- All evaluation was carried out according to Children in Need criteria. Quantitative (e.g. number of sessions, attendances) and qualitative methods were used to collect evidence of the impact of the project. Creative practitioners wrote weekly reflective diaries in which they recorded any development in the participants' behaviour.
- Adult key workers wrote pre- and post-project evaluation feedback
- The participants' responses to the project were captured through questionnaires, **outcomes stars**, writing journals and case studies as well as in their poetry.

Outcomes to help tell the story of the impact of the art on the partners and funding partners objectives:

- The project ran for three years from September 2016 to September 2019, with 237 workshops held, involving 489 young people. Led by professional writers, poetry writing offered a medium through which children **safely explored their feelings and experiences**, and could imagine and **describe their live positively**
- The specific outcomes sought and measured were: **skills development – effective use of language, in writing and orally; improved self-expression; increased self-confidence; improved interaction between peers and with adults; and improved sense of mental wellbeing**
- The development of **improved coping strategies and reduced social isolation – developing a network of friends within which participants felt supported and appreciated** – were also found to be additional outcomes.

Feedback:

'I write because it allows me to create my own land and express my mood in different and abstract ways. It allows me to go to different places and live different lives that are unlike my own.' Participant

'Thank you for this whole club because my imagination spreads and confidence explodes inside my body.' Participant

'They showed patience and respect for one another's ideas. Because they were working together on one end piece, there was an authentic need for communication and collaboration which they seemed to enjoy.' Practitioner

'The group has transformed from quiet and tentative to excited and very cooperative, they listen to each other carefully and respect each other's ideas.' Practitioner

'At the beginning of the project S had difficulty controlling her anger and would have regular outbursts. Throughout the project, S has improved her ability to manage her anger and has had very few uncontrolled outbursts. There has been no physical outbursts for several weeks as a result of the project and S's relationship with her peers has improved. Her anxiety levels have decreased significantly and she is better able to talk about her anxieties. She appears much happier and calmer now.' Key worker

'Creative writing had a positive impact on the participants' sense of identify and ability to process their feelings. It gave them the skills to write honestly about their emotions, sharing difficult moments without become vulnerable.' Artist

**There she is.
Nobody really remembers her arriving,
When, how or why.
But, look, she squirms under imaginary stares from the seats behind her.
She changed her hair over the summer.
That was all we knew about her. Now she's gone.**

'The young poet's ability to write with such clarity and objectivity about herself demonstrates a significant sense of control and confidence for a 16-year old girl who said she feels like an outsider.' Artist

This case study is particularly useful as an example of:

- Multi-partner working across individual schools, mental health services, libraries etc
- Working with specific desired outcomes
- Using a funder's evaluation criteria
- Sharing creative work produced as well as process.



Example 6: Sound Works

Run by: Community Music Wales

Partners: Barnardo's, Youth Services, local youth clubs

Funding partner: Children in Need

Summary:

Sound Works aimed to support the life aspirations and confidence of young people who were in need due to living in areas of economic or social deprivation, having low aspiration through lack of opportunities or living with a spectrum of mental health issues. In consultation with partners and young people, we developed and delivered a six-year project focussing on the creation of new music in a genre they could relate to such as rap, rock or pop music, using strong role models. We offered engagement opportunities and helped young people set personal achievable goals to build self-esteem and expand their comfort zones, enabling them to have a voice.

The key aims were to increase young people's confidence, widen their social circle and support networks and raise their future aspirations. Research points to these being some of the key factors in young people creating happier and better lives for themselves. So, with the young people we established setting and working towards achievable goals: writing and performing their own music with their own lyrics in front of peers or the public for the first time; going to a live professional recording studio; and putting their finished products on line for their peers and families to see.



Image: Sound Works

Outcomes to help tell the story of the impact of the art on the partners and funding partners objectives:

- All of the young people showed an **increase in confidence** and many of them sang or performed for the first time in their lives. Many even performed on stage in front of their peers or families, such as the Barnardo's group who performed on stage in Ebbw Vale.
- Many of the young people we worked with were very shy, with a lack of confidence in social circumstances due to issues such as Autism and Asperger's. For example, in Blaenau Gwent, one participant sat in silence outside the door during the first week. The second week he brought his acoustic guitar and sat at the back of the group, still in silence. The third week he quietly played along at the back. By the eighth week, he was performing with the rest of the group and eventually performed his own written song on the stage in front of approximately 70 people. **He would now like to continue being part of an active creative group** in Ebbw Vale.
- In Newport, we also saw excellent outcomes with young people who were excluded from school and placed on an alternative curriculum. They had no confidence in themselves, their futures or their own abilities, as evidenced by the reports from the youth workers and through their initial self-assessment forms. **Nearly all the participants gained accreditation, which gave them an increased sense of confidence. They began to have raised aspirations for their futures, demonstrated by their desire to continue working towards additional courses and look at expanding their experiences.**
- The project ran for **six years and engaged over 800 participants**
- **On average 92% positive outcomes (including achievement of accredited learning, a break in negative behavioural patterns and increase in confidence).**

Feedback:

Hear more about the project and the difference it has made from Community Music Wales and the young people taking part on the project video

<https://youtu.be/eClwo8rni0M>

This case study is particularly useful as an example of:



- Partnering with both local government and the voluntary sector
- Having clear aims arising from research
- Setting goals with participants
- Describing participants' development, including a specific individual's journey
- Demonstrating quantitative and qualitative data
- Using video to tell the project story including the direct voice of participants

Toolkit credits:

This toolkit has been developed by People Dancing with funding from Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy sector innovation fund. Created and written by, Mary Schwarz, Rob Lindsay, Stephanie Brown and Ruth Bates Lee.

We would like to thank all the artists and organisations who contributed to the case studies, in particular Kiz Crosbie & Zoe Anderson at Mortal Fools, Sara Rose, Kaja Nisha Patel, John Whall at Derby Quad, the Dance staff at UCLAN, Rachel Dunlop & Justine Wheatley at Peak and Hannah Jenkins at Community Music Wales.

Special thanks to David Johnson at Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Further CPD:

People Dancing has produced an online learning programme: 'Developing income streams for participatory arts practice'. The programme is FREE to members of People Dancing and can be purchased by non-members.

Webinars created with support from Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy accompany this Toolkit and can be accessed for FREE by members of ArtWorks Alliance. Visit <https://www.communitydance.org.uk/developing-practice/funding-support>