

Evaluation of the impact of the 'Retired not Tired' programme (2012-2015)



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1. Overview of the Programme

The 'Retired not Tired' programme of work was created in 2011 by the Learning and Participation teams (Music and Dance) at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance and is funded by Lewisham Council. The programme is specifically targeted at older people aged 60 and above from Lewisham and includes a mixture of music, dance and combined music & dance groups, providing regular opportunities for participants to take part in creative activity, interact socially and develop new skills. Sessions are led by experienced practitioners from the Trinity Laban's Learning and Participation department, supported by a team of project managers.

Each group in 'Retired not Tired' has a creative focus: practitioners work with participants' ideas, skills and creative talents (on whatever level these may be and including those beyond solely music and dance) to produce their own creative outputs. Groups have been specifically programmed in different geographical locations around the borough and reach a range of different sub-groups of older people, in terms of age, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The programme comprises:

- **All Singing All Dancing** – a joint music and dance group originally based in Catford and now meeting in Bellingham;
- **Dance for Health** – a group combining movement (with Pilates in the group's early stages) based at the Laban Centre, Deptford;
- **Arts Befriending Group** – a social arts group based in Sydenham partnered with Ageing Well, Lewisham;
- **Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club** – a social and creative group based in Bellingham Green.

Key personnel

The programme is run by creative practitioners and project managers from Trinity Laban's Learning and Participation team:

Creative team

- Donna Ford, Natasha Lohan (and maternity cover by Maria Ghoumrassi) dance & music practitioners – All Singing All Dancing
- Natasha Lohan, music practitioner – Arts Befriending Group, Sydenham.
- Stella Howard, dance practitioner (with support from Pilates practitioners Anja Schall/Monica Giacomini)– Dance for Health
- Zoe Gilmour, music practitioner – Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club
- Lucy Drever, music student placement - Arts Befriending Group, Sydenham & Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club.

Project management

- Joey Gamper, Learning & Participation Projects Manager (Dance)
- Louisa Borg-Costanzi Potts, Learning & Participation Projects Manager (Dance)
- Veronica Jobbins, Head of Learning and Participation (Dance)
- Katie Windsor, Learning & Participation Projects Manager (Music)
- Kate Atkinson, Learning & Participation Manager (Music)
- Andrea Spain, Head of Learning & Participation (Music)

Research and evaluation

Kate Wakeling, Trinity Laban Research Fellow

Hannah Etlin-Stein & Misako Okazaki, Trinity Laban Dance Science department

2. Notes on the Evaluation Process

This evaluation has been carried out by the Trinity Laban research fellow, with input from the creative practitioners, project management teams and the Trinity Laban Dance Science department, and features research completed between October 2012 – January 2015. While building on the excellent ‘initial impact’ evaluation document covering January 2012 – August 2013, this report documents the period of research and evaluation conducted by the research fellow and extends the interim evaluation report produced in Autumn 2013.

The research fellow has had the generous opportunity to spend a great deal of time with the groups across the year, getting to know participants through joining in with weekly classes (and occasionally performances), and from here conducting interviews, discussion groups, surveys and health studies. The report therefore aims to capture something of the quantity and variety of material gathered: from participant testimonies to notes on session observations. In order to ensure continuity between evaluation documents, this report highlights the same three key dimensions to the programme identified in the original 2012 report:

- The **quality** of the work;
- The impact on participants in **social, health and well-being** terms;
- The specific impact of participating in **creative, cultural activity** on older participants.

Evidence

Evidence has been gathered in a number ways, each judged appropriate to the four diverse groups comprising the programme. Common to all four group reports is evidence drawn from:

- Interviews and group discussions with participants;
- Notes from session observations by the research fellow;
- Commentary/debrief material from creative practitioners.

In addition, participants from ‘Dance for Health’ and ‘All Singing All Dancing’ kindly completed termly **feedback surveys**. (It was judged that a significant proportion of the Bellingham ‘Young at Heart Club’ and the Sydenham ‘Arts Befriending Group’ members would be unable to complete such questionnaires and so surveys were omitted for these groups.) These surveys included specific, likert-scaled questions on the perceived impact of the sessions in terms of health and well-being, as well as providing opportunities for extended written feedback from respondents.

From 2014, Dance for Health and All Singing All Dancing have also taken part in intermittent **post-it note ‘sticky walls’** to allow the reflective process to be more of a shared, communal process, particularly in terms of discussing where each group might head next artistically.



A **ten-week health study** was also completed in the summer term of 2013, working with volunteer participants from 'Dance for Health' and the Sydenham 'Arts Befriending Group'. Run as a pilot study with a view to investigating the health benefits of such programmes on a subsequently larger scale, the testing sought to investigate quantitatively the impact on physical health of participants in 'Retired not Tired'. Assessments included measuring lung capacity, functional reach and balance confidence among participants, with testing carried out at the start of term then again at its close to chart potential improvement, deterioration or sustainment in these areas among volunteer group members. A standardised **well-being survey (CASP 12)** was also conducted with the 'Dance for Health' volunteers as part of the study. The findings of these studies are all included within the 'Health & Well-being' sections of the report for the relevant groups.

It should be noted that in writing up this report it was decided not to include participant case studies. While case studies can offer great insight and colour, there were concerns as to preserving the anonymity of participants in a public document, particularly when exploring potentially sensitive life situations and stories. Instead, the report aims to include a rich array of anonymised participant commentary from interviews and discussion woven into (and often shaping) the various 'evidence of impact' sections of the report. In this way, it is hoped the report also emphasises the relevance of participants' comments to the specific themes under examination, and ensures that participant voices are heard strongly and clearly but without compromising their anonymity.

Structure of the evaluation report

The report first explores each group individually (including an extended discussion of the 'evidence of impact' for each of the groups), followed by a summary of key findings across the programme.

The report on each group comprises:

1. An **overview of the group**, including:
 - Background and aims
 - Summary of key achievements
 - Notes on practitioners' creative approach
 - Outline of evidence collected
 - Summary of 'strengths & successes' and 'challenges & areas for development'
2. Evidence of **social impact**, covering themes including:
 - Social confidence
 - Social networks/group interaction
 - Sense of ownership
 - Combatting isolation
 - Enhanced engagement with the community
3. Evidence of impact on **health & well-being**:
 - Improved/sustained psychological well-being
 - Improved/sustained physical health
 - 10-week health study (where applicable)
 - Physical confidence & body awareness
4. Evidence of impact of **participating in creative, cultural activity**
 - Increased confidence in and expression of creative abilities

- Development of new skills
- Connecting with a 'younger self'
- Sense of enjoyment
- Incorporating other creative skills & experiences
- Broadening cultural horizons
- Positive impact of relationship with professional practitioners
- Developing reflective practice

Photographs taken across the programme have also been included to illustrate each group's activities.



3. All Singing All Dancing

3.1 Overview

Practitioners: Natasha Lohan and Donna Ford (with maternity cover provided by dance facilitator Maria Ghoumrassi)

Background: 'All Singing All Dancing' is a combined music and dance group for older people which meets once a week during term-time. Group members are from the local area and are an active, independent cohort with a wide age range. The group has taken an increasingly bold and creative approach to their work as the programme has progressed, and membership has settled into a loyal cohort with additional members occasionally 'dropping-in' on sessions.

From 2012-2014, sessions were held in central Catford at the St Lawrence Centre, SE6 but since the Autumn term of 2014, the group has been meeting at Bellingham Leisure Centre.



Aims

- To provide opportunities for creative participation and the development of self-expression through creative pursuits including song-writing, improvisation (musical and movement-based) and performance;
- To enable older people to develop their music and dance skills;
- To nurture health and well-being through participation in music and dance.

Achievements across the programme

- Clear development of the group into a confident, exploratory and creative 'company' of performers, while the group has maintained its diverse membership and is run with a strong sense of inclusivity.
- Devising and performing a range of imaginative and exploratory music and dance pieces, including work shown at two end-of-term peer-to-peer sharings at the Laban building in December 2012 and April 2014, and public performances at the Horniman museum as part of the 'Latin Dance Festival' (inspired by the 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition) in July 2013, and at the 'Curious Tea Party' in July 2014 (an event co-hosted by the Horniman Museum and Trinity Laban).

- Participation by a number of group members in Trinity Laban's intergenerational *In Memoriam 2014* project, a dance film celebration of the legacy of Rudolf Laban through the creation of an original movement choir piece featuring 100 dancers and musicians.
- A strong sense of social cohesion and mutual support has continued to develop among the group, existing amid a highly diverse set of people.

Creative approach

The group combines music and dance-based activities, woven together by the two creative practitioners. Sessions are informal and include a brief period of socialising and 'catching-up' followed by warm-ups that include breathing exercises, light physical movement and relaxation/focusing work to prepare for creative thinking. Creative content is arrived at through a variety of processes: working from a taught starting point; working from a co-devised starting point; developing work through improvised content; or working from an individual idea contributed by group members. Typically however the process includes a combination of led and co-devised content and, where possible, combines both exploration of movement and vocal expression.

The group has gone from strength to strength in its confidence both to create and perform ambitious, exploratory and high-quality new work as a collective. As group members expressed it in Autumn 2014:

'We've become a more cohesive and adventurous performance troupe.'

'I feel like we're on some kind journey and I don't want to get off. I want to see where it's going.'

Public performance opportunities at the Horniman Museum have provided a central focus for the group's creativity activity, with new pieces including a creative response to the 2013 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition and a piece for the 2014 'Curious Tea Party' event (which drew on themes of women's suffrage and the pioneering choreography of Isadora Duncan). Other works created have also harnessed the group's growing eagerness to take creative ownership of their work, including the performance piece *Hear Here* (2013) which featured a soundtrack comprised of 'home recordings' participants had made of their day-to-day experiences (using recording equipment provided by Trinity Laban) and also featured a poem written and spoken by a group member. Another work, *I Never Dreamed the Sea so Deep* was created across 2013-2014 and saw the development of powerful improvisatory vocal and movement work led by group, inspired by an extract from Allen Ginsberg's poem *An Eastern Ballad*.

Evidence collected

- Participant feedback questionnaires and post-it note 'sticky wall' surveys
- Informal interviews and discussions with participants conducted by Trinity Laban research fellow
- Observations from Trinity Laban research fellow and creative practitioners
- Debrief material from creative practitioners
- Data from registers and monitoring

STRENGTHS & SUCCESSES	CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Rich and diverse opportunities provided for self-expression among all participants in both music and dance (and on occasion text/poetry).</p> <p>All members successfully encouraged to contribute to creative work and carefully recognised for these individual contributions by practitioners.</p> <p>Sense of pushing artistic boundaries with the group's performance projects and developing an increasingly confident group 'voice'.</p> <p>Highly diverse membership that nonetheless forms a cohesive social and artistic group.</p> <p>Strong sense of trust, mutual support and camaraderie within the group.</p> <p>Group consensus in agreeing to meet in a new space in Bellingham, which has greatly enhanced the potential for movement (as well as providing improved acoustics for vocal work).</p>	<p>Difficulty of incorporating new members who may arrive mid-term into more exploratory musical/dance-based activities, but without wanting to hold back the rest of the group.</p> <p>The need to find further ways to combine art forms more consistently, rather than approaching vocal work and movement work as separate entities.</p> <p>Challenges in balancing the priorities of different group members, in terms of a social versus artistic focus. (This has been somewhat resolved by moving the tea break to the close of the session, helping to maintain the group's artistic focus across sessions while allowing extra time for 'catching up' at the end of the classes).</p> <p>Restrictions of the space (in terms of size, flooring and general atmosphere) were a significant issue at the group's Catford venue from 2012-2014 but have since been resolved through moving to Bellingham Leisure Centre for the autumn term of 2014.</p>

Evidence of Impact

3.2 SOCIAL

3.2.1 Increased social confidence & 'self worth'

Observation has found participants to grow in social confidence through attending the sessions, both within the context of the group's encounters and, as reported by participants, in terms of engaging with the wider world. As one group member described it:

'I now talk to anyone on the street or on the bus!'

Several initially quieter members of the group are now at the forefront of the group's collaborative work and all members of the group engage socially at the beginning and end of sessions. Participants have also noted this growth in general social confidence, stating in their feedback:

'This class makes me feel that I can do things. It's given me confidence and energy.'

'I'm not as withdrawn – I'm more sociable now.'

The particular sense of confidence enabled through being offered the space and expressive means to **'be oneself'** was also evident in participant commentary:

'It's made me more outward looking... I can be more myself.'

'You can be yourself and act with no negative comments.'



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

3.22 Development of social networks/group interaction

While comprised of a highly diverse group of people in terms of background, ethnicity and physical ability, the group operates as an extremely close community during sessions. There is a clear sense of support and care between members, with participants taking a concerted effort to enquire after other members' health and well-being. A number of group members have undergone severe challenges across the three years of the programme, including bereavement, health problems and strenuous demands on individuals as carers of loved ones. Responses to such issues are met with high levels of concern and practical support from the group, sometimes facilitated by the group's leaders but also organised independently, including help with transport and regular visits and phone calls.

In addition, there is strong climate of acceptance and freedom generated by the practitioners but taken up by the participants themselves, where everyone is willing to share ideas, move and sing as freely and spontaneously as each individual is able, and to accept and engage with others' contributions. The practitioners have a keen sense of this close community, one group leader noting that

'it is a very diverse group; one could not imagine this group of people together in any other situation – yet there is a camaraderie and support to be found every week, especially when improvising.'



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

The value of this close community to group members was strongly emphasised in informal interviews and on feedback forms, and stressed both by those group members who are more and less frail/isolated.

'The social function of this group is paramount: it is very valuable.'

'The class provides the opportunity to make friends and interact in a friendly and supportive group.'

The group's broad **diversity** and the **unconditionally warm welcome** the group offers to all members was also celebrated in participant feedback forms:

'Everyone here feels welcome.'

'I value the company – the chance to go out and mix with different people.'

'I've enjoyed mixing with different groups of people here.'

Two group members also explicitly referred to the group as feeling like a **'family'** - stating:

'It's like coming home to family.'

'I value the warm welcome, the new family I have made... I feel at home with my new family...'

3.23 Sense of ownership

By generating all the performance material from within the group, there was a particularly powerful sense of shared ownership over what the group has been producing. This is especially evident in the group's intense focus and concentration during final rehearsals for performances and the pride (and, on occasions, surprise) with which members have spoken of these performance occasions, stating: *'Was that really us?'; 'I felt like a star!'; 'The feedback was so good. It made you think: well, we must have done something then.'*

The recorded soundscape that was developed for the July 2013 Horniman performance was a particularly good example of a collaborative piece that united the group and which everyone valued being part of. The sense of the soundscape existing 'outside' the group on a professional-sounding mixed CD was a source of genuine delight and also suggests a readiness for even more 'ownership' of the group's creative output. On this occasion the majority of the content was mixed digitally by the practitioner, and, while extremely pleased with the results, group members subsequently voiced how they'd like even more involvement in the process next time. One practitioner described the process:

'The group absolutely relished the idea of pre-recording improvised material which we then edited for the soundtrack. We had a very short lead-in time so the editing was mostly prepared by me outside the sessions and then [coordinated by] presenting the group with a narrow set of options. But my aim was to show them how quickly and how inventively we could utilise all the things we do in our sessions to create a unique soundscape for our

performance. They are unanimously interested in doing this again but with more control on the compositional part of the process.’ (practitioner commentary)

The scope of this creative ownership has been developed in a subsequent devised pieces in 2014, notably in the group’s experimental work *Hear Here*. This work sprang from a series of sound recordings participants were invited to make of day-to-day activities, from washing machines to bus journeys. These sounds were then edited into a soundtrack which became the basis for collaboratively-devised movement piece. Group members highlighted how using their own chosen sounds to create the piece had a marked effect on their sense of involvement with the project:

‘We had a lot of fun last term. We had to do the recordings of the sounds – of anything out in the world – and I felt then that I was really engaged with it all... because we did that recording: there was that process of listening and putting it together.’

3.24 Enhanced engagement with the wider community

An interesting outcome that has emerged more recently from ‘All Singing All Dancing’ is what seems to be a sense of enhanced engagement and connection with the community at large. The 2014 *Hear Here* project which drew on ‘found’ sounds from outside the rehearsal room was a key factor in this, as one participant described:

‘I loved the bit where we listened to New Cross station [- a recorded station announcement]. I had been feeling very isolated and adrift in the world... but New Cross is my gate up to town and back - and to have it made into magic like that, it reminded me of how we are sustained by our environment.’

Other group members discussed the new ‘visibility’ in the community that performing in public spaces (particularly at the Horniman Museum) gave them and the feeling that they may be able to inspire other older people in Lewisham to participate in something similar.

‘I think it’s a good thing that there are people who can see that people of our generation are doing this kind of thing. Because I think for a lot of people of our generation, they might find it quite bizarre that we would do this! And I think, well, maybe it’s good if people then think: ‘that’s something that I could do.’’

When creating the piece for the Horniman’s ‘Curious Tea Party’ event and considering life in the Edwardian times, participants were eager to explore the history of the Suffragettes and ideas of social justice. Some heated discussion saw the group eager to prompt audience members to consider current issues of unfairness and oppression, and discussion included topics concerning contemporary feminism, FGM and



the 2014 kidnapping of Nigerian school girls, for as one group member stated: *'even today, life for a women can be very hard.'*

In turn, the group saw the devising process piece and performance opportunity as a platform to make some powerful statements about their own moral convictions:

'I want to tell the people... I want them to see the past but also the here and now. We're trying to give them a message, [that] "we are freedom". And when we finish and they leave, I want them to think 'what am I doing?''

'This is about what is happening now. Those kidnapped girls [in Nigeria]... all around us there is trafficking, whatever else... these are our neighbours... we have to be aware of them.'

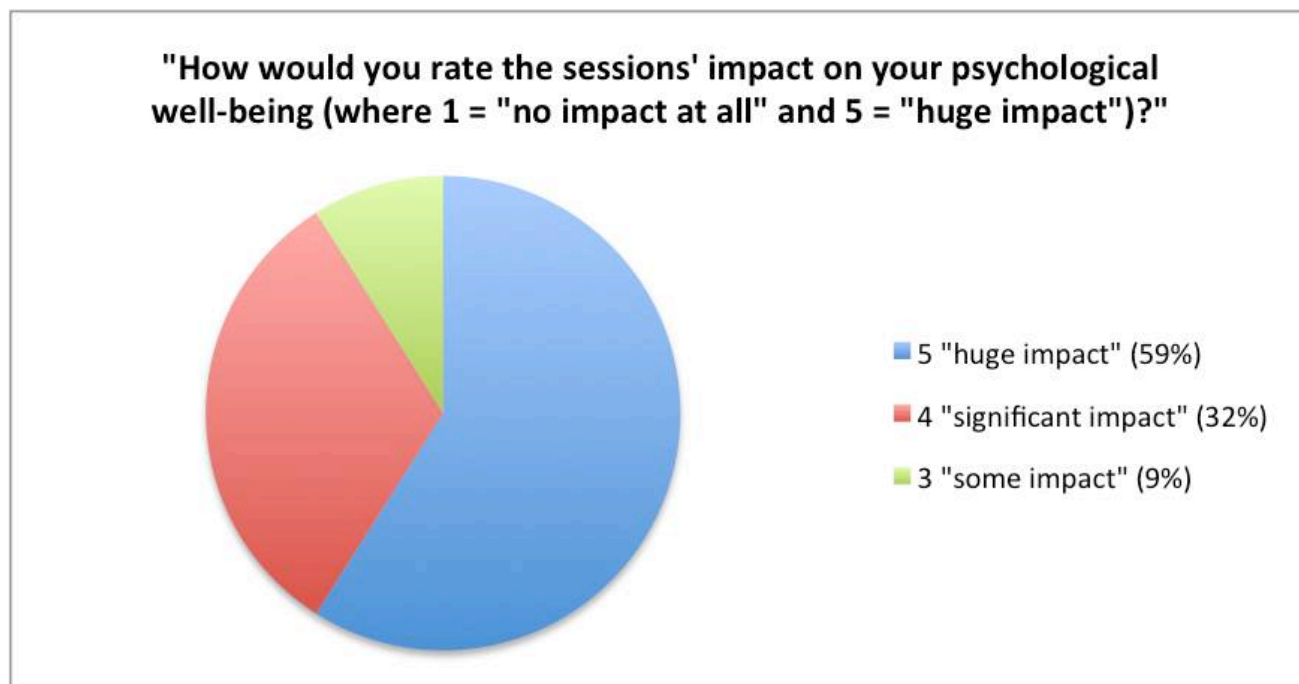
'This needs to be a contemporary protest. We need to be the Isadora Duncan of the twenty-first century.'



3.3 HEALTH & WELL-BEING

3.31 Improved/sustained psychological well-being

Surveys conducted across the programme asked participants to rate the impact of the sessions on their psychological well-being on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = “no impact at all” and 5 = “huge impact”). Impact recorded has been remarkably stable across the programme and as an overall summary of the surveys, **91%** of all responses rated the sessions as having either significant impact (4) or a huge impact (5) on their psychological well-being.



Perceived benefits of attending 'All Singing All Dancing' to participants' psychological well-being

Having now spoken regularly to participants about their experiences over the programme across several years, participants openly talk about the powerful impact the group has amid times of profound personal struggle:

'I have experienced some serious psychological difficulties in the last two years. They have been painful and difficult times but this class has helped to balance me... Coming here has helped centre me through these very turbulent and emotional times.'

Participants also noted more general feelings of sustained or enhanced well-being on their feedback forms. These ranged from feeling **less preoccupied emotionally with a particular health problem** (*'I feel less dominated by my cardiac problem'*) to a sense of **freedom and acceptance** during and following sessions:

'I find I am freed up after class – a relaxed feeling.'

'The classes enable me to accept certain moods that I would otherwise suppress – decreases inner conflict. There's a sense of belonging with creative people: I feel understood.'

For other participants, the sessions have introduced new kinds of 'goals' to their lives, encouraging improved productivity:

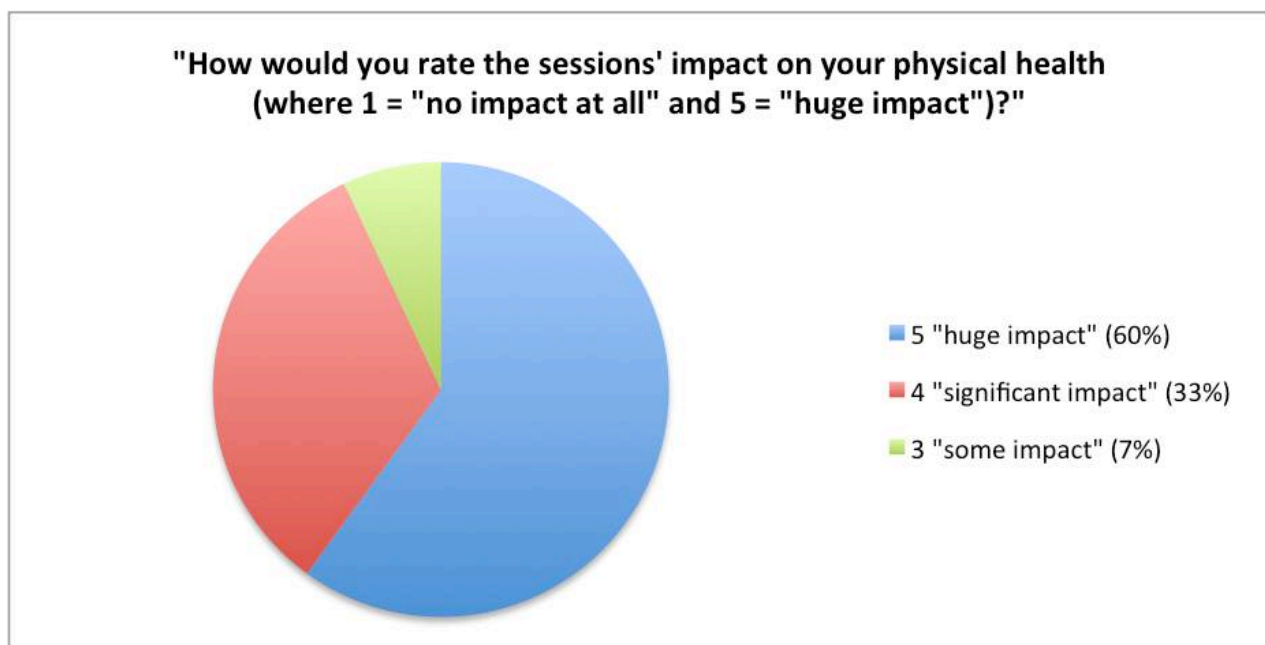
'I've developed a feeling of creativity and purpose.'

'My adrenaline and serotonin is elevated so I feel less inclined to have an afternoon siesta – instead, I am pushed to get productive.'

3.32 Improved/sustained physical health

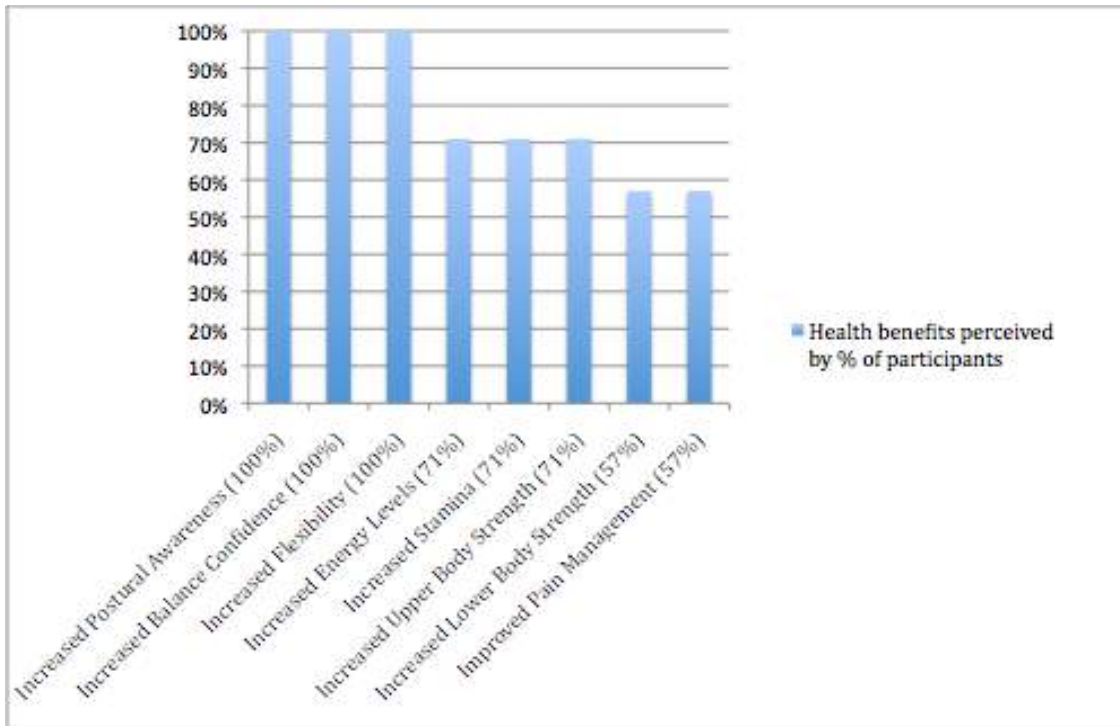
Perceived health benefits

Surveys conducted across the programme have asked participants to rate the impact of the sessions on their physical health on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = "no impact at all" and 5 = "huge impact"). **93%** of all responses rated the session as having either **significant impact (4)** or a **huge impact (5)** on their physical health.



Perceived impact of attending 'All Sing All Dancing' on participants' physical health

Participants were also asked to note any specific improvements in their physical health from a given list of more detailed possibilities. 100% of participants recorded increased **postural awareness**, increased **balance confidence** and increased **flexibility**, with further perceived benefits recorded in the graph below:



Specific health benefits identified by 'All Singing All Dancing' participants

Individual participants have also specifically highlighted improvements with their **agility, breathing** and **arthritis** - with example comments provided below:

'I can now lift my legs up (could not after hip operation).'

'Better breathing – an awareness of deep breathing – I'm now using my lungs to capacity.'

'My breathing is definitely improved.'

'Has helped in dealing with the arthritis in my hand.'

Participants have also noted the care and flexibility with which the sessions are run, allowing people of diverse physical abilities to participate:

'I have a bad problem with my knees – the doctor said it's like a repetitive strain. I am pleased that the nature of the class allows me to join in and do what I can.'

'The nature of the movement we do here, because it's not rigid and it's not repetitive and it's not expected, necessarily, then it gives a person the ability and confidence to be more fluid - so you know you've got the confidence to turn and respond in a certain way.'



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

3.33 Physical confidence & body awareness

These improvements in health have also been mirrored in improved confidence in participants' body image and also in their grasp and acceptance/stretching of their own physical abilities, with participants noting in feedback forms:

'I now trust my body to sing.'

'At first I was overdoing exercise alone at home resulting in pain afterwards but now I have learned to do exercise with care.'

'I feel better in myself – in my body.'

'The class has given me a new alertness - as to my ability and how to stretch it.'

In turn, this developing confidence allowed the group to push themselves physically but safely in the various performance projects, one practitioner noting:

'The physical performance work had a really strong identity – I could see them challenging their bodies in exploring changes in tempo, fluidity etc. in each of the structured improvisation situations.' (practitioner commentary)

3.4 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATING IN CREATIVE, CULTURAL ACTIVITY

3.41 Increased confidence in creative abilities

From observation and feedback from practitioners it is clear that members of the group have developed a genuine 'creative voice' across the sessions, particularly through the 2013 Amazon Horniman project, with one practitioner noting that it was through this project *'that this group began to define themselves as artists.'*

The chance to feel creative was noted as a clear highlight of the group by participants in discussion and feedback forms:

'Being creative: it's the highlight of my week.'

'I most value the creative element – and how varied it is.'

Additionally, participants suggested that the sessions had allowed them to develop creatively in a way they'd not felt allowed to previously (or for many years) - as though the group offered them **new or rediscovered creative 'license'**.



'It reminds me in a way of when I was young - I was free and I wasn't worrying about things – [but] as adulthood came I felt restricted with partners, with friends, with your world and with criticism - and you are very restricted with your movement and your voice and everything. This class is like going back on a journey to when I was young, free and frivolous and I could do what I want to do and feel myself.'

'I don't feel such a freak. I'm less nervous about performing, self-exposure, making mistakes. I'm becoming more self-accepting of my own learning process with its ups and downs.'

'It's reminded me of creativity suppressed over the years.'

3.42 Development of new skills

Everyone in the group has cited improvement with breathing (as linked to singing capability) on feedback forms, suggesting this has been a significant technical development across the group over the year. Using the Tibetan bowl to develop breath and voice control has been consistently celebrated by members:

'I've particularly valued the introduction to the Tibetan bowl – and all the breathing work.'

'Every exercise we've done with the breathing I've found really useful. And the bowl! it's magical to me - it just stimulates stuff in the mind... it's like a drug. When you listen to it, it really lifts you, it sparks things.'

'[What I've valued most is] having the opportunity to develop my singing ability - particularly through the breathing exercises/singing with Tibetan bowl.'

'I can sing better and my breathing has improved.'

Combining music and movement was also noted by many as a new skill, and connected to a sense of improved coordination:

'[I have] improved body coordination and [am] breathing more deeply for singing.'

'I feel like I can do vocal and movement improvisation now, sometimes combined.'

'I've learnt more about musical improvisation and putting movements to sounds – learning to choreograph.'

3.43 Sense of enjoyment

Feedback from participants demonstrates that participants have enjoyed both the intensity of the sessions' creative work as well the social and more light-hearted side to being a group member:

'It has expanded my enjoyment of music and dance and been enjoyable in a social sense as well. I enjoy the variety and creative process which is brought into what we do. Has stretched the imagination.'

From observing sessions where the group tried out some ceilidh dancing for St Patrick's Day and another session where the group performed the song 'Come on Get Happy' (at the suggestion of one group member) and took on a spontaneous conga formation, it is clear that the group are also keen to 'let their hair down'. These sessions transformed into an uproariously joyful moments of song and dance, with participants playfully adapting and improvising steps, using their voices with shouts and calls, and filling the room with laughter. As one participant expressed it at the time: *'there really are no inhibitions.'*

3.44 Incorporating, encouraging and validating other creative skills, experiences and reference points

The group has often drawn on members' particular skills and talents both in more informal sessions and in performances. Participants have shared their own poetry with the group which has then been



an impetus for further creative work, while other individuals have taught the group new songs and dance steps. The musical element of the Amazon Horniman project over the summer term involved a huge range of different musical techniques, sounds and ideas, which drew strongly on the breadth and diversity of the group's skills and backgrounds. One practitioner describes the process:

'We took raw recordings of improvisations on the outdoor instruments at the Horniman, clips from vocal improvisations over that material that we did in the

rehearsal room, recorded explorations of speaking texts [in various different languages as spoken by the group] that evolved from brainstorming reactions to the museum visit... all manner of vocal explorations became fodder for the track.' (Practitioner commentary)

3.45 Broadening cultural horizons

Feedback from the group demonstrates that cultural horizons have been broadened in a number of ways. For some, the group's own diversity has provided a widening cultural experience:

'I've learnt about other cultures with different ethnic members [sic] attending'.

For others, the link to new and exploratory cultural pursuits has led to fresh enthusiasm for other art forms:

'This has been very rewarding – I have a new appreciation for modern dance and for musical composition.'

'I've developed a real interest in choral singing and have been taking part in other singing groups like Voicelab at the Southbank.'

3.46 Positive impact of relationship with professional practitioners

A number of participants also noted the rich benefits they felt derived from working with high-quality facilitators:

'These tutors really support and nourish our imaginations in a multisensory way which is highly inclusive and makes me feel secure that I will always be inspired.'



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

4. Dance for Health

4.1 Overview

Practitioners: Stella Howard (with Anja Schall/Monica Giacomini)

Background: This group combines a focus on health and creativity through dance (and, in the group's earlier phase, with Pilates techniques). Sessions are run weekly during term time in dance studios at the Laban building in Deptford, SE8. Participants tend to be independent, physically able older people.



Aims

- To re-establish body confidence, balance and physical strength;
- Explore creativity and freedom of movement;
- Prepare for fall prevention and control through movement/dance;
- Build a trusting and friendly environment where people work easily with other, at times using physical contact;
- Engage and explore a more dynamic range where participants' physicality is safely challenged, and resistance is encouraged to aid strength.

Achievements this year

- Creating a number of newly-devised pieces, with performances at: the end-of-term peer-to-peer sharings at the Laban building in December 2012 and April 2014; at the Horniman museum as part of the 'Latin Dance Festival' (inspired by the 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition) in July 2013; and at the 'Curious Tea Party' (an event co-hosted by the Horniman Museum and Trinity Laban) in July 2014.
- As well as carrying out an informal 'exchange' with Brighton-based older people's dance company Three Score Dance in July 2014, group members also performed a newly-devised work (*Barmy on the Crumpet*) at the Brighton Dome Studio Theatre, as part of Three Score Dance Company Winter Festival.
- Participation by a number of group members in Trinity Laban's intergenerational ***In Memoriam 2014*** project, a dance film celebration of the legacy of Rudolf Laban through the creation of an original movement choir piece featuring 100 dancers and musicians.

- Regular group attendance among participants members at professional dance performances including at the Southbank, Sadlers Wells and at Laban’s Bonnie Bird theatre.
- Members of the groups continuing to volunteer as part of the archiving department at Trinity Laban.
- Attendance by several group members at the Lewisham OPAN (Older People’s Arts Network) symposium on older people’s arts, and close engagement from the whole group with two academic research projects on ‘kinaesthetic empathy’ and ‘virtual selves’, with participants keeping reflective ‘dance diaries’ and participating in extensive one-to-one interviews. See <https://trinitylaban.wordpress.com/tag/music-dance-participation-education-older-people-well-being-arts-cpd-arts-with-older-people/> for a participant blog about the experience of taking part in the OPAN symposium.

Creative approach

The ‘Dance for Health’ sessions are about providing a space for enjoyable creative movement that encourages and emphasises the benefits of movement to the ageing body. The sessions often use Pilates-based exercises to focus on alignment, posture and balance, and then take these principles into creative movement. The environment of the session encourages creativity, individuality, friendship, and the sharing of thoughts and discussion around movement.

The sessions begin with warm-up exercises that encourage a range of movement/mobility, whilst directly linking to posture, balance, core stability, rotation, extension and joint mobility. In standing, dancers are encouraged in their freedom of expression to move creatively and freely around the studio space, while using a full range of the body’s movement-potential carefully and progressively. Sessions often explore the natural swing or rhythm of the body, and may involve directing

participants to work in pairs, trios or in larger groups to travel across the space or to devise movement material together. The class always closes with a final cool-down, returning the breath and the body to a calm state.



Work across the programme’s three years has been richly varied. A sample of the different terms’ foci includes: time spent exploring creative exercises and free improvisation; exploring improvised responses and co-devising choreographic sequences which drew on Wasily Kandinsky’s dynamic painting *Swinging* (1925); a playful co-devised work exploring Edwardian etiquette inspired by the Horniman’s ‘Edwardian Tea Party’ event theme called *Barmy on the Crumpet*; creating a series of group-devised pieces focusing on a single body part (e.g. hands, shoulders, feet) transformed into a dance film by Nicolas Kyprianou, Trinity Laban’s Learning & Participation (Dance) Graduate Intern.

Evidence collected

- Termly participant feedback questionnaires, plus post-it note 'sticky wall' surveys;
- Interviews and discussion with participants conducted by Trinity Laban research fellow;
- Feedback from group members who participated in a voluntary 'reflective dance diary' exercise in the Autumn term 2013 - Spring term 2014;
- Observations from Trinity Laban research fellow and creative practitioners;
- Debrief material from creative practitioners;
- Data from registers and monitoring.

STRENGTHS & SUCCESSES	CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>The blend between creative work and activities which enhance body confidence, balance and physical strength is celebrated by participants.</p> <p>Warm-up activities commented on as particularly beneficial to participants' health.</p> <p>Strong social bonds and community feeling within classes.</p> <p>Creative elements felt to be stimulating and fulfilling by many participants, with a good blend of creative ownership among group members and artistic direction from the group's facilitator (Stella Howard).</p> <p>Commitment, sensitivity and artistic strength of the group's facilitator strongly valued by participants.</p> <p>Solo, partner and group activities combined, with mixture of choreographed and improvised elements.</p> <p>Gradual pacing of session content and teaching.</p> <p>Use of professional dance space is valued and appreciated by participants.</p> <p>New members to the group incorporated smoothly without repetition for existing members.</p>	<p>Preparing for and giving performances much enjoyed and valued by some participants but less so by others.</p> <p>Occasional tension in the group as to the balance of freer/creative movement and the more health-driven or technique-based exercises.</p> <p>Difficulty of balancing more challenging content while maintaining the class' nurturing ethos.</p> <p>Worry that the group has become 'too large' expressed by some participants.</p>

Evidence of Impact

4.2 SOCIAL

4.21 Increased social confidence

In earlier stages of the programme's evaluation process (2013-2013) the idea of 'increased social confidence' did not resonate particularly strongly with some participants in their formal feedback. While participants were keen to state how much the class had improved their physical and artistic confidence, group members put forward little evidence to suggest its impact in this domain, although two participant commented on how the programme had affected their aspirations in more general terms, noting: *'I think the class gives me a higher expectation of what I can do'* and *'I now do things I never thought I could do.'*



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

However, following some particularly exciting performance opportunities in the past year, participants have noted a particular social 'high' coming from these experiences, as well as the idea that the classes support the sustenance of one's social confidence, for instance :

'As a person I have confidence - but I see that this class has no doubt helped to maintain it.'

Furthermore, in informal conversations with the researcher across the last 3 years of the programme, several participants noted that being in the Laban space (including the cafe as well as the dance studios) and feeling welcomed and recognised by staff members and students was of great value. Several participants spoke of sometimes feeling 'invisible' in other public contexts and

noted that this **social recognition** amidst what was perceived as a prestigious, dynamic and ‘youthful’ institution proved uplifting and affirming.

4.22 Development of social networks/group interaction

Across the duration of the programme, the group has formed into a strong, cohesive unit that functions both creatively and socially together:

‘The great and wonderful thing is that a group has formed, which is highly supportive of its members’ self expression in dance and in other areas too.’

Many of the group members meet for coffee before sessions at the Laban cafe and eat lunch together afterwards along with class practitioners, while smaller groups regularly attend dance performances together both inside and external to Laban. It is clear from session observation that many close bonds exist within the group, not only among longstanding friends who attend the class together, but also among participants who have got to know one another well through learning choreography, improvising together (increasingly involving close physical contact), and from sharing sensitive appraisals of one another’s work. This has led to an intense but respectful intimacy across the group, which one participant noted as:

‘A heart-warming mark of the trust we classmates have in each other. There’s so much about Tuesdays that develops in the class itself but extends and spills over into the time we share before and after sessions...’



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

This observation is mirrored in many participants' comments. Alongside the perceived health benefits and value of the creative elements of the sessions for participants (as noted below), this sense of **lively sociability** among the group is regularly listed as the main 'draw' of the class in participant feedback:

'I feel everyone is my friend here, when I am at the class – and we are working towards the same aims and objectives.'

'There's a wonderful sense of community.'

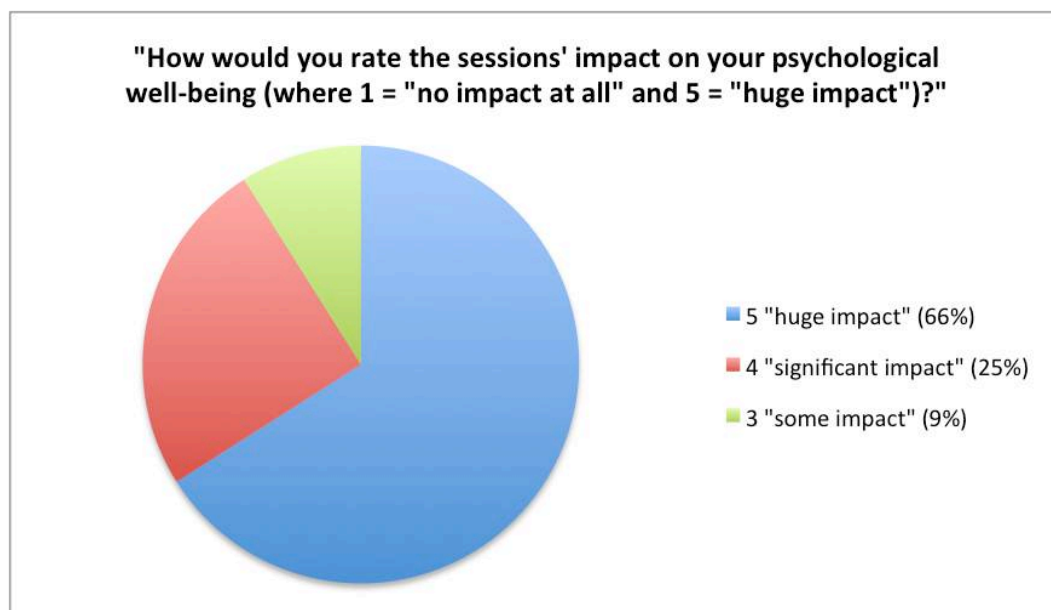
'Have made some great friendships. We now often meet outside class for social events.'

'Attendance has been really rewarding. There is a real atmosphere of sociability in all that the class does – the meeting-up beforehand, lunch after class, the Horniman experience...'

4.3 HEALTH & WELL-BEING

4.31 Improved/sustained psychological well-being

Surveys conducted across the programme asked participants to rate the impact of the sessions on their psychological well-being on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = "no impact at all" and 5 = "huge impact"). Impact recorded has been almost entirely stable across the programme. As an overall summary of the surveys, **91%** of all responses rated the sessions as having either a 'significant impact' (4) or a 'huge impact' (5) on their psychological well-being.



Perceived benefits of attending 'Dance for Health' to participants' psychological well-being

Many participants noted how they find the sessions generally **uplifting to their mood**:

'We laugh a great deal... the best medicine of all.'

'A general feeling of "betterness"... of positivity.'

'The exercise and creativity releases energy and joie de vivre.'

Some participants also stated how the session **added structure** to their calendars, offering a positive routine and acting as a 'landmark' in the week:

'It gives a structure to my week.'

'I love having a routine each week – getting up and dressed and coming along. It's quite important once one's stopped work, so being amongst others is important to me.'

'[The classes are] a rewarding time and give me a day I really look forward to.'

Several participants also noted in feedback that the **'after-effects' of the sessions** also proved to be positive and would, for some, last several days:

'It gives me a sense of being uplifted for the following few days.'

'Mood and endorphin boosting through the tasks set, which remains for several days. It's life enhancing.'

'I find it easier to relax [afterwards]. Less stressed. Approaching any task/problem more positively.'

'More relaxed - and I sleep better afterwards.'

4.32 CASP Well-Being Survey

In addition to general investigation into 'well-being' among the group, a small pilot study into well-being was carried out in conjunction with the 10-week health study in 2013 outlined below. The 'CASP 12' survey was used, a self-enumerated scale of 'quality of life' which spans four dimensions of control, autonomy, self-realisation and pleasure.¹ Participants are asked to respond to a series of statements (e.g. 'I look forward to each day'), stating how far the statement matches their feelings from a series of four options (e.g. 'often/sometimes/rarely/never').²

¹ Hyde, M., R.D. Wiggins, D. Blane & P. Higgs. 'A Measure of Quality of Life in Early Old Age: The Theory, Development and Properties of a Needs Satisfaction Model.' *Aging and Mental Health* (2003) 7:86–94.

² It should also be noted that in informal discussion with the researcher, participants later respectfully noted their dismay and discomfort at some of the wording of the survey, which they felt presupposed a negative outlook in life for older people. Thus, any future exploration of the notion of 'well-being' with the group will involve more exploratory, participant-driven responses to the issue, rather than the use of such a standardised survey.

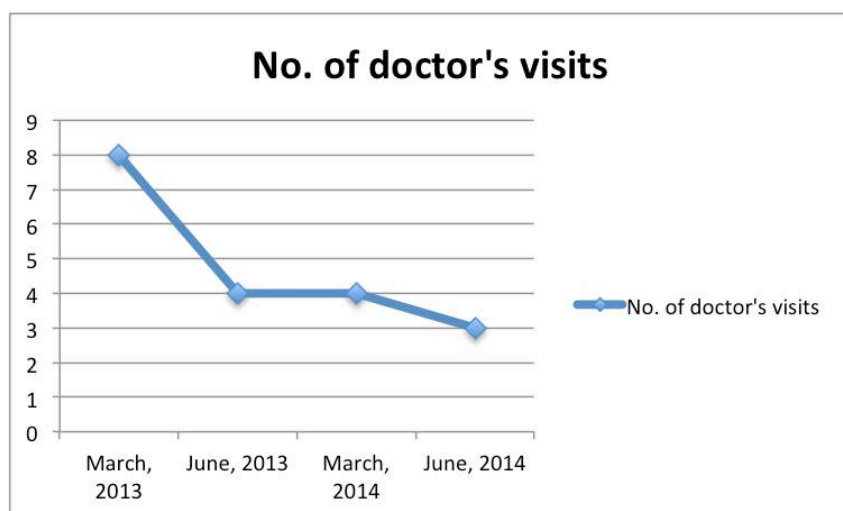
Results showed consistently high levels of well-being among the group at both phases of the testing, with the domains of control, autonomy and pleasure showing almost no variation in response across the term. However, there was a notable **increase in the domain of 'self-realisation'** evident across the term, with 4 out of 6 participants scoring more positively in at least 2 of the statements which explore this dimension. This result supports participant commentary that has noted the class' value in terms of the **opportunities for creative self-expression** it affords (see section 4.41: 'Increased confidence in and expression of creative abilities').

4.33 Improved/sustained physical health

Research has explored the improvement and sustainment of physical health among participants across the year, both in terms of perceived and measured benefits.

Falling numbers of doctors' visits

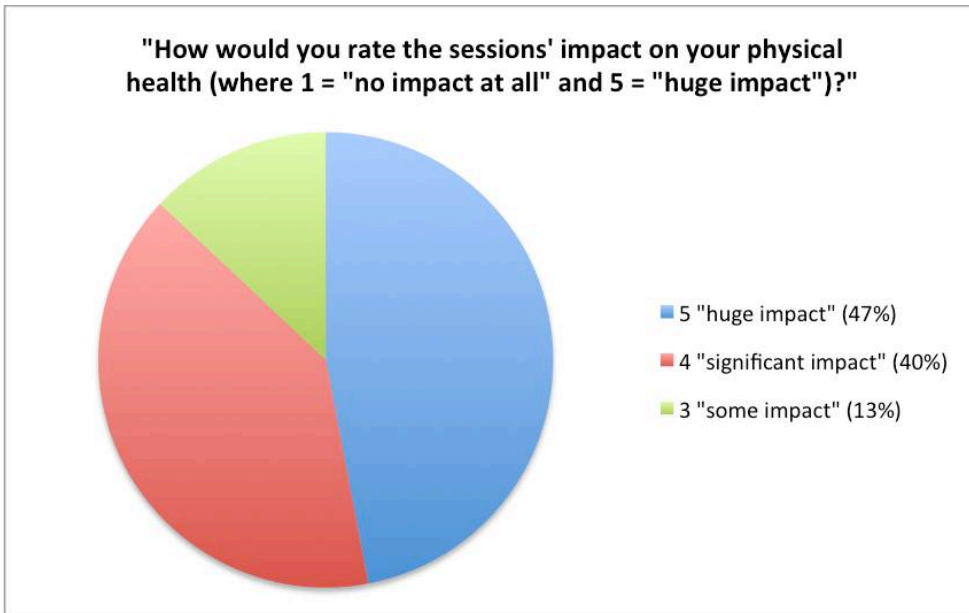
Since 2013, we have asked participants at various intervals to record the number of visits they have made to the doctor in the previous 2 months. Across this period, total recorded doctor visits among participants have shown a steady decrease, as indicated on the chart below.



No. of doctors' visits by recorded by 'Dance for Health' participants

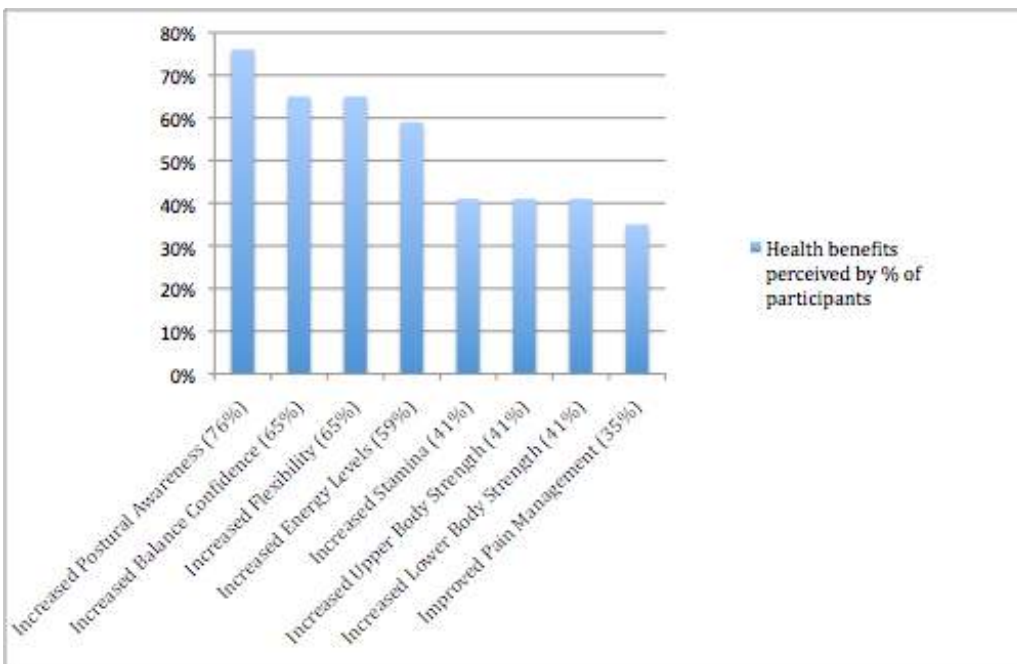
Perceived health benefits

Surveys conducted across the programme have asked participants to rate the impact of the sessions on their physical health on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = "no impact at all" and 5 = "huge impact"). **87%** of all responses rated the session as having either significant impact (4) or a huge impact (5) on their physical health.



Perceived impact of attending 'Dance for Health' on participants' physical health

Further to this overall perceived impact, in preparation for a fuller health study conducted across the summer term, in March 2013 participants were asked to note any improvements in their physical health from a list of given possibilities. The most significant results included increased **postural awareness** (recorded by **76%** of participants); increased **balance confidence** recorded by **65%** of participants) and increased **flexibility** (recorded by **65%** of participants). The complete results are charted in the graph below.



Specific health benefits identified by 'Dance for Health' participants

In addition to this survey, participants also recorded more individual improvements in their health, including:

[in reference to cartilage problems with both knees] 'with the combination of the dance classes and the remedial Pilates [private offer at TL] I have been able to avoid operations and am making constant progress.'

'I'm thrilled that my personal health has improved: thank you, thank you, thank you.'

'Mortons neuroma (feet) pain improved considerably!!!'

4.34 'Dance for Health': 10-week health study (2013)

In addition to exploring the health benefits of the programme as perceived by participants, in 2013 a more formal 10-week health study was carried out in conjunction with Laban's Dance Science department, working with six volunteers from 'Dance for Health'. Using a series of established tests, volunteers were assessed for functional reach, movement efficiency, balance confidence and lung capacity at the beginning and end of a ten-week period. It should be noted, however, that most participants engaged in at least one other kind of physical activity each week including Pilates, yoga and swimming in addition to 'Dance for Health' classes, so the study's conclusions are accordingly limited.

- **Functional Reach**

'Functional reach' is a clinical measure of balance and understood as the length an individual can reach forward in a plane parallel, with feet rooted on the ground.³ The majority of participants (4 out of 6) demonstrated a significant **improvement in functional reach** scores across the term (with the other 2 participants showing slight decreases of c.2cm) with an average increase of 4.7cm.

- **Movement Efficiency**

The 'timed up and go' test (TUG) is a timed test of movement efficiency and an indirect measure of functional balance and fall risk.⁴ Participants are timed as to how long it takes to stand up from a chair, walk to a point 3m away then return to a seated position.

Results showed **improvements in movement efficiency** across the majority of the group. 5 out of 6 participants showed an improved time at the end of term, with an average reduction of 1.3 seconds in time taken to complete the task.

- **Balance Confidence**

Balance confidence was assessed using the 'ConfBal' test, where the term is understood as 'people's conviction in their ability to engage in everyday functional tasks without losing their balance'.⁵

Participants are asked to respond to a series of statements relating to balance, (e.g. 'How confident are you that you can sit down on a chair without losing your balance?') stating whether they would be not confident (scored with 3), slightly confident (scored with 2) or confident (scored with 1). Higher scores thus reflect more problems with balance confidence and lower scores reflect fewer problems.

³ Duncan, P. W. & D. K. Weiner, et al. 'Functional reach: a new clinical measure of balance.' *J Gerontol.* 1990 45(6): M192-197

⁴ Shumway-Cook, A., S. Brauer & M. Woollacott. 'Predicting the probability for falls in community-dwelling older adults using the Timed Up & Go Test' *Phys. Ther* 2000 80(9): 896-903.

⁵ Simpson, J. et al. 'The CONFbal scale: a measure of balance confidence: a key outcome of rehabilitation.' *Physiotherapy* 2009 95(2): 104

4 out of 6 participants demonstrated increased balance confidence, with one participant showing a substantial improvement, dropping 5 points across the term. One participant lost some confidence, gaining 3 points in scores, and one participant scored the highest balance confidence possible at both the first and second phases of testing.

- **Lung Capacity**

Using a spirometer, participants were measured for forced vital capacity (FVC) - the amount of air participants can exhale with force after a deep inhale; and forced expiratory volume (FEV) - the amount of air that can be inhaled over a short period of time.

Results showed a fairly constant level of capacity in participants across the two phases of the testing, with a combination of minor increases and decreases of c.0.3 evident across the group, suggesting that **lung capacity (both expiratory and vital volume) was largely sustained**.

Summary of findings from 10-week health study:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● With some small variations, results showed that, overall, participants physical condition was largely sustained or improved across the term.● Overall improvements were noted in functional reach, movement efficiency and balance confidence.● Lung capacity - both vital and expiratory volume - was found to be largely consistent, showing neither improvement or deterioration.

4.35 Physical confidence and awareness

The practitioners have observed a clear increase in physical confidence among participants, with one practitioner noting that

‘[the group’s] growth in physical confidence really is wonderful. I see it in all participants little by little. Towards the end of last term one of the oldest members of our group had a fall during the session. With only the mildest of effort, she picked herself up and continued to dance. She later remarked how in another situation or time that would have affected her more.’



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

From feedback forms, participants have similarly reported finding themselves to be more confident to explore the extent of movements, as well as feeling better 'aware' of their own bodies - both in terms of its limits and what can be further 'stretched':

'I think I have more of a sense of connectedness and overall awareness of my body.'

'I have a new sense of aesthetic around my own body image that is giving me more confidence.'

'I've enjoyed being more aware of my body and moving in different ways. I feel freer as a result.'

'I have been made aware of how to dance more successfully using my body's ageing/ decreasing mobility through past (and very recent) injuries.'

'I've become more aware of my posture – the class has given me an interest in remedial exercise. I'm a slow learner with regard to physical things – not sporty etc. – however I see an improvement and I try harder (still some way to go!)

'I've valued the chance to feel the body loosen and stretch and do things I haven't done for years.'

4.4 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATING IN CREATIVE, CULTURAL ACTIVITY

4.41 Increased confidence in and expression of creative abilities

For many participants, the chance to explore movement creatively and expressively is one of the principle reasons they now attend, although this often emerged as an unexpected 'plus' having initially joined for health reasons. From informal discussion and written participant feedback, the majority of participants have been eager to express how enjoyable and affirming they find this opportunity, and how far their **confidence in their creative expression has been nurtured and developed**:

'The classes really let me be creative. I feel I use my imagination within the framework given and sometimes surprise myself!'

'It is essential and exhilarating to know that we have new tasks presented on which we can build – and the freedom to express ourselves creatively – I really enjoy improvising.'

'I notice I can participate in the class more easily than I could at first... I'm interested that I'm much less inhibited than I would have been a few years ago. I now enjoy moving in ways that I don't move at other times. I feel less inhibited when I move.'

A small number of participants have noted they still feel somewhat **uncomfortable or self-conscious** to work in this way. However, several of the participants who have enjoyed these aspects less, have

said they are nonetheless interested by the challenge and that they are keen to find a way to develop these skills:

'The exercises force one to be creative but I find that very challenging.'

'I'm not a very creative person so these parts of the class are hard for me and a challenge [but] I'm pleased that I've tackled something I've never done before.'

4.42 Development of new skills

One practitioner observed a strong improvement in the extent of participants' movement, stating:

'One thing that was clearly noted... was how much fuller in their bodies the participants had become, not merely using their arms to dance, but changing body parts and levels when dancing.' (Practitioner commentary)

This was mirrored in participants' own responses, with many group members likewise noting that they felt their technical ability had improved:

'I've developed a greater range of movement and coordination.'

'I have new skills regarding technique - focusing on different dynamics'

More recently, a number of participants have also noted that they have acquired or developed new **social/interaction skills** linked to partner/group work, particularly in terms of working with partners of differing abilities:

[I've learnt] the skill of adapting to different people and knowing how to think before I say something. I am still improving my listening skills.'

'I've developed the ability to adjust to working with movement-restricted partners... I'm more aware of other people's ability and creativity – as in spontaneous invention of movements.'

'I like the interactive creativity – learning to 'read' other people's bodies.'

'I've developed patience, understanding, learning to "listen" and LAUGH!'



4.43 'Becoming' a dancer and connecting to a 'younger self'

An interesting outcome of the class that has emerged through informal discussion with participants and written feedback is the sense of new identity that participation has enabled for some group members. As one participant expressed it:

'I have attended other dance classes but what makes the Laban experience special is the sense of 'becoming' a new dancer. I thought I was 'past it' but I am not!!'

In parallel with this, sessions seem to have connected some participants to the notion of a 'younger self'. Observation finds classes often highly playful, with laughter and fluid experimentation of movement occurring both within and between structured activities, which some participants have informally described as a '**youthful**' experience. However, for others the chance to approach dance in a serious, professional setting with skilled, experienced tutors has similarly connected to the idea of younger self where participants speak of being reawakened and feeling able to confidently define themselves as dancers.

'I feel younger and stronger. I feel like a "dancer" - a lovely feeling!'

'The class has stimulated a sense of youthfulness.'

'This dance class is like a door back to yourself... it's connected me to a younger self.'

'I come for the friendship, alertness and a sense of recaptured youth.'

'The opportunity to be creative during improv. or set choreography has been a delight: takes me back to my 30s.'

'I have RESURRECTED and rediscovered skills I had when I was younger.'

4.44 Sense of enjoyment

The sessions are clearly playful and enjoyable for participants, with frequent laughter erupting throughout classes. Participants have also been keen to emphasise this spirit of fun (often using the phrase 'light-hearted') in their feedback, noting how it also impacts on how they feel about their wider surroundings and how the sensation may last for days at a time:

'It's uplifting – it brings me happiness.'

'There's an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment.'

'Being light-hearted perhaps opens new awareness of everything surrounding me.'



'Increased sense of fun and light-hearted enjoyment with others.. this light-hearted fun spreads into the following days...'

4.45 Incorporating, encouraging and validating other creative skills, experiences and reference points

A number of the group have significant professional or amateur expertise in dance and the performing arts, and where possible practitioners have provided opportunities to support individual participants in sharing skills and expertise with the rest of the group.

The devising work that fed into the two Horniman performance pieces (the first based on the museum's 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition and the second responding to the Edwardian 'Curious Tea Party' event) saw particularly large amounts of input from the group in both concept and execution, and the creative practitioner effectively drew out a range of ideas from the group which were then woven together in the two pieces for performance at the museum. Participants also commented on the flexibility and responsiveness of Stella's leadership as allowing plenty of room for group members to contribute creatively, for instance:

'Laban classes are special because of they encourage improvisation which allows dancers to further utilise their extended technical/movement dynamic skills. This has resulted in more valuable input from our members into choreography for performance. Such an improvisatory approach is not available at my other dance class where chunks of rep are taught and then developed to suit our bodies.'

4.46 Broadening cultural horizons

Group visits to performances have been regularly arranged both by the practitioners and by members themselves, and trips have included performances at the Bonnie Bird theatre at Laban, the Southbank and participatory events at The Albany. Participant feedback has emphasised the value of being encouraged to attend such diverse events, especially when paired with the opportunity to share reflections and opinions following the shows at the subsequent 'Dance for Health' session.

'These classes have given me back an enthusiasm for attending dance and theatre performances and for sharing my thoughts and ideas with others.'

'Has encouraged me to be more aesthetically aware and appreciative of theatre/dance performances and other art forms.'

'Up until this I haven't been interested in dance as artform.'

In turn, one participant also spoke of how they felt the group had together developed an increasingly sophisticated shared approach to discussing their own and others' work:

'Since classes began, people have become more confident in using the language of aesthetics to describe what they see, think or would like to create. This makes it easier to work together as we have a common artistic language.'

Participants have also noted that the sessions themselves have widened their appreciation of contemporary dance and other art forms, and that the experience of being in the Laban building and among the young dance community there is in itself inspiring. A number of participants also stressed the value of **inter-generational work**, and their desire for further opportunities for this in the future.

'It's opened up my awareness of what surrounds me... it's wonderful to be around young, creative staff and a huge pleasure to come to this beautiful building and landscape.'

'So good to mix with the range of age groups within Laban. It's a breath of fresh air.'

'It's good to be in a multigenerational environment - the fact [Laban] is so prestigious ups standards'.

A number of participants have also been volunteering on archiving projects at Laban, staying on to assist with the archive for the afternoon following the class. Participants have stated their interest and enjoyment in pursuing this work:



'I have really enjoyed the archiving sessions -- Peter Brinson was a fascinating character and seemed central to much that was happening in Education and the Arts.'

'I've enjoyed the opportunity to work with the Laban Archivist, on the Peter Brinson material. Delving into the boxes has brought many happy memories of working with Peter on various projects in the 70's/80's and, along with other Dance for Health volunteers, we're helping to categorise the plethora of material he collected over the years. I hope we are of some use to dear Jane who is so patient and understanding.'

4.47 Positive impact of relationship with professional practitioners

Written and verbal feedback from participants has stressed the particularly positive impact of the practitioners' skill and nurture in leading sessions. From this feedback, the practitioners' specific teaching approaches and engagement has evidently been a key factor in the success of the classes and in creating a welcoming and stimulating environment for participants.

'Stella's ability to plan each session always impresses and it is evident that a lot of careful thought goes into it.'

'It is great to be in such well-managed group. It means you can be involved when you want to be or learn from others leads. As a former performing arts teacher I know how hard it is to create



the kind of learning and creative ethos we have in the class. I am full of admiration and love being a 'student' in my elder years.'

'Stella is exceptional in her understanding and patience.'

'A benefit that deserves a mention is meeting this amazing group of tutors.'

The value of having a series of graduate interns from Trinity Laban in sessions (alongside other occasional volunteers) to support and share skills with the group has also been celebrated by participants. The creation of a highly-professional short film by Nicolas Kyprianou (current Graduate Intern) of a series of group-devised sequences met with particular enthusiasm and acclaim from the group.

4.48 Developing reflective practice

Supported by the strong reflective practice of the class' facilitator Stella Howard, the group has also developed a concerted reflective approach, regularly appraising its own creative work and the group's dynamics as well as engaging in discussion about other performances viewed outside of the class:

'[the facilitators] make time and space for us to see and appraise each other's dance and pay attention to giving us feedback and prompts to improve what we do.'

This culture of reflection has had a markedly positive impact on some participants, for instance:

'One of my goals in dancing myself is to gain more insight into the dance that I pay to watch. Developing a critical response to our own work and process – attending to issues of quality – is very rewarding in itself and also helps me to get more from the dance performances we like to attend.'

Another participant noted how the ongoing communication between everyone linked to the group has seen seeing both participants and practitioners developing their approaches and abilities together:

'I suggest that part of the uniqueness of the dance sessions at Laban, the Retired not Tired group, is that there is a core group that have been working together for three years. It appears that trusting relationships have been established and I feel that there has been development for both the participants and the practitioners on many different levels.'

Furthermore, group members have also generously supported the academic pursuits of the research fellow, participating in reflective one-to-one interviews, the 2013-2014 dance diary project and attending a seminar on research findings about the Retired not Tired programme in April 2014. One participant noted the particular value they perceived of being engaged in this analytical process:

'I think it's very significant that Trinity Laban have employed Kate to research the Retired Not Tired programme. We get a strong message from the practitioners themselves, but Kate's work reminds us that the people running the Learning and Participation programme are also reflective practitioners who want to hear our voices and are open to the feedback she helps us to offer.'

5. Arts Befriending Group, based in Sydenham

5.1 Overview

Practitioner: Natasha Lohan

Background: The group primarily has a social focus and provides opportunities for older people to socialise around arts-based activities. While maintaining a strong focus on singing, sessions also incorporate poetry, drawing, craft and arts appreciation. Attendance fluctuates as many of the group are frail or have care responsibilities.



Aims

- Provide opportunities for social interaction with arts activity as a key focus;
- Provide opportunities for older people to express themselves through creative activity, with a strong focus on singing;
- Find and nurture the particular skills and talents of individuals in the group.

Creative Approach

The Arts Befriending Group based in Sydenham is a social group with art-based activity at its heart. Members have been recruited through Ageing Well, a local support organisation for isolated older people, as well as via the Lewisham Pensioners' Forum and through other local community services (e.g. doctors' surgeries and libraries). Sessions are split between music and other arts activity, with a fluid movement between singing, craft and poetry combined across sessions with themed projects running across several weeks and frequently building towards a performance. Creative content is shaped around the ideas and contributions of members of the group and participants have increasingly taken on leadership roles in directing creative activity or leading smaller groups. For many people who attend, the Arts Befriending Group is their only opportunity for social interaction on a weekly basis.

The group has also benefited from voluntary support from a Trinity Laban music student, mentored by the group's facilitator.

Achievements

- Wide range of activities undertaken and woven together beyond singing, including poetry, drawing, musical improvisation, lyric and song writing;

- Participation in various performances, including: end-of-term peer-to-peer sharings at the Laban building in December 2012 and April 2014; at Blackheath Halls as part of the the 'Blackheath does Broadway' event in April 2013; participation at the Entelechy Arts 21st Century Tea Dance at the Albany Theatre October 2013; performance at the Horniman museum as part of the 'Latin Dance Festival' (inspired by the 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition) in July 2013 and at the 'Curious Tea Party' in July 2014 (an event co-hosted by the Horniman Museum and Trinity Laban).
- Enhanced connection between the different groups in the Retired not Tired programme, notably during the latest Horniman 'Curious Tea Party' performance, where participants from this Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club and the Arts Befriending Club were happy to 'mix up' their seating arrangements as they performed a participatory singalong (also welcoming the public to join).
- Completion and performance of a range of group-devised songs and creative projects, which include a 'Winter into Spring' project that included craft, poetry and songwriting, the newly-composed 'Horniman Song' (written by the group about the story of the museum's collection) and a series of re-written lyrics for Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'My Favourite Things'.



Evidence collected

- Interviews and discussion with participants conducted by Trinity Laban research fellow
- Observations from Trinity Laban research fellow and creative practitioners
- Debrief material from creative practitioners
- Data from registers and monitoring

STRENGTHS & SUCCESSES	CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Group has a profound impact on members' social isolation.</p> <p>Sessions are highly inclusive and the group is tightly-knit despite wide range of abilities, physical conditions and backgrounds among the group.</p> <p>Fluid and creative blend of art forms explored in sessions.</p> <p>Stepping-down of the co-leader who ran art activities has opened group to a wider range of creative activities and also allowed other co-leaders to emerge.</p> <p>Strong sense of recognition and validation of each individual members' interests, talents and skills.</p> <p>Shared expertise with Ageing Well.</p> <p>Successful student placement, including completion of intensive song-writing project with an individual participant.</p>	<p>Structure of sessions changing due to stepping-down of participant who co-led art activities led to brief period of anxiety and flux.</p> <p>Initial challenge for practitioner in leading wider range of arts activities.</p> <p>Managing co-leadership of participants and the dynamics of dual leadership.</p> <p>Continuing to ensure the inclusivity of the group amid its highly diverse membership.</p>

Evidence of Impact

5.2 SOCIAL

5.21 Increased social confidence & 'self worth'

From observation and the practitioner's feedback, participants have gained social confidence across the years of the programme, not only through the social interaction of the group, but also through having their ideas and skills incorporated into the core of the group's creative work:

'This group has enabled me to blossom.'

'It's made me more confident and happy.'

'I think we're more comfortable with each other now. We have a laugh. We don't seem so of withdrawn and shy.'



Performing successfully in public venues has also impacted on participants' self-worth, particularly concerning how participants felt themselves to be positively perceived by others around them:

'We're performing in Horniman's Museum. What prestige that is! To be able to tell the children that: 'We're going to be rehearsing a concert in Horniman's Museum' they can't believe it. And at Blackheath they paid to come and see us.'

'Every time my son-in-law rings up, he says, 'have you got any further engagements?'. He says 'I can't believe that some people pay to hear you sing!' – Well, I think it's nice that they think we are good enough to sing in public!'

5.22 Development of social networks/group interaction

The group provides a warm and supportive environment. Each session begins with a cup of tea and a period of chatting and catching up, and it is clear both from observation and participants' own responses that group members share strong social bonds and value this group cohesion (which some considering it to derive directly from the group's singing activity):

'We really are a special group. I've never been to a group where there's no backbiting. I think we're all very positive each other and it must come through how we interact as a group singing.'

'There's no cliquey-ness or meanness: we are a group' [participant's own emphasis]

'I wanted to be part of something... People are friendly and welcoming.'

Indeed, several participants consider fellow groups members to have become genuine **friends**, with whom they may engage with socially outside of sessions:

'I've been coming here now for what, 14 months, and to say that at my age you make a new friend - I could ring them up and have a chat - that's very nice at my age.'

'I did have some reservations... what if I don't like those people? But I've really got now that there are about 5 people in the group that I think of as a friend.'

The **practical support and care** the group afford one another is also clear, with cards, phone calls and visits arranged when a group member has fallen ill:

'One member was ill and we took it turns going into Lewisham hospital to see her - and although she had a family and some visitors, nevertheless it was nice she had extra visitors.'

'Everybody is very helpful to each other I find.'

The group also has a positive impact on member's **wider family circles**, particularly through performances. Several participants had family members attend the performance at the Horniman museum and Blackheath Halls which was a source of pleasure and pride for participants, while another commented on enjoying sharing mementoes of a performance with his family:

'The photographs they gave us [from Blackheath] - my grandchildren loved them.'

5.23 Combatting isolation

For a number of members, the weekly gathering of the group is absolutely central in reducing their social isolation. For one participant the session is currently his only social interaction with other people (bar brief daily visits from a carer) and he frequently speaks informally of the huge value of attending for him:

'I enjoy it because of the social contact. Coming here is the last of my outings. I've given up most of them now but this is the one I look forward to. it's just 2 hours and it's after the weekend of being all alone.'

This feeling is also echoed in other participants' responses:

'It's my only link with life: coming here is like getting a big hug.'

'If I was sat indoors I'd be downhearted and not doing anything.'

Another form of isolation was noted by a participant in an interview: this participant explained that although she was 'in theory' a highly active and social person, she'd felt increasingly isolated and unhappy when at home alone in the evenings. However, through attending this creative group the participant was keen to state that *'my inner self has been restored. I just don't feel like that any more.'*

5.3 HEALTH & WELL-BEING

5.31 Improved/sustained psychological well-being

As well as the impact on psychological well-being that the group offers through providing a warm and supportive environment, participants in interviews and informal discussions have been eager (in some cases with an almost evangelical zeal) to stress how singing is central to their perception of the group's benefits:

'I can't tell you what a joy it is to come each week.'

'All I can say is that singing has caused a release in me: it's made me happy. This group has put the life back into me.'

'I'd say to anyone that's not well or is poorly to sing: It's just so... what word can I use?... liberating. It's just lovely.'

'Once I'm here, I'm the old me. Coming here: it's a tonic; it's like a booster; it's like you've had a booster shot in the arm.'

'I just feel better in myself.'

Participants also noted how this uplifted mood stayed with them **after sessions** - and that in one case the sessions had encouraged a participant to sing while at home to keep her spirits up.

'It's something to think about when you're at home: what you've done - what's made you smile.'

'When I used to sing in the house when my children were small or teenagers, they always used to say to me "do you have to sing?" - they didn't never liked me singing - and now I'll be in the house on my own and I'll be singing at the top of my voice. So that's new!'

5.32 Improved physical health: 10-week health study (2013)

A 10-week health study was also carried out with a small group of volunteers from the 'Arts Befriending Group'. The tests carried out were the largely same as used for 'Dance for Health', however, this study omitted the movement efficiency 'timed up and go' test which was judged inappropriate for this less mobile and frailer cohort (please see section 4.34 in the 'Dance for Health' section for further details/references on the selected assessment methods).

• Lung capacity

Using a spirometer, participants were measured for forced vital capacity (FVC) - the amount of air participants can exhale with force after a deep inhale; and forced expiratory volume (FEV) - the amount of air that can be inhaled over a short period of time (1 second, 2 seconds and 3 seconds).

Results showing a mixture of sustaining, low-level deterioration and improvement, with 3 out of 6 of the participants increasing in capacity. Considering the group scores as a whole, the average FVC

score increased by 0.28L and for FEV by 0.25L suggesting a **small overall improvement in lung capacity** across the group.

- **Functional Reach**

‘Functional reach’ is a clinical measure of balance and understood as the length an individual can reach forward in a plane parallel, with feet rooted on the ground (Duncan et. al. 1990).

The majority of participants underwent a **reduction** in their functional reach, with reach scores decreasing across the group by an average of 2cm.

- **Balance Confidence**

Balance confidence was assessed using the ‘ConfBal’ test, where the term is understood as ‘people’s conviction in their ability to engage in everyday functional tasks without losing their balance’ (Simpson et. al. 2009: 104).

Participants are asked to respond to a series of statement relating to balance, (e.g. ‘How confident are you that you can sit down on a chair without losing your balance?’) stating whether they would be not confident (scored with 3), slightly confident (scored with 2) or confident (scored with 1). Higher scores thus reflect more problems with balance confidence and lower scores reflect fewer problems.

Participants were found to have fairly consistent ratings across the two phases of the study. Two participants scores rose by 1 point (slightly less confident) while another’s decreased by 2 (slightly more confident), so that participants’ **confidence in balance was overall shown to be sustained** across the ten-week study.

Summary of findings from 10-week health study:

- Assessments that explored **functional reach** and **balance** showed either sustained or deteriorating conditions;
- However, average results for lung capacity - both vital and expiratory volumes - were overall found to be **slightly improved** across the term.

Additional comments

In addition to the study, other participants not involved in the formal testing have been keen to state the physical impact the sessions have had on their breathing and overall physical health:

‘Do you know what? I had to go to the hospital last week and I had to have some sort of heart examination and the nurse said I want you to breath very deeply... and she said, ‘you’re very good breather’. And I thought, ‘I must tell Natasha!’ I know how to breath deeply. So you see, medically it’s good for us too.’

‘It wakes up some bones that have been sleeping for some time.’

'The breathing exercises really help. My hospital appointments are getting further apart - they are! Because especially with the breathing... they were monitoring that very closely because if it developed into a certain thing that they thought might be wrong with me, it would have meant I'd have to go onto steroids - and I'd have to have operations to have it lasered - but because it's not as bad as it used to be they don't want to see me as often, so it really is a bonus. And it must be from the singing!'

5.4 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATING IN CREATIVE, CULTURAL ACTIVITY

5.41 Increased confidence in their own creative abilities

The group has clearly grown in creative confidence across the years of the programme. The group practitioner notes a significant 'step forward' came about through a solo songwriting project undertaken by a participant with Parkinson's Disease and supported by the student assistant from Trinity Laban in the 2012 Autumn term. This newly composed song was learnt and subsequently performed by the group at the December sharing, and the practitioner notes how the project provided

'a great opportunity for drawing out a quiet talent and thereby instilled an interest in the rest of the group. The sense of pride in a fellow group member/friend and the dedication to playing their parts in realising it in the final performance was a very large step towards autonomous creativity for this group.' (practitioner commentary)

Following the close of the original format of peer-led art activities in January 2013, a group discussion took place which explored what the participants wanted from the group in the future. From observing this discussion, it was clear many members were keen to explore new creative areas such as poetry and songwriting, potentially inspired by the new song composed the previous term - or were keen to encourage others to 'have a go'. This change in session format seemed in many ways to revitalise the group and members have since been observed writing poetry alone and in groups, contributing to newly-composed songs, creating collages and craft items, all with increasing energy and dwindling self-consciousness.

The practitioner noted the change in the group in one of the first exercises in this new session 'mode':

'We embarked on a poetry writing project on the same theme of Spring - working in groups. Beautiful poems emerged. The exercise was simple, straightforward and immediate - all of which I think instilled the idea of how possible it would be for this group to think and act creatively.' (practitioner commentary)

Soon afterwards, the group performed at Blackheath Halls which also had a huge impact on both individual and group confidence. The practitioner describes,

'When asked to participate at 'Blackheath does Broadway', the group were excited but nervous. This was a great journey in terms of them learning to trust me not to make fools of

them. The applause they received when introduced was warm, friendly but after they sang their opening number, it was spontaneous and raucous even. The members still felt that perhaps the audience were “being nice” but as I pointed out to the group – their physical engagement with the song and the event itself served as a reminder to everyone in that hall that we can do anything we set our minds to.’ (practitioner commentary)

Members’ own feedback about the performance in interviews has confirmed this significant growth in confidence:

‘I really thought I’d got to an age when I thought I couldn’t sing anymore... but I sang at Blackheath and people came up to me afterwards and said ‘you really enjoy singing, don’t you’ and I said ‘why? did that come across?’ and they said ‘oh yes!’

‘To go on stage... it was wonderful. I suddenly felt quite at home under the spotlight.’

‘All that clapping: you can’t believe all those people are clapping you - but they are.’

After the Blackheath performance, in a later interview one participant also noted how cheerful and confident the entire group seemed, stating

‘It’s really lifted the group, its pepped us up: that we know we can do it now!’

At the more recent Retired not Tired sharing held in April 2014, there were some concerns that participants from the Sydenham and Bellingham groups may have felt potentially a little excluded from the programme as a whole – which featured some more experimental works that some other participants found *‘a bit weird’*. This potential division between the groups was successfully remedied at the Horniman ‘Curious Tea Party’ event however. Here participants from across the programme were ‘mixed-up’ in their seating as they performed an informal Music Hall singalong, and was met with enjoyment and enthusiasm from participants.

5.42 Development of new skills

The practitioner has noted that the group’s singing ability as a whole has developed significantly, stating in debrief material that *‘vocally, it really has got stronger’* while participants have similarly commented that they feel they have gained new skills and ability:

‘I now believe that I can reasonably sing in tune. To come to my age and find out you can suddenly sing in tune is quite something.’

‘No matter what age you are, I now know you can always learn something new.’

Another participant noted how she felt that participating in the group’s activities helped her both to stay sharp and to keep on learning:

‘when you get older you’re so afraid of losing it - and this is not only an exercise in companionship and singing, but it makes us study a little bit which is very good for our grey matter.’

5.43 Sense of enjoyment

The social impact of the group seems to function not only through the sessions' caring and nurturing environment, but also through a sense of fun and light-heartedness. One participant has noted: *'It always makes me smile.'*



Two sessions observed brought this to the fore, interestingly both involving text writing. A session partially dedicated to limerick writing elicited much laughter and merriment over some more risqué suggestions from some of the group, while working on the lyrics of the Horniman song in the summer term similarly saw several participants in fits of laughter over a suggested line by one group member (concerning Mr Horniman retiring to the home counties 'to have a fling'). The value of 'having a laugh' has been noted informally by a number of participants, and complements the more serious support and creative focus that the group offers its members.

5.44 Incorporating, encouraging and validating other creative skills, experiences and reference points

The practitioner is keen to find and develop each individual's skills and interests, and this is clear in the range of activities carried out, often led by a particular member's interests, for instance: collages, limericks, flower-making. Some participants have found these activities initially challenging, but also seem to enjoy seeing other members 'shine':

'I enjoy the writing stuff, but there's such a lot of people with a lot of talent in there - I mean, [J] has done some marvellous poems - she doesn't even know herself how good some of them are.'

Song choices for existing repertoire have been carefully shaped by participants' ideas and memories: the choice of 'If I was the Only Girl in the World' was led by a participant with a particular connection to the song, and the group's performance of the song at the Laban sharing in December then featured a 'soli' section sung by this participant as part of a trio.

The work on a series of Music Hall numbers for the Horniman event in July 2014 also met with tremendous enthusiasm from group members, and connected powerfully with many participants' memories and experiences, particularly those who were oldest (and sometimes frailest) in the group.

'I'm the one that stirs it up you see! I know those and I get onto Natasha about them. Years ago, people used to meet in someone's front room and have a good old singsong. And as children - well, I can remember my grandmother singing along in the yard on washing day - I can remember these songs... Last week we picked out a couple of songs and they were my grandmother's favourites.'

5.45 Broadening cultural horizons

The wide range of art forms explored evidently brings new experiences to many members of the group. Trips out to perform have been a significant highlight for many, involving **visits to venues for the first time**, and in some cases **reconnecting** participants with an experience which had otherwise been dormant in the memory for some time.

'These little journeys out - it gives people a lot to look forward to... it's a brilliant thing.'

'When we went to Blackheath and to the Horniman, I'd not been there before - and I really, really enjoyed myself.'

'When we went to Blackheath that was wonderful. It was out of this world. But it was back to normal! I used to love to go to the theatre - we used to go quite a bit and I'd know all the songs - most of the songs we did I've seen the show [that features these songs] - but that was a long time ago now.'



6. Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club

6.1 Overview

Practitioner: Zoe Gilmour

Background: Music activities within the Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club were established in early 2012 to follow on from an initial pilot project undertaken by Entelechy Arts in 2011. Music practitioner Zoe Gilmour from Trinity Laban has been visited the group in six-week blocks (extended from 5-week blocks in 2012), incorporating music (and other activities including art and craft) into a mixed programme of social activity. The group is primarily a social one, with the musical content worked around social elements like bingo and a raffle.



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

Aims

- Provide opportunities for social interaction with arts activity as a key focus;
- Provide opportunities for older people to express themselves through creative activity;
- Find and nurture the particular skills and talents of individuals in the group.

Key achievements

- Development in the group's creative skills and confidence, through the successful introduction of more creative, exploratory activities including song-writing based on reminiscence work.
- Increasing acceptance and enthusiasm for singing and creative activities among the group.
- Participation in various performances, including: end-of-term peer-to-peer sharings at the Laban building in December 2012 and April 2014; at Blackheath Halls as part of the 'Blackheath does Broadway' event in April 2013; participation at the Entelechy Arts 21st Century Tea Dance at the Albany Theatre October 2013; performance at the Horniman museum as part of the 'Latin Dance Festival' (inspired by the 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition) in July 2013 and at the 'Curious Tea Party' in July 2014 (an event co-hosted by the Horniman Museum and Trinity Laban).
- Enhanced connection between the different groups in the Retired not Tired programme, notably during the latest Horniman 'Curious Tea Party' performance, where participants from this Bellingham 'Young at Heart' Club and the Arts Befriending Club were happy to 'mix up' their seating arrangements as they performed a participatory singalong (also welcoming the public to join).

- Increased connection among group members and other local older people's arts organisations, including new links with Meet me at the Albany (with some group members now volunteering at/attending sessions)



Creative approach

The 'Young at Heart' Club is primarily a social club for older residents in Bellingham and held at St Dunstan's Church at Bellingham Green. Membership of the club comprises local older people, including many who are frail and are supported to attend the group by the organisers and using transport provided. Given that the club pre-existed as a purely social club, the practitioner has worked in close partnership with members of the group in planning and structuring activities, and sessions are often delivered with a co-host from the group.

Early work with the group centred around singing existing repertoire familiar to the group, but the group has since taken part in more exploratory song-writing and reminiscence activities including work exploring how personal stories and objects can be brought to life through songwriting; sharing and developing ideas for repertoire to learn together (with opportunities for both group and solo singing); and music quizzes and themed craft activities, including making and adapting props for use in performance.

The group leader has been keen to generate something beyond a 'choir model' in sessions, and this is evident in the wide range of creative activities undertaken and the strong sense of shared responsibility among group members over how sessions and performances are shaped and delivered. The format for the Horniman performance in 2014 also reflected this need for sensitive structuring: here members of 'Young at Heart' willingly 'mixed up' the seating arrangements, sitting alongside other participants from across the programme and also welcoming member of the public to participate in the singing too. This sociable and less 'performative' format worked extremely well, successfully integrating participants from the Bellingham 'Young at Heart' club with other group participants from 'Retired not Tired' and yielding a range of positive remarks from the 'Young at Heart' participants (see below).

Over the last year, a recently-qualified music practitioner, Shaun Stevens has also supported sessions as a volunteer (having attended a taster workshop run by Zoe as part of the *Older & Wiser* CPD event), and has been met with warmth and enthusiasm by the group.



Evidence collected

- Interviews and discussion with participants conducted by Trinity Laban research fellow
- Observations from Trinity Laban research fellow and creative practitioners
- Debrief material from creative practitioners
- Data from registers and monitoring

STRENGTHS & SUCCESSES	CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
<p>Group valued as a friendly and creative space for participants.</p> <p>The group continues to offer huge value to participants in terms of combatting social isolation, standing as a warm and welcoming community.</p> <p>The group is valued for its sense of fun.</p> <p>Session contents and timetabling sensitively developed in conjunction with the group's own leaders – creating a strong sense of pride and shared ownership over the group's activities and performances.</p> <p>Music used in increasingly broad and exploratory ways in sessions, including use of effective CD playlists and a variety of song-writing activities.</p> <p>Group has welcomed and supported the arrival of a new volunteer practitioner (Shaun Stevens), warmly sharing their skills and interests with him.</p> <p>Repertoire suggestions have been increasingly generated by group members, with members yet more confident and eager to put forward suggestions and to support other group members in identifying songs and transcribing lyrics.</p> <p>Several highly successful performances from the group, which were evidently hugely enjoyed by all who participated.</p>	<p>Need for widely differentiated activities to meet the wide range of abilities, health challenges and interests.</p> <p>Transport logistics (expense and unreliability) a major obstacle when participating in external performances and outings for many members.</p> <p>Not all group members have wished to attend group performances, meaning these members potentially feel excluded from some of the activities that precede and follow performances (although the issue has been handled deftly and sensitively by the group's practitioner).</p> <p>The balance of time allocated within sessions to social and creative elements is sometimes a source of some tension among a small number of group members.</p> <p>Can be challenging/excluding for group members to experience some of the more experimental performances from elsewhere in the Retired not Tired programme. One successful step in meeting this challenge was taken at the 2014 Horniman performance, where participants from across the programme were 'mixed-up' in their seating during a cheerful, informal and inclusive singalong.</p> <p>Aims to introduce more movement and dance into future sessions through occasional visits from a dance or movement specialists from Laban.</p>

Evidence of Impact

6.2 SOCIAL

6.21 Increased social confidence & 'self worth'

Participants have spoken of how the group has helped **strengthen their confidence** and sense of **self-worth**:

'It's brought me out of my shell... I was a bit apprehensive about coming but not now.'

'I felt ten foot tall when I'd been away and I came in through that door and everyone had missed me.'

The experience of participating in the group's **performances** also seems to have a particularly beneficial impact on participants' sense of confidence and worth:

'When they clapped and applauded... Knowing there were all those other groups there but that we really went down well. Well, it was lovely.'

'We enjoyed [the performance] but you could see the people did as well: you could hear the applause and everything! And it was such a big audience... It was surprising - and lovely!'

Programme practitioners noted however that during the April 2014 sharing at the Laban building, some of the participants from the Bellingham and Sydenham groups may have potentially felt a little excluded from the programme as a whole. This was successfully remedied at the Horniman 'Curious Tea Party' event, where participants from across the programme were 'mixed-up' in their seating as they performed an informal singalong, as described by practitioner Zoe Gilmour:

'I discussed with Young at Heart the intention of mixing up the seating arrangements; they went along with it and encouraged new people to sit among them during the performance, and the results were good.'

Participants themselves also noted what a boost this new format proved to be for their feeling of confidence, when they may otherwise struggle with such performance occasions:

'I can get nervous performing on stage but there, it was just like us here. You felt comfortable. It was just like how Zoe does a singsong here – really comfortable... Normally I'd get a bit worried but it was a really lovely day. I enjoyed it more than when I've done it before!'

6.22 Development of social networks/group interaction

The club provides a warm, sociable environment for members. Sessions are punctuated by cups of tea, shared cakes and periods of chatting and catching up, and it is clear both from observation and participants' own responses that group members enjoy the company and camaraderie of the group, with participants often referring to **the explicit social value** of the group:

'We love coming to the club. It's a nice afternoon out and they're such a nice crowd, a lovely group. It's a welcoming group.'

'It's not cliquey here: everyone's friends with everyone else. Some groups aren't like that - and they put you off.'

'When [the group] is on holiday, I miss it. I think it's such a good thing to come to every week.'

The enhanced sense of 'belonging' to the Retired not Tired programme as a whole (following the July 2014 Horniman performance) was also noted by participants as a bonus:

'Singing with other groups of people – it was really nice. I thoroughly enjoyed it and when you get home you know you've had a good time. Of all the musical events we've done, I really enjoyed it.'

'I enjoyed it more singing along with the others - more than getting up on a stage. The different clubs all sitting together - it was lovely.'

One participant who has been instrumental in the running of the group from the beginning, has stressed that **singing activities have helped forge a new level of group feeling and interaction**. He is aware that singing has not always appeared to unite the group - and this division has been an ongoing challenge for the practitioner - but he has ultimately come to regard singing as an important element in sustaining the group's cohesion, noting late in 2013 that:

'The singing has made a big difference to this group... when [the group] started, everybody was sitting at different tables, they were segregated, if you know what I mean, so you were getting 'groups'.... but the singing has done the group good, it's really moved us along and it's kept us from stagnating - it's got us to do something together.'

Commenting on the group's dynamics in 2014, this same participant was even more confident as to the value of singing in upholding a sense of community within the group :

'If we don't have singing, sometimes out comes bingo and then no one says a word! With the singing, everyone does interact. The singing now goes down really well.'

Observations of the group find that sessions often feature powerful but 'micro' interactions among group members when engaged in music-making. A recent observation of a singing session found two female participants both suddenly recall a song familiar just to them. The pair promptly and spontaneously sang through the song while the rest of the group listened carefully, applauding enthusiastically at its close – yet the pair themselves sang only to one another, looking intently and warmly into one another's eyes as they sang. Such small moments are difficult to quantify or to place within broader 'impact' claims, but to the author they are the very essence of what the group's activity accomplishes for its members and no less crucial for their scale and transience.



Photograph by Roswitha Chesher

Beyond creating strong social bonds among group members, the group also has an **impact across whole families**. The practitioner noted how three generations of a family helped to track and share a song that the group later sung together: a group member's grandson loaded the song 'Don't be a Hero' onto the member's daughter's phone; from here the group member and her daughter attended the session with the new song; the song was then shared with the practitioner, who typed up lyrics and taught the song to the group as a whole. This sharing of material also works in the other direction: another participant noted the pleasure she got from sharing the group's songs with her family: *'I like singing. It makes me feel lovely. I sing to my grandson now.'*

6.23 Combatting isolation

Many of the group's members live alone and participants stated how spending time in the group's warm social environment has allowed them to **feel less isolated**:

'Otherwise you'd just sit indoors but this gets us all out: you forget about all the other things.'

'We could sit at home and feel depressed, but you come here and start singing all those old songs and it's lovely.'

'What brings me here? Human company. People need people. Sometimes when you look around and you're low yourself, it's good to have people to say 'how are you?' - to give you a big smile. The biggest value is a big smile.'

'What else would people be doing if we weren't here? We'd be indoors looking at four walls and feeling miserable. Mixing around - it's lovely.'

6.24 Sense of group ownership

Participants are increasingly **proud of the group's achievements**. The recent performance at the Horniman (in July 2014) yielded extremely proud and positive comments from group members:

'What we've done is a real eye opener... it was wonderful.'

One of the group members has also documented the group's arts activity by creating a scrapbook that includes photographs, programmes and tickets from performances. The participant then brings the book to sessions following performances to share with members who may have been unable to attend.



6.3 HEALTH & WELL-BEING

6.31 Improved/sustained psychological well-being

The practitioner has noted what she feels to be a tremendous impact on participants' well-being through attending the sessions. Several group members are unable to participate 'actively', but the practitioner has expressed how *'participation may not always be as we imagine it, sometimes just being in the room makes a huge difference.'* From observation it is clear that for several of the more physically challenged participants, just being in a space with music playing is visibly uplifting, and by turns relaxing or stimulating.

Participants have also noted how uplifting they find sessions, and several have also stated that participation offers particular relief to a preoccupation with any physical ailments by providing an engaging, positive distraction:

'Singing, it makes you feel sort of elevated! I think it's wonderful.'

'I find if I've got a bad back or whatever, doing this sort of things helps you forget a little bit. You know, you feel you've got something out there and you aim for that. Just takes your mind off it. It makes you feel better - to meet people, talk to them - you feel much better when you get home, not sitting there moping...'

'It just gives you that booster - if you've got anything wrong with you, it takes it all away. You forget about it.'

'I have such a lot of problems of my own at the moment - health problems etc. - and I find that this helps take it all off me - it does really help.'

Sessions often involve bouts of laughter and a real sense of high spirits and 'play'. Such moments of play (e.g. spontaneous dancing or suddenly beginning a new song as another song finishes) are initiated as much by individual group members as by the practitioner, and the sense of good spirits seems to ripple across the group with other participants then taking the baton in behaving playfully. Group members often refer casually to the group being about 'having a laugh', but as an observer it feels like a particularly meaningful and enriching element of the group's dynamic and one which has developed powerfully across the years of the programme.

6.32 Improved/sustained physical health

Some participants have cited a clear impact on their physical health through taking part in the group - notably through the beneficial impact singing has had on their lungs and breathing. As one participant has stated:

'Singing is very uplifting, it's very healthy. I've come here with a cold and gone away without one: it expands your lungs, makes you breathe properly.'

6.4 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATING IN CREATIVE, CULTURAL ACTIVITY

6.41 Increased confidence in creative abilities

The group has demonstrated increasing creative confidence across the programme's years. Through observing sessions, members have been growing confidence and energy to suggest and develop themed repertoire ideas, working together in the 2014 summer term to recall and write out lyrics for 'Three Little Fishes' and 'The Coffee Song' in response to the 'Amazon Adventure' exhibition at the Horniman. This confidence has also extended into increased energy and verve in performance, noted by participants themselves:

'We sang old songs from the shows - we knew some slightly but not all - then we practised and got them - we got more confident. By the end it was fun to perform them.'

'I think there were some people in the other groups [from Retired not Tired] who didn't like it because when we were getting our voices going we were so much louder. They weren't very happy with us! We didn't do it on purpose - we couldn't help it!'

6.42 Development of new skills

For some members of the group, singing has been a new venture and so has marked the acquisition of a new skill:

'This is the first lot of singing I've ever really done - so it's something new for me. When it started I didn't know, and then I went home and sat down and thought: 'I enjoyed that'... Yes, it was something different at first and I hadn't done it before - but since we've carried on, it's really taken off: I think it's marvellous what we've done.'

For other members who were already comfortable to sing, some of the new repertoire has marked a constructive challenge:

'My Mother's Book' was more of a ballad and so it was more difficult... I enjoyed it though - it was totally different. It can be good to do something different - that way you're learning.'

The group's facilitator, Zoe Gilmour, has also noted how the recent arrival of a volunteer music practitioner has seen the group offer perhaps unprecedented levels of support to mentor this younger person, developing skills to support this young musician in his own progression:

'The group are very patient with him when he is practising how to lead: they are 'holding' him in fact... You could say that in some way they are sharing their learning and skills, as participants, with him and mentoring him in the same way as I am.'

6.43 Connecting with a 'younger self'

In interviews, participants have noted how singing connects them back to a younger self, recalling what one participant called "the good old days" and in doing so, conjuring a sense of happiness and contentment in the present.

'I tell you what, music brings back what I call dormant memories - there could be a happy moment in your life and you look at your self and what you were doing. So singing, it brings back memories, the best things in your life, the best times in your life, and that makes you feel good now.'

'It's really lovely. The music brings back memories. I look forward to it every week.'

6.44 Sense of enjoyment

It is clear the group derives great enjoyment from engaging with one another, and alongside the fun of the weekly raffle, sessions often include playful activities such as quizzes or craft. The choice of repertoire and singing activities strikes a good balance between more lyrical works such as 'I Could Have Danced All Night' or 'My Mother's Book', a moving ballad composed by the practitioner for a group member based on a reminiscence activity - and more playful, skittish repertoire such as 'Hey Little Hen' or 'The Coffee Song'.

One particular session observed just before the 2014 Easter holidays highlighted the strong capacity for enjoyment among the group. As the group completed a craft activity decorating easter baskets, accompanied by an Easter-themed CD playlist as selected by the practitioner, the music switched to a tea dance number and the practitioner began to dance lightly. She was joined spontaneously by two other members of the group who began waltzing together, the pair then subsequently

encouraging one of the dial-a-ride drivers who happened to be waiting at the back to take to the dance floor too. The rest of the group watched the impromptu dance in delight, laughing and applauding at the scene, and there was a real sense of shared 'end of term' celebration and fun.

In interviews, participants have offered clear feedback as to how much fun they have in sessions and how singing contributed to that sense of fun and light-heartedness:

'You come out of here feeling on top of the world.'

'I thoroughly enjoy the singing - it really gives me a lift.'

6.45 Incorporating, encouraging and validating other creative skills, experiences and reference points

The running of the group is particularly strong in this area, with the practitioner showing great care, sensitivity and expertise in drawing out individuals' contributions. The practitioner has provided a number of opportunities for participants to share stories, objects and 'reference songs', including a period of WW2-themed reminiscence work in the spring term of 2013. The practitioner then composed two songs based directly on these exchanges and the impact of this gesture proved extremely powerful. The songs were warmly and movingly received by the two individuals who'd shared the stories



and indeed by the group as a whole, with several other members shedding tears as they learnt to sing them together. Following the sing-through, the participant who'd volunteered the story immediately asked for a copy of the lyrics to take home and show her daughter, and another group member later commented: *'it was lovely how Zoe made them up from things we'd told her. 'D's' song [My Mother's Book] was just so... well, it moved me very much.'* Both songs were later performed with great success at the Horniman museum performance in the summer of 2013.

In preparation for the Horniman museum performance, the group also developed new work on the theme of 'collections'. Members of the groups visited the museum itself, but the practitioner also arranged for photographs to be taken of participants with their own collections (with some photographs taken at sessions and some through individual home visits by practitioners) - meaning that everyone could participate even if unable to make the museum visit. These images were then displayed attractively at the Horniman museum performance. Despite some initial anxieties among a few participants about how they might look in the pictures, participants were evidently delighted with the results, and proud and pleased to see their personal contributions recognised.

The practitioner has also introduced a range of craft activities into the sessions which members have enjoyed (*'we like doing the arts and crafts things... it's nice doing our own designs'*). Working with a co-host during a preparatory session for the Horniman performance, the group planned props to

bring from home to animate the performance, which included craft pieces that group members had previously made: *'I was asked to take my mermaid that I'd made out of scraps I'd had over the years.'*

Two of the songs performed at the Horniman museum were suggested by participants themselves. One song 'Three Little Fishes' was put forward by participant 'O' who then recalled a snippet of the song (but not the title) so worked with another group member to fill in some of the other lyrics, from which the practitioner could then trace the song online. 'O' had chosen the song as she felt it would be fun for children but grew anxious that the song suddenly seemed *'too long to sing'* and had some *'nonsense'* words in it. However, 'O' was delighted when *'I saw there was people with children and [the song] really brought people together... it did work! So everything that day worked perfectly!'*

6.46 Broadening cultural horizons

Recent months have seen a cultural horizons broaden for a number of group members. With the support of the practitioner, two participants now regularly attend 'Meet Me at the Albany' (the older people's arts club which includes a range of participatory arts activities) and these two participants since invited the project's manager to come and speak to the group at Bellingham. Zoe Gilmour is confident that the group's gentle exploration of different art forms and participation in other performances has contributed to this increased openness among participants:

'I think this connection is in part due to the visits / performances at the 21st Century Tea Dances which have broadened [the group's] outlook and also a gradual increase in confidence due to the work we've been doing in Bellingham over the past few years.' (practitioner comment)

Participants have also noted that they have enjoyed hearing different instruments played at sessions, and learning and listening to varying styles of music. The repertoire developed among the group across the year and performed at Blackheath Halls and at the Horniman has sometimes proved new and challenging for some members of the group, particularly 'My Mother's Book', but participants spoke of enjoying this challenge and of working to help others (e.g. members of the 'Arts Befriending Group' when they joined forces at the Horniman museum) to embrace the new material:

'Some of them didn't understand [My Mother's Book] at first - didn't know what it was about and they didn't want to sing it. So I turned round and explained it to them and then they were happy to do it.'

Visiting other venues, from the Laban centre to exhibitions at the Horniman museum, offered new and exciting experiences for group members, or a chance to revisit after many years:

[on a visit to the Horniman] *'I really enjoyed it. I've been to the museums before but not seen anything like that.'*

'For lots of the group, [the museum] was a new place - and I hadn't been there for years and years so it really nice to go back, to walk around it all. It was a bit different. It was good fun.'

7. A Community of Practice: Trinity Laban and OPAN

Trinity Laban's work with older people has resulted in strong connections with a number of other arts organisations in the borough of Lewisham who are also engaged in participatory arts work with older people. These organisations have together formed OPAN (the Older People's Arts Network), which aims to articulate the local arts/culture/participatory offer for older people and improve the coherence of what is provided; sharing expertise, practice, research and training. Alongside Trinity Laban, OPAN comprises Age Exchange, Entelechy Arts, Montage Theatre Arts, The Albany and the Horniman Museum & Gardens.

Across this 2012-2015 period, OPAN has worked towards a number of initiatives, notably a symposium and two connected CPD programmes funded by ArtWorks London (a special Initiative of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation).

Age Gap symposium

The Age Gap symposium took place in April 2013 at the Laban building. Developed by OPAN members in collaboration with Helen Ball (Head of Engagement at The Audience Agency), the event gathered together a range of South London-based arts participants (including a number of Retired not Tired group members), artists and project managers over a range of art forms. The symposium explored ways of supporting and nurturing artists to develop creative practice in participatory settings with older people, examining the needs, challenges and gaps in relation to continuing professional development (CPD) for artists working in this field. The Audience Agency documented the day, producing a publically available report which includes recommendations for future action, and which is available here:

http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/media/1189642/age_gap_symposium_final_report.pdf

As a result of the Age Gap symposium, OPAN developed two Continuing Professional Development initiatives for both emerging and established artists working in participatory settings with older people, as are outlined below.

Sharing Practice

The 'Sharing Practice' CPD programme ran from November 2013-January 2014 and was created in response to a need for CPD for experienced artists who had been working in the field of older people's arts for at least 3 years. This facilitated 'reflective learning group' comprised eight artists working across diverse art forms (and linked to the various OPAN organisations) who met for an initial day of self and co-reflective activities, facilitated by experienced arts practitioner Clair Chapwell. The group then departed and arranged to observe each other's practice in situ in the interim weeks. The group then re-convened in January 2014 to reflect on these observations and to engage in co-mentoring activities.

Older & Wiser

Older & Wiser was a one-day conference-style event which took place in February 2014 and targeted at emerging older people's arts practitioners. The need for such an event was identified through OPAN who recognise that there is a shortage of artists who have the understanding, experience and skills to undertake this work, which is currently undergoing a period of growth in terms of recognition, as well as financial investment. Retired not Tired Participants attended, contributing to group discussions and one participant from 'Dance for Health' also co-presented a paper with the Trinity Laban research fellow in the morning sessions.

8. Summary of Key Findings

<p>Social impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research suggests the programme has a powerful social impact on participants. The value of the groups in nurturing social engagement and interaction was stressed by participants and practitioners across all four groups. This sensibility ranged from a more light-hearted ‘conviviality’ for some, to a more intense feeling of ‘family’ for others. • Similarly, groups have been shown to reduce social isolation among members, combatting loneliness and providing a warm and supportive environment for more vulnerable older people. • In turn, participants’ commentary suggests this positive interaction has in many instances generated enhanced social confidence (although this benefit was found to be less central to the ‘Dance for Health’ cohort). • Participants and practitioners have often emphasised a growing sense of group ownership over each group’s creative work - particularly when building towards performance - which has further boosted the sense of positive community feeling among groups.
<p>Impact on health and well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey responses from ‘Dance for Health’ and ‘All Singing All Dancing’ also suggested high levels of perceived health benefits. This was recorded in general terms (>90% state a “significant” or “huge” impact on their health) and across specific domains, with participants noting improvement in postural awareness, balance confidence and flexibility. • The two 10-week health studies noted some improvement in lung capacity (‘Arts Befriending Group’) across the term, as well as improvements in functional reach, movement efficiency and balance confidence (‘Dance for Health’). • Interviews, discussion and survey comments also revealed numerous accounts of health improvements, including improved breathing, improved mobility and reduced pain. • Many participants have noted the programme’s strong impact on their psychological well-being. Surveys completed by ‘Dance for Health’ and ‘All Singing All Dancing’ group members showed that the vast majority (>91%) perceive participating to have had a “significant” or “huge” impact on their well-being. Verbal commentary from participants across the programme has similarly stressed powerful benefits in this domain.

<p>Impact on health and well-being (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, the CASP12 well-being survey completed by ‘Dance for Health’ volunteers suggested that the class may have a strong impact on participants’ sense of ‘self realisation’. This result may be tentatively linked to other participant commentary which has stressed the value of opportunities for creative self-expression offered by the class.
<p>Benefits of participating in creative, cultural activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioner and participant commentary has suggested participants have developed in creative confidence and contribute in a large variety of ways to each group’s creative work. • Participants have recorded how the groups have helped them to acquire and develop skills, from improved breathing/singing technique and choreographic ability (in both creation and execution), to improved social listening/collaboration skills. • Participants in ‘Dance for Health’ and the Bellingham ‘Young at Heart’ Club have emphasised how taking part in the programme has connected them to a ‘younger self’, re-activating positive memories and aspirations. • All groups are clearly fueled by and valued for their sense of fun, with both the social and creative aspects of sessions often characterised by a light-hearted, playful atmosphere. • Practitioners across the programme have taken great care to engage and validate the ideas, experiences and skills of group members. Practitioners have made sensitive use of remembrance activities; supported participants to select and share repertoire and choreography ideas; and sought to engage the contributions of group members across all creative activities. • In turn, as the programme has developed, participants from each of the four groups have shown an increasing capacity to reflect critically on their creative work and on the artistic direction of the group as a whole. • In terms of broadening cultural horizons, the programme has facilitated a number of performances at different venues, with many participants relishing the opportunity to visit a new place with the support of the group. Participants have expressed their pleasure at being introduced to new art forms, or new combinations of creative work, and at having the opportunity to work with skilled professional practitioners.