



Above & Beyond

Interim Evaluation (Full Report), 2021

Image of the 'Mernix', a mythical creature created through Above & Beyond

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Year two: Sheree Kenton, Keith Barber, Rebecca Rouke, Karen Siddle, Val Burton, Nicola Williams, Marie Lynch, Zoe Wilton.

Trustees

Jim Johnson (Chair), Anna Jones (Vice-Chair), Mike Eccles (Treasurer), Professor Eric Weitz, Graham Boxer, Jamie Beddard, Jane Pratt, June Hudson, Anthony Scott, Anya Winful.

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Introduction

Collective Encounters was established in 2004 and has been an Arts Council England RFO/NPO since 2008. 2019 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the organisation, with the launch of Above & Beyond and the Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre. The company is led by Sarah Thornton (Artistic Director) and Annette Burghes (Executive Director). Team members who have worked for the organisation for an extended period include Abi Horsfield, Ben Mellor, Aidan Jolly and Harriet Warnock, and the company's work is also supported by a wider team of regular freelance associates alongside contacts across Collective Encounters' wider sector network.

The foundation to Collective Encounters' work, and a vital consideration within this process of company development and evaluation, are the principles, ethics and practices defined by the company as Theatre for Social Change (TfSC).

The four-year project, Above & Beyond launched in Spring 2019, with funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation to test out a new way of working for Collective Encounters. Above & Beyond was launched alongside Collective Encounters' 'Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre' (with funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation) and whilst these two new initiatives were independent of each other, learning was shared between them, with both projects benefiting the local community and cultural infrastructure and the wider participatory arts movement.

Rather than a discrete set of programme objectives and activities, working with targeted communities of interest, Above & Beyond was structured to integrate activities within the existing community infrastructures of several localities, responding to the priorities of the local communities and leaving a sustainable legacy of creative production within these settings. An integral element of Above & Beyond is the **Project Advisory Group**, an ever-evolving team of local people who represent the diversity of the local communities and are paid and supported to make key decisions about the project alongside the Collective Encounters' team. The Project Advisory Group identified their aim for the creative output of the first two years of the project. This was part of a wider Theory of Change with links to aim one, and will be explored first in the outcomes analysis.

This report examines the first two years of this process and the underpinning principles, intended collectively to develop new and existing relationships (local and sector partners and participants), refine participatory creative practices and power-sharing and build tangible capacity and meaningful legacy for all stakeholders. This is a crucial milestone at which to reflect upon and share the evidence and learning stemming from planned activity and the significant changes that have had to occur as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a review of the effectiveness and implementation of planned approaches, the impact of external changes, the efficacy of measures taken to adapt to these and reflection upon the learning and recommendations that will guide the next phase of the four-year project.

Evaluation

Impact of Pandemic

Above & Beyond was initiated in Spring 2019, with physical outreach in two Merseyside communities - Bootle & Birkenhead. During year one, regular residencies with local groups were established in these two communities, alongside delivery of the sector facing events, internal development and the short-term outreach projects, planned as part of the programme.

By Summer 2019, a **Participant Advisory Group** had been recruited and worked with the Collective Encounters' team to recruit the external evaluator, before working collectively to define an aim for the creative output: **"To connect and celebrate community while sharing and understanding the challenges being experienced by different groups."**

By March 2020 the two local groups were scheduled to meet for the first time and begin co-devising the collaboratively produced work to begin touring later on in the year.

The emergence and impact of the Covid-19 virus was beginning to be observed and Collective Encounters revisited plans and began the transition to online and remote delivery approaches.

Year one activity, therefore reflects the planned delivery, with year two demonstrating the steps taken to continue delivering with the group and towards the wider objectives, within these changing and uncertain circumstances, rather than the development and fruition of planned approaches.

Methodology

Collective Encounters' commitment to 'radical', rather than 'liberal' social change, as both a critical lens for devising creative works and ensuring participant led practice, has informed the evaluation process.

The **Participant Advisory Group** (PAG) was brought together to steer Above & Beyond and inform the organisation's wider work. Their evaluation focus (prior to lock-down), produced the extended logical framework and initiated training around action research processes and participatory methods, with the intention that the group would take an active transformational or 'emancipatory' (156, Aldridge 2015), rather than transactional or tokenistic role within this process. Some adaptation was required due to the additional demands of the pandemic, to focus the PAG role on creative outcomes, and participant led analysis was delayed until phase two. The group have been active 'Actors', though without involvement in all stages.¹

¹ The PAG group was inactive during the initial stage of the pandemic, when all members of the team were focussed on establishing new systems and processes and maintaining creative activity with groups. Plans to involve the group in evaluation activities such as participant led observations and data analysis have also been limited due to the level of demand ; desire to prioritise their role informing creative production.

The evaluation is intended to examine how Collective Encounters works with and through the different stakeholders, to influence the wider civic, social and political sphere; how exchange between these groups is developed and supported; and crucially, how the agency of these individuals and groups informs the work of Collective Encounters.

Beyond the quantitative indicators, the evaluation process draws upon the rich descriptive evidence of participatory narrative based approaches, triangulating feedback to establish an intersubjective, rather than objective analysis.

In considering creativity as the tool for wider social impacts, the evaluation will be integrated within the creative process, aligning action learning cycles within the creative phases of 'Planning' Collective Encounters/PAG preparation, 'Play', through outreach, residency and core sessions, 'Pressure', capturing focussed rehearsal/production, and 'Pausing', for reflection and analysis (Anderson 2013).

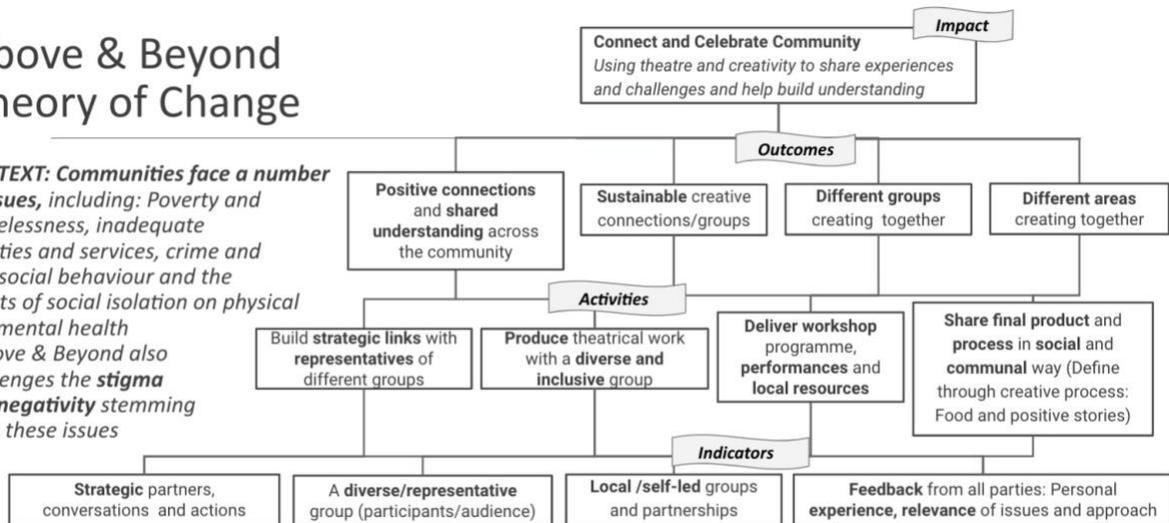
The evaluation process draws on existing tools and materials, providing the team and PAG with a toolkit of methods that can be built into creative activities, accompanied by ongoing feedback and a likert rating (H-Form) to close regular creative workshops, session observations, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and surveys (capturing partner, sector and audience feedback). The analysis also makes reference to Quality and Social Change Indicators (Appendix B) and is aligned to the Ethical Research Policy which underpin Collective Encounters' ethics and practices, as defined in the company's TfSC 'practice as research' approach (see Collective Encounters Research Lab publications, Sarah Thornton, 2012). A deeper qualitative reference to these intentions are crucial to understanding and reviewing Collective Encounters' work, through Above & Beyond, during this period.

Project Advisory Group (PAG)

The PAG worked with the Collective Encounters' team, facilitated by the external evaluator, to produce a Theory of Change that would define collective project objectives (see below²). This process was informed by group analysis of the local feedback gathered during Abi Horsfield's street interviews in Birkenhead and Bootle.

Above & Beyond Theory of Change

CONTEXT: Communities face a number of issues, including: Poverty and homelessness, inadequate facilities and services, crime and anti-social behaviour and the effects of social isolation on physical and mental health - Above & Beyond also challenges the stigma and negativity stemming from these issues



Inputs and resources include: the skills of the Collective Encounters team, to engage the community (and relevant community partners), deliver creative session and co-develop the final piece with participants; community centres, organisations and groups providing space and connections; food and hospitality alongside suitable workshop and performance environment. These factors will be crucial to the immediate success, scope and legacy of the project.

² The impact of the pandemic on these objectives was discussed with the group and it was agreed that while the activity details would change significantly, the principles that underpin the project remain the same.

Meeting Project Aims

PAG Aim: To connect and celebrate community while sharing and understanding the challenges being experienced by different groups

PAG Outcome 1: Positive connections and shared understanding across the community

The PAG group highlighted this as a priority, providing an enhanced rationale for outcomes 1.1 (Increased access and engagement by marginalised individuals and groups) and 1.2 (Marginalised individuals and groups experience the personal and civic benefits of participation). A key consideration for the group was the analysis and insight that had come from phase one research, highlighting that exclusive focus on the negative outcomes of structural inequalities further stigmatised and undermined the lived realities of individuals. A new model, embedded in local communities, had to account for the diversity of the individuals encountered within Birkenhead and Bootle.

The research phase included desk research (local media, data and reporting, some of which is summarised in 1.1), alongside creative approaches such as psycho-geographical drifts with existing contacts local to these areas (April 2019) and street interviews (May/July 2019) to establish an understanding of the local landscape and history:

“I just saw I just looked and so I drove around different areas to look at different houses, different demography, who was on the street, what people were doing. And I drove at different times of the day. So I went in the morning. I went in the day. I went in the evening to just have a look around and see what was happening.” Abi Horsfield³

This process identified some of the similarities and differences between the areas and identified local gatekeepers, useful networks and the best means of reaching out to share plans, respond to concerns and build trust. Feedback during this stage demonstrates the foundation this built:

“Working in this area for the last 17 years we have had lots of companies do things on ‘knife crime’, ‘domestic violence’ ‘hate crime’ ‘mental health’ etc. in order to raise awareness – but people here don’t need to raise awareness – they live it – they need to be built up, told they have power and given the opportunity to exercise it – unless there is an audience to hear their voice they are just shouting in the dark and it does more damage... they need to be heard by people who will really make change – government and philanthropists.” Community Partner⁴

The street interviews in Birkenhead and Bootle asked what residents considered to be important issues locally, whether they thought that theatre would be a useful way to express these, and if so, how/why.

³ Outreach Director Interview, 27.02.2020

⁴ Initial email response from local organisation, with whom a workshop was later delivered (Outreach Director Reflections, Abi Horsfield, 26.11.2019)

outlet that 'got me through'.⁶ Continued workshop activity, as planning for the final production began, elicited similar mixed feedback.

"It was based in reality and it didn't have any escapism."⁷

'The Legend of the Mernix' was the final outcome of the work produced during the first two years of Above & Beyond, introducing magical realism to the familiar characters and settings. Sarah Thornton and Abi Horsfield wrote the treatment and script in April 2021, bringing together content created by the group.

"I think Barbara came to life when I was in a breakout room... originally because we were talking about creating somebody who was, you know, a bit stroppy, an unsympathetic business advisor, wasn't she in the Job Center or something."⁸

The feedback shared by participants throughout the process indicates that they have felt connected in personally positive ways and found common understanding through the outcome as well as the process of creation - from playful creative interaction, to more focused devising and recognition of local characters, environments and scenarios:

"It was new and exciting, and it is lovely to be in a group acting and playing."⁹

"The chemistry in the group is brilliant, it's clicked, there's no-one trying to outdo each other... seeing the end product, it was absolutely amazing to me because I couldn't have seen or predicted all the things we've done each week, monologues, or having a laugh or saying stuff, that would turn into that, so that's really an eye opener for me, I thought that was brilliant because I've been really out of my depth, not just out of my comfort zone, out of my depth I think. What I've brought to the group I don't know - I'd hope I've brought friendship and down-to-earth groundedness."¹⁰

"Really enjoyed thinking about the local area."¹¹

"I really enjoyed today it was lovely to combine the magical of the first improvisations and the characters which were really real."¹²

"I like creating characters and I love the way we collectively create the whole characters."¹³

⁶ Y-form response, 28.10.2020

⁷ H-form response, 02.12.2020

⁸ Participant response, Local launch, 03.06.2021

⁹ H-form response, 30.09.2020

¹⁰ Y-form response, 28.10.2020

¹¹ H-form response, 03.02.2021

¹² H-form response, 12.03.2021

¹³ H-form response, 17.03.2021

“The people in it you can see outside, they are just normal people so you can identify - it's really good.”¹⁴

“I didn't realise how big it was going to be as a project, the scope of it with the different elements... It's come together really well, I'm proud to be a part of it, and I think it does tick all of the boxes of what we would have wanted. It's a really good thing to be a part of and everybody's brought something different to the group....”¹⁵

The social and communal aspect of the sharing will be significant now, looking to engagement with the quest by community partners, opportunities for the wider community to engage online and offline and the response and feedback locally.

PAG Outcome 2: Sustainable connections

This is reliant not only on participant capability and interest, but also enabled by multi-agency commitment throughout the programme, to provide the local support for self-led groups and initiatives to thrive (this outcome is consistent with 1.3) and to sustain activity without Abi Horsfield's active role as facilitator.

The experience and track record that Collective Encounters brought and willingness to go 'Above & Beyond' was crucial for both partners and participants to engage. The level of engagement in the outreach phase exceeded planned capacity - Abi Horsfield responded to requests, delivering four times the planned number (39 sessions between June 2019 and January 2020 and two further online in 2020) before moving to residencies, which offered creative development, while continuing to capture content to inform the devised pieces.

“...once they give permission to do some things then everyone wants to get involved. And so very quickly, I had managed to have meetings with lots and lots of people...I realised quite quickly that it was better to offer a series of workshops, maybe two or three workshops in an organisation rather than just one, because when the people start they're interested in you being there, the second time people engaged, the third time people come back.” Abi Horsfield¹⁶

Collective Encounters built relationships with groups and organisations operating locally, providing outreach opportunities through taster workshops and distributing marketing through these, to gain visibility, trust and understanding. Organisations hosting session in **Birkenhead** included Involve NW, Make it Happen, Spider Project, St. James' Centre, Tomorrows Women, Wirral Change, Wirral Hospital Schools, Wirral Refugee Action.

¹⁴ P. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

¹⁵ N. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

¹⁶ Outreach Director Interview, 27.02.2020

In **Bootle activities** took place in partner organisation settings which included Kindfulness Coffee Club, LA/Library, Liferooms Bootle, North Park Community Gardens, Orrell Trust, Sefton OPERA, Strand By Me, Swan Women's Centre.

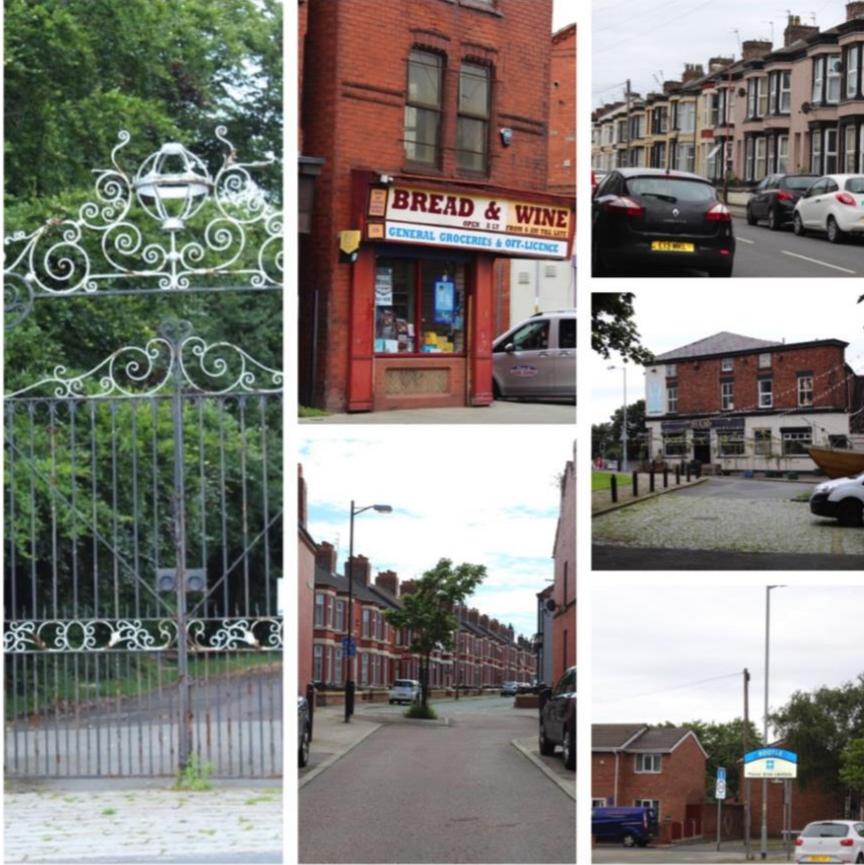
Of these organisations (8 in Birkenhead and 9 in Bootle, several of which included smaller groups/sessions), only four were groups with whom Collective Encounters had an existing relationship (Spider Project, Tomorrow's Women / Strand By Me, Swan Women's Centre). Abi became a trustee of local boards and joined organising committees as a result of this engagement.

Despite remote delivery, these local relationships have been fostered by Collective Encounters and the continued engagement of participants that have existing links with these groups (many of whom were recruited to Above & Beyond through hosted outreach sessions).

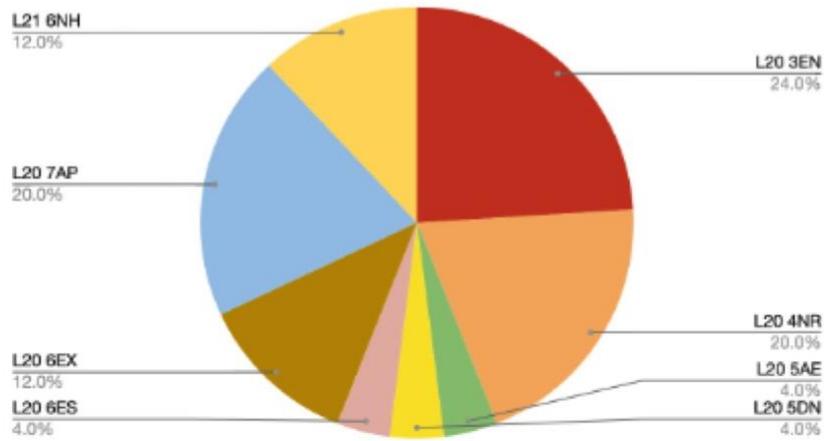
Some of the community partners in Bootle & Birkenhead



Images of Bootle captured by group members



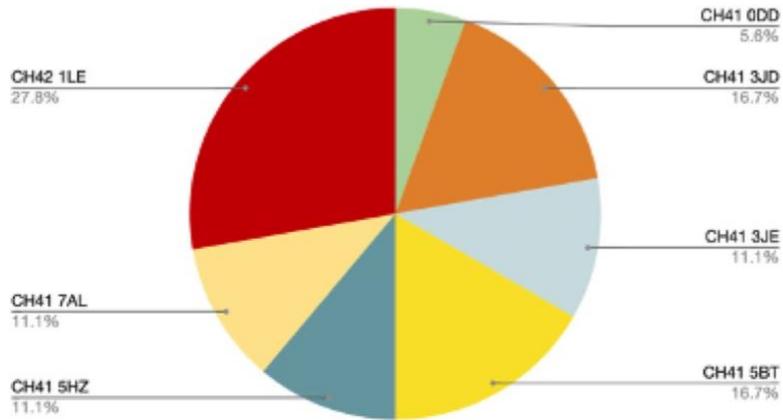
Bootle Outreach Sessions



Images of Birkenhead captured by group members



Birkenhead Outreach Sessions



Community Partner Case Studies

KINDFULNESS COFFEE CLUB

I met Zoe from the Kindfulness Coffee Club at a mental health awareness event at the Liferooms on 12th September 2019. She was there with a group of participants, and we got chatting about the work she was doing.

The Kindfulness Coffee Club is a community, it has a new to you shop, a café and a workshop space where it runs women's groups, walking groups, reading groups to name but a few. Its vision is a community built on kindness where all are accepted.

Following this initial meeting, Zoe and I arranged for me to come in to facilitate some poetry workshops with her walking and women's groups, where I met several core group members.

When lockdown started Zoe contacted me again to ask if I could share creative activity that her participants could do through WhatsApp, and I made some creative Friday sessions that were sent out to people.

Zoe became part of the PAG and the KCC is one of the stops on our walking quest. Zoe intends to take her walking group on both the Bootle and Birkenhead tours and wants to carry on working with us in the future.

ST JAMES'S CENTRE

I went into the centre to deliver a workshop and people enjoyed it, so I went in several times.

We were in a noisy café which people dropped in and out of and created amazing work and shared their dreams and ideas.

Becks became a PAG member and has been instrumental in voicing what her community needs and wants are.

During the election in 2019, I went in and we did some voter education and created manifestos about what was important to the local community and performed soap box moments in the café to place our dreams and ideas before a crowd. They are now planning a series of workshops around The Legend of the Mernix, and looking for other ways to use creativity within their services.

COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

A local councillor in Rock Ferry signposted Community Connectors to Above & Beyond. Community Connectors link isolated people in the community with activities that are happening locally and encourage participation.

I started by talking to the whole team about what I was doing, then went on a door knock with a local connector and talked to people on the doorstep about what issues were important to them.

They were then having an open day and I was invited to facilitate a drama session, which I did, and this led to us running the core Birkenhead group from Standard House hub in Rock Ferry.

I was then invited to facilitate a creativity workshop with the workers, so they could understand the process and could talk to community members about how life changing creativity can be to improve mental health and wellbeing.

We have kept in contact during Lockdown and are looking forward to working with them again.

SEFTON PERFORMERS NETWORK

The performers network grew out of a need to coordinate local creativity ahead of Sefton being the Borough of Culture 2020.

Maggi from CVS asked if I could be part of the coordinating group alongside Annie from In Another Place and Brian from Space. We had three meetings prior to COVID and then moved online.

I facilitated the skills share, which included drama, poetry, character creation, clowning, singing, and making an Opera on Zoom. We also made a film in lockdown celebrating what small arts organisations were doing, in which Above & Beyond featured. We were also part of the online advent calendar contributing a piece about homelessness at Christmas.

The Network has been connecting 40+ individuals and organisations during the lockdown and we are now moving on to look at Zoom to room.

Participant numbers exceeding the target have been reached for the core, outreach and youth sessions delivered (23 participants regularly attended the core group, with over 200 more in outreach sessions). Despite changing delivery platforms, programme focus and participant commitments 11-13 (2 temporary due to health) of the 23 core participants have maintained direct participation. Nine members of the group did not move to Zoom sessions (one rejoined the group after a pause and Abi Horsfield remained in contact with others, checking in and sharing creative tasks). As well as these, one participant moved and one stopped attending due to new work commitments (3 other participants attended on 1-4 occasions).

Sustaining this contact during the pandemic is significant given the objectives of Above & Beyond (and PAG aims) and in light of the social isolation resulting from social distancing measures. Feedback from those continuing indicates the benefit that has been felt by this continuing connection, providing reassurance, support and inspiration:

*"I was so looking forward to it, the human interaction, I need to interact with people."*¹⁷

*"I was feeling isolated, I am sick of not having contact with people, it is so good to have connections."*¹⁸

*"I think we've knitted together quite well as a group over time."*¹⁹

*"I basically came to it and then after the first couple of weeks I realised that I was going to stay and it's just so nice because it's only about four or five of us, just so nice to be involved again...when Abi started talking about people in Bootle I thought, ok, it's bigger than just this then and gradually brought us in to it...I'm not worried about if I can't go out or if I can go out. Meet in different groups or if I can't, if I know that we can do this and that's fine. I haven't actually met the other people in Bootle yet but I feel that we've got a link already, it's nice, I can isolate, I can shut the door, stay in doors... to actually feel I can connect with other people, act with them on this, it's brilliant."*²⁰

*"Lots going on - it was a bit of fun and interesting seeing stories evolve – fun to being part of getting a show together."*²¹

*"It's been great, it's opened my mind today. It's cleared my head. I started with it being all clouded, but I feel better now. It's been fun and all you guys just make it fantastic."*²²

¹⁷ H-form response, 29.04.2020

¹⁸ H-form response, 29.07.2020

¹⁹ N. Participant interview 30.09.2020

²⁰ P. Participant interview 30.09.2020

²¹ H-form response, 12.03.2021

²² H-form response, 12.05.2021

PAG Outcome 3. Different groups brought together

This outcome emphasises participation in workshops (PAG 1, 1.1) and also through creative outcomes. That connectivity is inclusive, integrated and plural, as the PAG's aim describes: 'To connect and celebrate community while sharing, and understanding, the challenges being experienced by different groups'.

The activity plan phased delivery into distinct phases of outreach, residencies and local core group sessions before their merger for a collaborative production that would be toured locally. This was designed to bring individuals from different groups together gradually, and while the immediate group have managed this merger, in the shared online space, the more locally sited work has only recently been reinstated with the planning, production and launch of 'The Legend of the Mernix'.

The core group includes a range of ages and backgrounds and has adjusted to welcome new and returning participants throughout the process (see 1.2). However despite more diverse participation during the outreach stage, the core group was exclusively White British throughout. This may reflect the two areas lower (compared to national average) ethnic diversity, but does highlight the value of sharing and exchange beyond the core group, to ensure that this wider relevance and engagement has and can be achieved.

One of the areas that was changed due to the pandemic was the role of emerging artists within the project, where individuals involved with Collective Encounters' emerging artists development programme (Radical Makers) would have been offered paid opportunities to work with the group. When delivery shifted online and all activities focused on adapting to these new circumstances, the decision was taken to instead offer these opportunities as [micro-commissions](#) in an open call, launched on the 18 April 2020.

The opportunities were published online (website, social media and newsletter), shared among network contacts (COoL, LARC, Artworks Alliance, Culture Liverpool), on the Arts Council England opportunities page and picked up by other national platforms and social media coverage. From 23 April to following the deadline of 6 May, Annette Burghes, Abi Horsfield and Harriet Warnock met weekly to review and award applications. Ten emerging local artists were commissioned (of 49 proposals). Two commissions were awarded on the 23 April, two the following week and six following the deadline:

A Community Action Manifesto, Heidi Henders
Community Power, Immy Llewelyn
Community Power Coat, Kate Reilly James
Green Oceans, Tom George
Our Grassroots, Emily Garrett

Queer Letters, Anthony Scott
Small Gifts, Nathan Powell
We are Stardust, Dora Colquhoun and Jonathan McGuire
Thank-you, Amber Akaunu
The Sound of our Lockdown, Aisling Leyne

The works produced included illustration, audioscapes, poetry and photo essays, collaboratively produced during the first lockdown and released June-August 2020, offering the opportunity for a wider range of voices to be represented within Above & Beyond and bringing different voices together in the project's creative outputs:

*"I felt like the commission gave me the license to invite people to make their voices heard. From every walk of life."*²³

*"I normally write completely on my own so having other people's ideas to help shape a poem was a new format for me."*²⁴

*"I think I managed to include a wide range of people in my work and also seeing the output of other commissions I feel like the whole programme was inclusive and wide reaching."*²⁵

The next phase of the project has the potential to examine if and how this content can readily compliment and share space with the wider programme: How awareness and visibility of these outcomes can bring people together, outside the immediate activity, culture and dynamic of the core group:

*"I think in the future, a project like this could involve dialogue between participants or facilitate dialogue between different parts of the wider community. One of the films [Small Gifts by Nathan Powell] had a structure whereby different people were answering a question or prompt via filmed messages. I think that something like this could be developed. With the fast-paced communications style that technology enables, there is a lack of clarity and reflection in our collective communication; often a lack of real discussion. I think this could be addressed in a future project."*²⁶

*"I am satisfied with Collective Encounters distribution but having all the artists also distribute each piece would just have opened up the community."*²⁷

The response from collaborators and a wider public was also consistent with these aims.

"It made you consider others experiences we talked about that as a family"

"Sharing the tough stuff as well as the fun stuff an honest response I think."

*"...some of the pieces seemed to be challenging standard narratives and presenting peoples' experiences in ways that could be very thought-provoking"*²⁸

For *Small Gifts*, Nathan Powell:

²³ Artist, via feedback survey

²⁴ Artist, via feedback survey

²⁵ Artist, via feedback survey

²⁶ Artist, via feedback survey

²⁷ Artist, via feedback survey

²⁸ Collaborator, via feedback survey

By @lukeybarnsey: *Just sat here crying at this by @NathanPowell141. So simple and beautiful. Made me think about duty - beyond like what we are told "success" is in life we have a duty in this world to make everyone else's life easier and more beautiful. What else are we doing? (sic.)*

PAG Outcome 4. Different areas brought together

The PAG group highlighted the value of this interaction during the outreach and residency period (phase two, January 2020), prior to the planned group merger for the co-production and tour.

The place-based orientation of the work has been reasserted in the collaborative digital theatre production 'The Legend of the Mernix', with hybrid interactive digital vignettes around a magical realist narrative reflecting the social realities within these communities (through the images and stories told) and embedded within the local landscapes (through QR coded walking tours).

This outcome also addresses the wider interaction between the areas, a dialogue between the Eastside and Westside, which is central to 'The Legend of the Mernix'. Opportunities to strengthen this exchange, through online events launching the piece, ongoing walking tours (launched 10/11 June) and on social media platforms, enable audiences to engage with both quests physically and through the linkage offered in the prologue, beginning and end of the piece.

The project is live and the core group of Birkenhead and Bootle participants continues to meet, while outreach in the next communities, Kirby and Knowsley, begins. As lockdown begins to ease, facilitated interaction with this work could support these connections further.

Aim 1: Embed long-term cultural production and cultural activity in marginalised communities

Outcome 1.1. Increased access and engagement by marginalised individuals and groups

Above & Beyond sought to develop and extend Collective Encounters' existing practice, with a four year plan (April 2019 - March 2023) of targeting activity in four Liverpool City Region boroughs, to build connections, develop capacity and embed ongoing creative cultural action and activity.

The core participatory aspect of Above & Beyond focused activity in Birkenhead and Bootle, continuing work with the existing groups from these areas throughout lock-down, before widening the scope of digital participation after the Spring 2021, with marketing supported by the PAG.

Above & Beyond also includes youth outreach activities, running regularly as discrete holiday programmes, linking with specific communities of experience and relevant partners. These are looked after young people, and young people with experience of migration. These follow Collective Encounters' existing approach more closely but are referenced (in 1.1, 1.2 and 3.3) due to their continued relevance to these outcomes.

Above & Beyond focused activity in areas of socio-economic deprivation, identifying 'marginalisation' as the structural inequalities faced within these communities. The first two areas selected were:

Birkenhead: The Birkenhead and Tranmere ward contains LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas, identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation) in the 1% of the most deprived across the UK²⁹

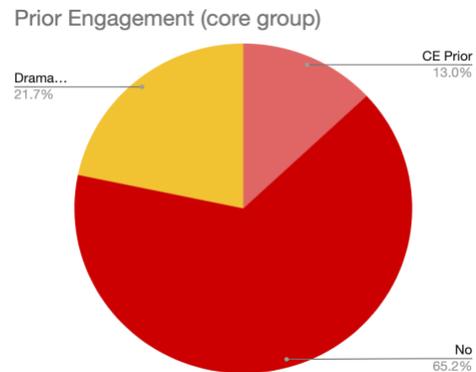
Bootle: Four of the nine LSOAs in Linacre are in the 1% most deprived nationally (with increases from 2010-2015), the remaining in the 5% most deprived³⁰

Groups with whom outreach sessions were delivered are all public and third sector agencies working within the local community (see page 14-15), to address general and more specific issues faced by the local population (including gender, health, socio-economic and racial inequalities). The project did not target specific marginalised groups. Instead the community contexts and relationships with local partners, aimed to reflect the local population and address groups with protected characteristics, to ensure that they were welcomed and represented. Basic demographic data collected during outreach sessions and formative data for the core group shows:

²⁹ See 'Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for Wirral 2015, Wirral Council Public Health Intelligence Team, November 2015 [<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/1145/imd-2015-report-final.pdf>: accessed 09.2019]

³⁰ See Bootle (Linacre Ward Profile, Sefton Council : 04/10/2017 [https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1902/linacre_ward_profile.pdf: accessed 09.2019]

- The core group brought together participants with no prior experience of drama, a range of other experience and, latterly, previous involvement with Collective Encounters (see chart)



- The gender balance of participants during the outreach is consistent with the final group numbers (approx. 60% female, 40% male).
- Outreach participant ages ranged from 14 - 90 years (with narrower range and younger average age of the core group 41 years compared to 47 years)
- Ethnic diversity of outreach was higher than the two areas' demographic makeup (84% White British, 8% White, other nationality/heritage, 8% other background/heritage³¹). The core group participants are all White British.
- 22% of outreach participants identified as disabled, rising to 39% in the core group.

Youth Outreach

Collective Encounters have run their core programme for 13–19 year-olds since 2010, alongside an outreach programme run in partnership with youth services and agencies. A review of activity 2010-2017 (Collective Encounters report) highlighted:

- 640 young people attending courses (43 of whom identified as disabled, 188 with experience of the care system and 49 with experience of homelessness)
- 31 partnerships with 31 voluntary and statutory services during this period.

The two ongoing project strands identified to be part of Above & Beyond, reached:

- 23 young participants in 2019 and a further 30 in 2020.
- Four participants from WYA 2019/20 attended 1-3 core Youth Theatre sessions as a result of their involvement.
- In 2020 89% 'sometimes engage with arts and culture' and 5.5% (1 respondent each) for 'never' and 'regularly'³².

³¹ In Birkenhead (E00168414/5), 2011 Census shows 87% White British, 7% Mixed Heritage, Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic background 6% White, other background [https://ukcensusdata.com/: accessed 09.2019]

Bootle, 2011 Census shows '4% of the ward population had an ethnicity recorded as Mixed Heritage, Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic background and of 4% overseas national registrations, 87% from European countries. [Linacre Ward Profile, Sefton Council : 04/10/2017: https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1902/linacre_ward_profile.pdf; accessed 09.2019]

The projects engaged with partner organisations, maintaining long-term relationships with Liverpool and Knowsley Children's Services and referral agencies (including Liverpool City College, Active8 Support Services and Bed Space) and a wide range of creative partners and freelancers working locally (including 20 Stories High and Movema).

“The Summer Project is one of the things I enjoy most about my job... It just gives the young people a chance to all get together. It's not about care, it's nothing about being looked after, it's literally just about having fun, building their confidence up...” Partner³³

“just got better and better over the years because we've been able to plan more over the years.” Partner³⁴

The regular Summer project with looked after young people did not go ahead due to local authority service priorities during the pandemic. Lock-down also affected longer-term youth engagement and a variety of alternative and supplementary activities were offered: Speak Up!, June 2020 (8 session/5 YP); Picture This, July-August 2020 (7 sessions/8 YP); Homotopia, September 2020 (4 sessions/10 YP); Mixtape Mondays, October - December 2020 (7 sessions/12 YP); Prince's Trust, April - December 2020 (7 sessions /13 YP)

Outcome 1.2. Marginalised individuals and groups experience the personal and civic benefits of participation

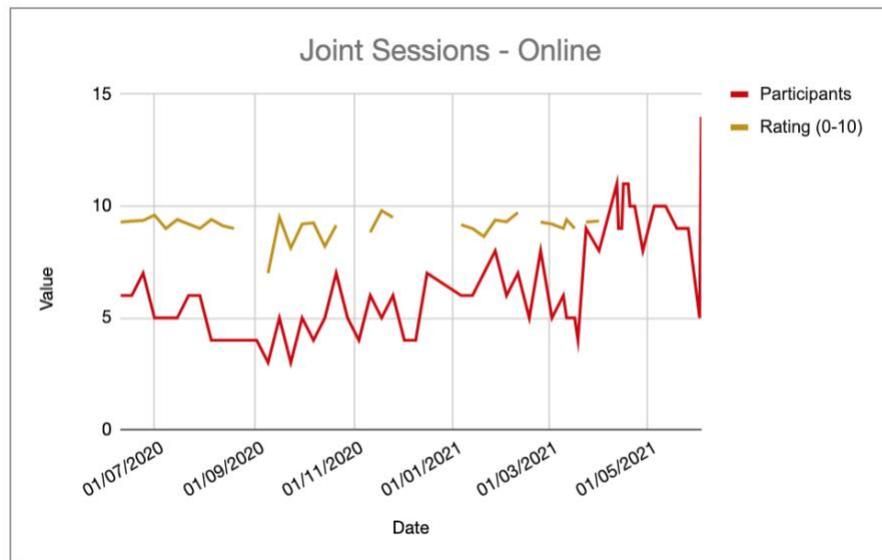
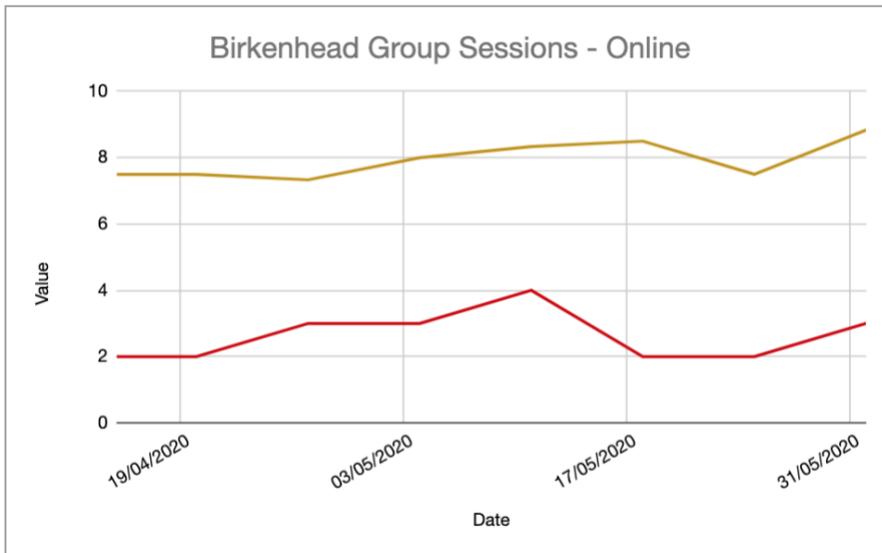
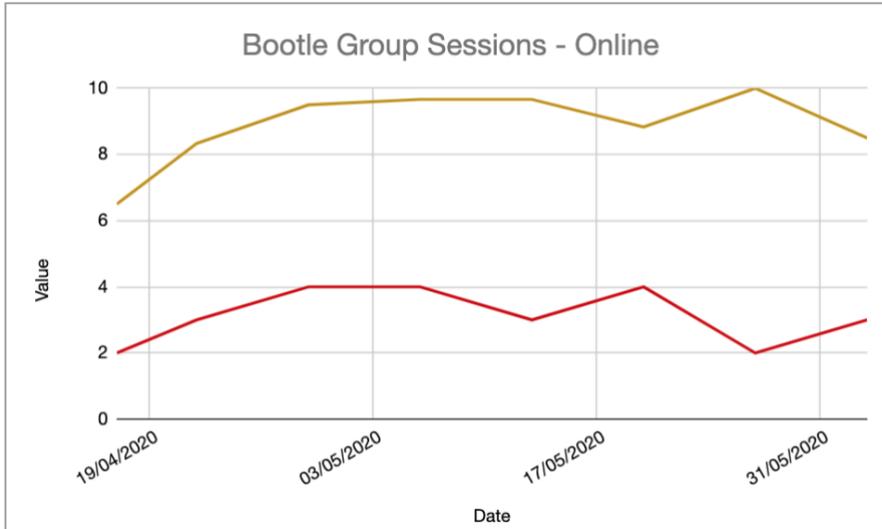
The impact of the pandemic on individual wellbeing (as a result of isolation and anxiety), civic engagement and existing structural inequalities has been significant (see eg. UCL COVID-19 Social Study and research outputs, Bu, Steptoe and Fancourt, 2020) and planned project activity and modes of participation have had to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances.

Above & Beyond continued throughout this period, with the Collective Encounters' team working with participants to provide ongoing opportunities to engage creatively (negotiating the new digital terrain, testing creative methodologies within these forums, ensuring participant access and maintaining contact with those 'offline'). While attendance fluctuated due to personal circumstances, feedback for the online sessions was consistently high (see charts below).

³² WYA Creative ESOL Participant Survey, 18 respondents of 28 total participants. The wider formative survey conducted with prospective participants 15.5% rarely or never engaged (of 32 respondents)

³³ CR. Liverpool Children's Services interview, 21.03.2020

³⁴ KM. Liverpool Children's Services interview, 21.03.2020



While restrictions made usual forms of participation impossible and dramatically changed the delivery approach and anticipated outcomes, project activity also helped people to negotiate the challenges faced as a result of the pandemic.

Collective Encounters' indicators for personal transformation (Appendix 2) are used to analyse the continuous feedback and detailed personal testimony and identify points of connection between these indicators in the responses provided by participants. Feedback during sessions (Y and H evaluation³⁵) expressed a range of benefits including personal wellbeing, pleasure ('fun'), respite (mental and physical), social connection, creative expression, skill and confidence development. Participant interviews³⁶ expand upon these personal outcomes.

Empowerment: How has TfSC practice supported voices and opinions, agency and expectations?

"...you can put forward your perspective without anybody thinking they're any better than you are. There's no kind of intimidation or anything within the group, everyone's opinion's quite valid"³⁷

The creative workshops encourage playful self-expression and exploration, while exploring complex issues. The safety of this collective acceptance enabled participants to push beyond personal boundaries and expectations:

"I have a way to go, I was scared to come, but I enjoyed it"³⁸

"Loved it, it took me outside of my comfort zone, it pushes me all the time"³⁹

"Everyday it's boosting confidence, learning types of things I thought it was far too late for. Last week brought out my inner child again, a new lease of life... I'd like to get out into the community, I'm looking forward to using Zoom and skills. All this is very useful, I'm in my 50s, my son's 17, I know what he's doing now, I'm not scared anymore."⁴⁰

Skills development: How have the practices increased interpersonal, life, creative and technical skills? As well as the creative and expressive skills the move to online participation and the production of digital theatre outcomes has demanded additional technical skills. This presented hurdles at times:

"...enjoyed the creativity, I didn't feel totally with it today, I liked the creatures, but I got a bit lost in the technical stuff."⁴¹

³⁵ Of 250 numerical ratings:109/43%='10'; 69/27.5%='9'; 51/20.5%='8'; 16/6.5%='7'; 2/<1%='6'; 2/<1%='5' (see 1.2)

³⁶ Semi structured interviews conducted with core participants 30/09/20 (4) and 28/04/21 (7)

³⁷ N. Participant interview 30.09.2020

³⁸ H-form response, 06.01.2021

³⁹ H-form response, 20.01.2021

⁴⁰ K. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁴¹ H-form response, 10.02.2020

Feedback accompanying the low 5:10 numerical rating (2 of 261 responses) in April related to 'getting used to it' (17.04.2020) and being 'a bit tricky' (22.04.2020) in the early days of Zoom delivery. Online participation has varied, but for those that did choose to join the online sessions (offered training and support, tablets etc. to do so), this became a significant personal outcome.

*"I don't like phones, I don't like videos, I've gotten comfortable with it over time but the Zoom thing at first was really quite intimidating, being able to see myself on the screen but because of the way Abi is, she makes it playful, she makes it fun, she's made me feel comfortable in a space where I would normally feel uncomfortable so that it's actually done me the world of good coming on here and overcoming those challenges. But if the lockdown hadn't happened, I probably wouldn't have done anything like this."*⁴²

An exploration of new and unfamiliar practices helped to develop familiarity gradually:

*"It was my first time – I've not done anything on Zoom before and everything came together."*⁴³
*"Really enjoyed it and I feel a lot more confident with the tech stuff. It was fun and easy."*⁴⁴

The blend of creative expression and technical challenge, play and progress was highlighted frequently:

*"Even though I found it difficult – I kept going with it."*⁴⁵
*"I find the more I do the more it wakes up my brain."*⁴⁶
*"Really challenging, but I did well with my acting."*⁴⁷
*"I really enjoyed fiddling about with the animation, but I might struggle with some of it, damn but I am up for giving it a go."*⁴⁸

Confidence and wellbeing: How has the project supported self-esteem, optimism and physical and/or mental wellbeing? Participant testimony emphasises the challenge of gauging progressive improvements (relative to a baseline), given the influence of external uncertainty:

*"It's all change coming back out again, so it's continually changing. It is a bit disconcerting, I think we've been there before though so it'll be ok."*⁴⁹

However, continuous and retrospective feedback consistently reinforces that involvement in Above & Beyond has helped participants to cope and even thrive under challenging circumstances.

⁴² N. Participant interview, 30.09.2020

⁴³ H-form response, 16.09.2020

⁴⁴ H-form response, 27.01.2021

⁴⁵ H-form response, 14.10.2020

⁴⁶ H-form response, 03.03.2021

⁴⁷ H-form response, 17.03.2021

⁴⁸ H-form response, 01.04.2021

⁴⁹ P. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

*"I forgot how much I missed it , I feel like a kid."*⁵⁰

*"Yeah, I'd give it a 10 it really brought me out of myself today and made me feel good."*⁵¹

*"Much better – brought my spirits back up."*⁵²

*"T wasn't feeling up to coming today, but he was able to join in by using P and he felt included and was glad P was accepted."*⁵³

*"I came in with my head all over the place, I appreciated the effort on your part to fill me in on what had been happening."*⁵⁴

*"I always enjoy it, I was really tired beforehand, and it perked me up, I learn a lot each week."*⁵⁵

*"I have learnt a bit; I liked the games, and it has been a bad week, and this has lifted my spirits."*⁵⁶

*"I started the session feeling really tired and I now feel really energised and more motivated now, and I am excited to see what the next step is."*⁵⁷

References to fun (22), play (9), lifting spirit and energy, were recurrent with regards to mental wellbeing and chronic conditions with physical symptoms:

*"I forget my pain, because I have been calm, I have listened more."*⁵⁸

*"It's helped me cracking up, literally. It's helped in a physical sense because it took my mind off my pain. And I think without having this on the Wednesday I'd have cracked up. Having this to look forward to. And it's got me over a physical thing because I've got, it's like body dysmorphia really, so to see myself on screen, that's took that fear away from me now, it's changed my thought on that."*⁵⁹

Feedback wasn't always positive, certain activities and discussions provoked discomfort and these responses needed to be negotiated and balanced (as they would be live contexts), within a digital environment with the potential to intensify and disrupt:

*"The time delay and lag, and talking about nasty news made me feel a bit awkward"*⁶⁰

*"Didn't like the music part I felt sentimental and didn't want to share that story."*⁶¹

Moving from this face-paced production period, to the next phase of the project and sustained activity of the group will be a crucial phase of this learning process.

⁵⁰ H-form response, 22.04.2020

⁵¹ H-form response, 12.05.2020

⁵² H-form response, 27.05.2020

⁵³ H-form response relating to participants use of a puppet as proxy in Zoom workshop, 27.06.2020

⁵⁴ H-form response, 30.09.2020

⁵⁵ H-form response, 25.11.2020

⁵⁶ H-form response, 27.01.2021

⁵⁷ H-form response, 12.03.2021

⁵⁸ H-form response, 22.07.2020

⁵⁹ Y-form response, 28.10.2020

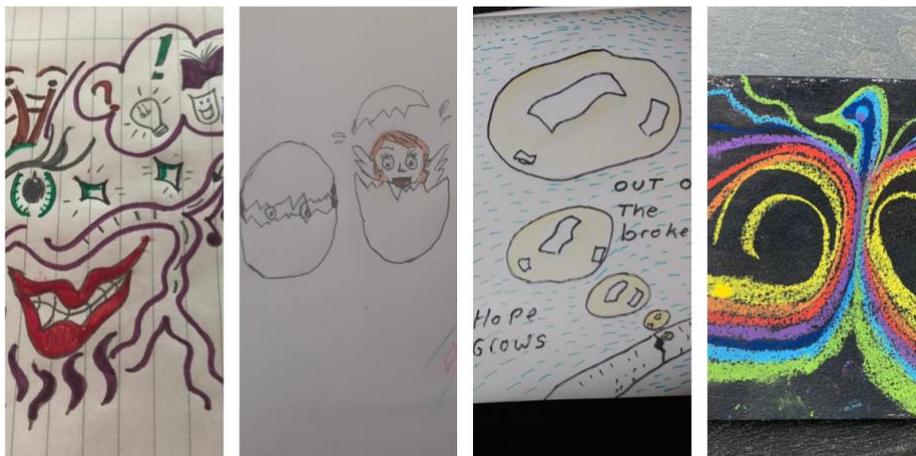
⁶⁰ H-form response, 04.05.2020

⁶¹ H-form response, 03.06.2020

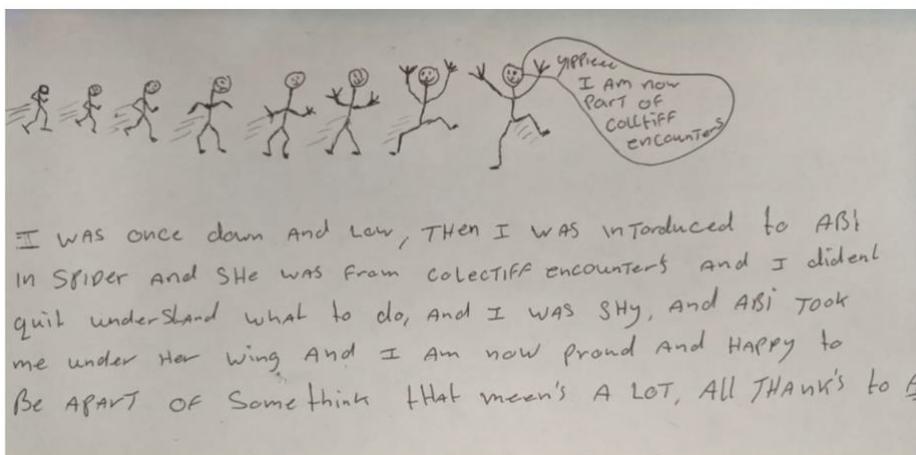
*"The last two weeks were great, quite intensive... it was really nice, that intensity and I enjoyed it, so I'll be sorry to see it end. Next steps, I'm not 100% sure. I had a very informal chat with Aidan the other day about Radical Makers... But whatever I do end up doing I feel like I've certainly grown a bit more in confidence, certainly since before the Confidence in Creativity course, I really needed it."*⁶²

*"I'm lucky to have stumbled across Collective Encounters, at a time when a chapter of life had come to end, and it was quite a difficult time, to come across that and have the opportunity to do new things and grow a lot, I feel very lucky."*⁶³

*"I've come quite far; I'm sharing ideas more confidently. Working within the group, it's been good working with different people because it brings out different things. Some bits I still feel quite out of my depth but some I'm on a much surer footing than I was on before...."*⁶⁴



Images of changes experienced by group Above & Beyond group members (2021)



⁶² B. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁶³ B. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁶⁴ N. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

Attitudinal change: What shifts in perspective, questions or beliefs have been opened up?

While not citing specific personal changes, testimony indicates that group members value the space for dialogue between differing perspectives, to test personal boundaries and negotiate the changing information and legislation relating to the pandemic:

*"I liked talking about the Covid/coronavirus story."*⁶⁵

*"Enjoyed it today, thinking outside the box."*⁶⁶

*"When I heard that I couldn't go [to regular groups during lockdown], I felt it had been snatched away, I was quite angry and this was an outlet. ... It's given me something to look forward to in the week as well as being able to stay safe while doing it. I feel like I've grown in the group as well.... let the others speak and thought about what I was going to say... It's sort of having a quite calming influence on me as well."*⁶⁷

*"It wouldn't just be a depressing story but you could do it in lots of different ways and get a message across to help... so it's sort of given me that 'I could do that, I could go down the creativity road'... So that's where I am now, I'm sort of standing on a threshold and thinking of possibilities, which I've got to say, I'd sort of given up on life, so I'm looking that there could be a path for me in the future. I didn't see a future before."*⁶⁸

*"I always enjoy when I hear other opinions, I like the fact that I think differently."*⁶⁹

Youth Outreach

Many of the proposed activities and delivery outputs and indicators were affected by the pandemic. However, feedback surveys⁷⁰ indicate all participants learnt new skills and most cited friendship, confidence and creative expression as outcomes, with 91% stating that they had new experiences and would be more likely to take part in arts and cultural activities as a result of their participation.

Despite obstacles and more limited engagement due to the pandemic, provision has continued and feedback from those attending reflects similar personal impacts:

"It gives them a good opportunity to build positive relationships up with professionals and with adults... we're all one. For one week it's about all being together and doing lots of team-work, which is nice. So the young people see adults and professionals from a different point of view." Partner⁷¹

⁶⁵ H-form response, 03.06.2020

⁶⁶ H-form response, 19.08.2020

⁶⁷ P, Participant interview 30.09.2020

⁶⁸ Participant interview 30.09.2020

⁶⁹ H-form response, 18.11.2020

⁷⁰ Survey responses 2019, 23 respondents

⁷¹ CR. Liverpool Children's Services Interview, 21.03.2020

Where You're At, 2019

"Meeting new people and their bravery."

"Was great job to bring young people together. Try to invite as much as you can. Thank you very much for everything."

Summer Project 2019

"A two-week course of artistic and self-expression."

"An excellent way to meet new friends and gain confidence."

"It's amazing and supportive and you meet so many friends".

Where You're At, 2020-21

"We are playing with a team, seeing a lot of new people, learn how to explain our day."

"I liked everyone was very friendly."

"I liked about the sound and senses and teaching others my language."

Outcome 1.3. Continued access and participation beyond the life of the project

Due to pandemic delays and the recent, gradual lifting of restrictions, it is too early to assess progression and continuation beyond the life of the project. What has been demonstrated to date, is the appetite of the core group of participants to continue work within the existing project group, across other areas of Collective Encounters work and within their local communities.

*"It's changed my life a lot because I want to carry on with what I'm doing now, with theatre works and with acting academy... a little bit nervous but since starting my confidence has grown."*⁷²

*"I hope it will reach lots in the general public and give some inspiration and I'm hoping it will inspire the communities in Birkenhead and Bootle as well."*⁷³

*"I'm actually feeling quite confident. I've loved being part of a group and future, maybe run my own group or keep on learning and be happy to keep on learning instead of controlling everything... it would be good to see other people coming on, doing specific things that they want to do, and ongoing groups. I don't think stuff like this can get tired. It's almost like a therapy group, so I think it should be an ongoing group, because I don't want to see an end and that's purely selfish."*⁷⁴

*"I was a bit apprehensive... In your head, I thought all really arty, I'd not fit in, but straight away it was lovely... hopefully this time next year I hope to be in the community centre with a mixture of young, wonderful local people, planning the next revolution. In forum theatre, everyone making scenery - that's my dream."*⁷⁵

Collective Encounters' current offer has enabled these transitions, with members of existing groups supporting the early Participant Advisory Group (PAG) work and existing group members continuing to steer the project, group members moving between different project opportunities to take up more intensive training, or volunteer within specific contexts. Throughout this initial two-year phase the team has offered supportive signposting between programmes:

"The whole programme has a symbiotic and complementary relationship - if someone comes to Radical Makers and it's not right, Above and Beyond might be a better fit - it's been tricky to get to that point but fantastic to see it working so well with participants progressing at their own pace."

Annette Burghes, Executive Director⁷⁶

⁷² K. Participant interview, 30.09.2020

⁷³ V. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁷⁴ P. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁷⁵ K. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁷⁶ Executive Director, Interview, 04.02.2021

This period of uncertainty has benefitted from the flexible and inclusive approach, which has seen some continuous participation, alongside more varied degrees of participation at different stages. The group has welcomed new and returning participants and supported their involvement at every stage, while ensuring that longer term participants' contribution is valued and progression routes are offered:

*"I came late with a small number from a different group...how welcoming the rest of the group was, it felt nice."*⁷⁷

*"I didn't think I could fit back in after being away, but I did. It always pushes me totally out of my comfort zone and takes my mind off my health issues. It's woken me up as well."*⁷⁸

The continued presence of The Legend of the Mernix (Walking Tour) within Bootle and Birkenhead will offer a link through which to initiate the delayed next stages of embedding and sustaining local activity, while initial research and engagement in Kirby and Knowsley begins.

Youth Outreach

Like Above & Beyond's 'new model', this outreach work is targeted and strategic, identifying partners and working to co-develop a structured creative programme, before delivering it with the young people.

Since 2017, funding for these programmes has been on an annual basis (with support from funders such as Children in Need) and the pandemic has significantly affected delivery, given the holistic, social and experiential focus (bringing together practitioners, practices and young people) and necessary support and involvement from statutory and voluntary agencies (responding to the immediate impact of the pandemic).

Significant 'time, energy and capacity' (Ben Mellor⁷⁹) was already required to bring together partners to ensure a quality experience for the young people involved, including sufficient pastoral care to manage and support any inter/personal issues, given the young people's complex circumstances.

Plans were in place to deliver *Where You're At* during the Easter break in 2020 (postponed until Summer due to the pandemic) with partner discussions for the *Summer Project* also underway. Despite not going ahead in 2020, the benefits for both young people and partners are notable as pandemic restrictions lift and individuals and services look to recover and rebuild connections:

"It's about coming out of their comfort zone... being part of the Summer Project can help them meet other young people." Partner⁸⁰

⁷⁷ B. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

⁷⁸ H-form response, 12.05.2020

⁷⁹ Youth Theatre Director interview, 23.01.2020

⁸⁰ KM. Liverpool Children's Services, 21.03.2020

While legacy and indirect impacts can be difficult to track, one of the council representatives shared personal testimony about their experience of the Summer Project as a young person and several examples of changes in the young people with whom they worked:

“We had a couple of young ladies on it last year, one of them loved poetry and writing her own work. She was in her own dark place so she stopped doing stuff like that because she wasn’t in the right frame of mind... since doing the Summer Project she’s been writing poetry and stories. We had a young lady who was quite isolated and quite shy, she wouldn’t talk to people for the first few days... and she actually wrote a rap and performed it for everybody at the end of the project.”

Partner⁸¹

The sustainability of these programmes is reliant on funding. All the areas for development relate to capacity and increasing the offer and provision. Feedback indicates that this was building prior to the pandemic due to the learning that had taken place through sustained partnership - but environment and social interaction were cited as crucial factors, aspects that were more challenging to recreate online.

⁸¹ KM. Liverpool Children's Services, 21.03.2020

Aim 2: A more resilient organisation

Outcome 2.1. A highly skilled workforce and diverse governance team

Above & Beyond has been used to create organisation-wide changes, linking project activities and teams and creating transition routes for participants. This has included workforce training and governance changes, as planned, and additional digital capacity building and upskilling in response to the pandemic demands. The full staff team worked collectively through weekly staff meetings, fortnightly artist development sessions, shared research and one-to-one peer support, and much of this learning is shared rapidly with the wider sectors.

“The running of the company has been exemplary and enabled us to do our best. We learn quite quickly and share stuff...” Aidan Jolly⁸²

All members of the team have contributed to delivery (from communications, administration and management, creative expertise and facilitation) of both the core group activity and sector programme, developing digital skills to facilitate activity and aid production of digital participatory work. External expertise was also recruited through network links and open calls to support this process.

The supportive, developmental and collaborative ethos internally is observed and noted by participants, both in relation to the movement of participants between programmes and the group and one-to-one creative direction offered by the wider team.

Technically, it brought together a range of new skills for the company. Members of the team were already accomplished in some of these areas, for other areas, specialist support was sought and a process of participant/PAG led user testing conducted with direction and support from the wider team, to bring the collaboratively created content and narrative to life.

“I haven’t seen anything like this before!” Caitlin Strongarm⁸³

“We’ve created a piece of digital agit-prop magical realism.” Abi Horsfield⁸⁴

While Above & Beyond emphasises participants’ increased influence, this process was inverted when lockdown hit, with rapid internal development required to meet new demands, and prioritise participant wellbeing and creative inclusion.

The decision to suspend live activity and move online was taken early, pre-empting government advice and lockdown. The staff team worked collectively through weekly meetings, fortnightly artist development

⁸² Radical Makers Course Director, Interview, 14.08.2020

⁸³ Digital Participatory Theatre Producer, Local launch 03.06.2020

⁸⁴ Outreach Director, Birkenhead Walking Tour Launch, 11.06.2020

sessions, shared research and one-to-one peer support to develop their capacity for managing the new and additional needs of participants and the sector, as well as challenges and opportunities posed by digital delivery.

“Annette in particular has done lots of research anticipating problems before they arise. So right from the start, we locked-down early, which I think was essential and that made a lot of difference and we also worked quite hard as a team to work to try and understand the particular context that we're working in and the context of each set of changes... we've responded with a whole set of different activities and resources, that have obviously been quite widely useful.” Aidan Jolly⁸⁵

In addressing the challenges that have arisen during the last year, Collective Encounters have tested and proven some of the fundamental principles that drive their practice - adapting rapidly and collaborating widely to navigate the pandemic. This has resulted in changes across the organisation, while the core aspirations for all programmes remain. The pandemic has also been a chance to review and change the company's practices through more rigorous planning and reporting.

Outcome 2.2. Increased evidence base on the social impacts of the organisation

An element of the programme brief is to utilise and review existing Quality and Social Change indicators to assess their effectiveness and suitability, contrasting these with the participatory priorities and methodologies co-defined through the PAG. The programme activities and evaluation were structured to embed and extend this power-sharing at an organisational level, testing and gathering evidence about the process. Work with local partners with differing priorities and expertise is also central to Collective Encounters' 'live' work and the quality of interactions that take place during projects and these continue to be tested online.

Given the significant external changes that have taken place as a result of the global pandemic and the resulting changes to delivery, social impact cannot be readily assessed in relation to pre-existing issues and contexts and will be defined by the current circumstances. As well as summarising the impact of Collective Encounters' work during the pandemic, this mid-point report will offer the basis for a focused review of the measures that can be established to examine wider impact during the second phase of the programme.

⁸⁵ Radical Makers Course Director, Interview, 14.08.2020

Outcome 2.3. Increased profile and recognition as a leading provider of theatre for social change

The planned sector facing programme (linked to the Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre) and rapid development of sector support activities at the onset of the pandemic, have resulted in significant engagement from policy-makers, institutions and the wider cultural sector. This is evidenced in the level of engagement in Collective Encounters led activity (eg. NPO attendance), network sharing invitations (via academic partners and sector networks and support organisations) and anecdotal observation:

NPO attendance at training events included: 20 Stories High, Abbey Theatre, Access All Areas, Active Inquiry, Artworks Cymru, Belgrade Theatre, Birmingham Rep, Bradford Theatre, Fringe, Brave Words, Bristol Cathedral, Burn the Curtain, Buxton Theatre, Contact Theatre, Create Sheffield, Curious Minds, Dundee and Angus College, Edge Theatre and Arts Centre, Fallen Angels, Festival of Thrift, Fish House Arts Centre, Glasgow Citizens, Goldsmiths University, Highly Sprung Performance, HOME, Homotopia, Imaginarium Theatre, Indoors Too Much, Joseph Rowntree, Kings Theatre, Lawn Mowers Theatre, Leeds Playhouse, Little Big Top, Liverpool World Centre, Mortal Fools Theatre, National Association of Youth Theatres, The National Theatre, National Theatre of Scotland, New Wolsey Theatre, November Club, Old Fire Station, Reaction Theatre Makers, Reading Repertory Theatre, Red Phoenix Story, Regent Theatre, Rhode University, Royal Shakespeare Company, Salford Community Theatre, Speak Up Theatre, Standing Tall Arts, Strathclyde University, The Ambassadors Group, The Bone Ensemble, The White Rabbit, Theatre Clwyd, Theatre Royal (Plymouth), Theatre Royal (Wakefield), TIPP (Theatre in Prisons & Probation), Treseder Productions,

“That sense of community and connection has been really important and has enabled people to access information... I went to about 5 external events in January, networking, advocacy, academic... People knew about Collective Encounters, they’ve downloaded our resources or been to an event... awareness of Collective Encounters work has really increased... The What’s Working events in June, didn’t position Collective Encounters as excellent providers, we provided a space to have the discussion about what good practice online looks like. At the time people could learn more from each other more than they could do from us. So, we provided a framework for this to happen.” Annette Burghes⁸⁶

Collective Encounters has been invited to share project activity and deliver training with Curious Minds, the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance/Arts & Health South West, LIPA, University of Bolton, Civic Role of the Arts During COVID, Voluntary Arts Creative Network - Theatre, Artworks Alliance and others during this period.

⁸⁶ Executive Director, Interview, 04.02.2021

Aim 3: A more resilient participatory arts sector

Outcome 3.1. Better networked participatory arts workforce

The sector development work through the Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre, had delivered the majority of planned year one activity. The pandemic restrictions called for an overhaul of the delivery approach and content responding to the new circumstances.

The smaller training network that had been established, was instead replaced with open ongoing events and dialogue from July 2020, after discussion with these organisations (regarding capacity/furlough and current priorities).

“Netty and I also were looking to establish a training network, so had met with key partners who were going to be part of that in its early phase, and then because of Covid, that was one of the areas we had to reinvent, and now that training network has naturally emerged from through that people who have been attending. One of our ambitions... is to connect more with other training programmes to share our learning nationally, and that’s one of the things I’m working through Artworks Alliance.” Sarah Thornton⁸⁷

The online events in Spring 2020 brought together NPO’s and mainstream arts, academic and cultural organisations (see 2.3), alongside individual freelance participatory artists and theatre facilitators. In year two these attracted more attendees (674 at 21 events, compared to 97 at 6 events) - bringing professionals from across UK (and further afield) together in practical and discursive online forums.

The differing formats for these events (live space in year one, and redesigned for online delivery) all had a strong dialogic element. The structure of group provocation and smaller breakout rooms for discussion established through ‘Talking Participation’ continued in the ‘Delivering Participatory Theatre During Social Distancing’ event series, launched in May 2020:

“It was very useful to share ideas and to speak with other practitioners outside of London.”⁸⁸

“It was great to see other people who are in the same situation as you. I liked discussing ideas with other practitioners when we are all in the same boat.”⁸⁹

“great resources, and always good to be in touch with people making theatre.. I like the smallness of the group, it made for a very responsive session.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Artistic Director interview, 17.12.2020

⁸⁸ Delivering Participatory Theatre During Social Distancing’ (DPT-DSD)-2 feedback survey, 11.06.2020

⁸⁹ DPT-DSD-2 feedback survey, 11.06.2020

⁹⁰ DPT-DSD-4 feedback survey, 26.06.2020

The 'Open Playgrounds' that followed, offered a practical space, encouraging greater connection and peer support:

"Loving the breakout rooms as a chance to hear all voices."⁹¹

"Lovely that we all feel like a mini collective now."⁹²

Collaborative relationships are fundamental to Collective Encounters' practice. The rapid changes of the pandemic have highlighted how crucial this dynamic has been:

"The discussions during those events... was very much full of people saying help ... we need to talk, we are committed to our communities, we want to keep working with them but we don't know how to do it. Some of people had never used Zoom before. I quickly made the decision to convene a space for these conversations to take place..." Annette Burghes⁹³

Interaction within the online sessions replicated the interactive, dialogic approach of live sessions as closely as possible, varying groups sizes and exchange formats, and offering a well-received opportunity for sharing experiences and learning (see 3.1, 3.2). The online space did however present some challenges and necessary adjustments:

"...the breakout group felt much more engaging. When we were together as a whole group at the end there were so many people it was just hard to keep up with who was talking."⁹⁴

"It was tricky managing people's expectations in the virtual space. Our breakout room had quite a dominant person who wanted their story told without much consultation with others or taking into consideration what others might want. It might be useful at the beginning to just remind participants of that. I know you do have that ethos but it useful sometimes to even have a quick reminder before we go into breakout rooms. It is harder to read people online that when in the same space. It is actually a useful reminder from my own perspective." (sic.)⁹⁵

Outcome 3.2. Better skilled participatory arts workforce

The Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre includes ongoing training and development sessions and a library of free resources that support good practice and addressing creative, practical and ethical issues.

⁹¹ DPT-DSD-Playback Theatre, feedback survey, 22.10.2020

⁹² Open Playgrounds (DPT-OP)-Devising, feedback survey, 12.11.2020

⁹³ Executive Director, Interview, 04.02.2021

⁹⁴ DPT-DSD-1, feedback survey, 03.06.2020

⁹⁵ DPT-OP-Adults feedback survey, 20.08.2020

“We’d done a lot of sector research about what the gaps were and what was needed... I built the timeline and stocked the library... When Covid hit, there was a new resource for social distancing in the library and new information to add all the time” Sarah Thornton⁹⁶

Across the training events programme, 90% of survey respondents stated that they had ‘learnt relevant new things’ and 87% stated the sessions were useful or stimulating (12% selecting ‘somewhat’). Initial sessions dealt with some of the broad themes and issues that the sector was negotiating, prior to and post-lockdown, resulting in a positive reception to the peer learning that could take place within the rapidly changing circumstances:

“Very thought-provoking discussions from people with a variety of backgrounds. I certainly learned lots from it.”⁹⁷

The blend of digital resources and live (currently online) events has enabled Collective Encounters’ training provision to offer relevant content to help equip the sector to respond to changing contexts.

“The sector support changed massively and events have been hugely beneficial. The amount of people attended illustrated that and feedback has been brilliant. And the resources that we pulled together post-Covid and support that we’ve given, I have felt that we’ve fulfilled a more important role than ever have before.” Sarah Thornton⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Artistic Director interview, 17.12.2020

⁹⁷ DPT-DSD-4 feedback survey, 26.06.2020

⁹⁸ Artistic Director interview, 17.12.2020

Resources and events included:

**Sector Resources,
Centre for Excellence Library**

Brief Encounters: Seven short films introducing ideas and themes within the participatory theatre sector

Global Movement: Interactive global map of participatory theatre organisations

Online Library & Resource Centre: Free to download and searchable library of participatory theatre books, reports and toolkits

Participatory Theatre Timeline

Delivering Participatory Theatre During Social Distancing: What's Working?

Making Digital Participatory Theatre: Series of 5 filmed essays and case studies

Participatory Theatre: Top Tips for Online Facilitation Games & Exercises

Events Programme (total attendees)

Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre Launch (46)

Rediscovering the Radical: Theatre & Social Change Summer School (15)

Talking Participation: Cultural Democracy, Delivering Participatory Theatre, During Social Distancing, Evaluation, Excellence, Excellence in Participatory Arts with Older People, Political Engagement in Youth Arts Practice (99)

Digital Participatory Theatre - Open Playgrounds: Adults, Devising, Digital Inclusion, Forum Theatre, Living Newspapers, Older Adults, Playback, Young People (103)

Digital Participatory Theatre Seminars: Audience, Agency Action, Open Music, Participation & Social Change, Tech for Remote Performance, Tech for Sound (330)

Masterclasses: Participatory Theatre & Looked After Children & Young People, Making Political Theatre with Communities (41)

As well as the [published learning](#) (and resources such as Participatory Theatre: Top Tips for Online Facilitation) addressing aspects of online delivery, which has been a significant outcome of the last year, the feedback has continually refined the evolving sector facing programme and identified where more focused themes and training would be valuable:

“More specific topics - age range, inclusion, setting, rehearsals, writing etc.”⁹⁹

This responsively informed sector programming and the creation of the Open Playgrounds to test and explore online practice with differing audiences, has continued to be well attended and received during lockdown:

⁹⁹ DPT-DSD-1 feedback survey, 03.06.2020

“I wasn't able to make the events in June and as a lecturer in Applied and Theatre and Social Change, I was struggling during lockdown to come up with ways to play games online. This was really inspiring and gave me lots of ideas to work with when teaching my students. It has also made me think about how I can use the online platform to reach out to more vulnerable groups.”¹⁰⁰

“Really enjoyed learning from others - interesting mix of new games, but importantly, shared experiences around practice/challenges etc.”¹⁰¹

The core programme for 2021-2022 has been published, repeating some of the successful sessions delivered to date and supplementing these with sessions addressing issues such as wellbeing, trauma, anti-racism and climate justice, alongside a continued programme of technical skill development. More in-depth training will be an area for ongoing review within digital and live space (see 3.4).

Outcome 3.3. Increased evidence of the benefit of arts engagement and participation by marginalised communities

The participatory evaluation processes that accompany Collective Encounters practice are being used to gather continuous feedback and refined to reinforce the qualitative evidence being gathered during Above & Beyond. Case studies and testimony are crucial for understanding the process as it is experienced by individuals and the quality of personal relationships and individual support, that quantitative measures not only struggle to capture but can actively undermine. The creative and evaluation processes seek to capture and retain the value of this dynamic and equality of voice, not reducing experience to generic categories or imposing measures that do not feel personally meaningful to those involved, but respecting and validating the contribution made by all involved.

Partner feedback and Collective Encounters' dialogue with wider studies and sector learning looking at personal and civic impact will also be necessary in forming holistic insight into this outcome.

Case studies and testimony are crucial for understanding the TfSC process as it is experienced by individuals (see 3.4), these can better reflect the individual journeys experienced and moments that supported these.

¹⁰⁰ DPT-OP, Adults feedback survey, 20.08.2020

¹⁰¹ DPT-OP, Digital Inclusion feedback survey, 03.09.2020

Birkenhead participant case study by Abi Horsfield (2021)

I first met N on 11th December 2019, she came to a drop-in workshop at open day of the community hub at Royal Standard House in Rock Ferry, she had heard that there was going to be some drama and had come down specifically.

In that session we created characters and did poetry, she was very nervous but engaged well, she talked about wanting to try new things and make changes. I knew we were going to be setting up a core group in the January and I invited her to attend, she said she would, and she did.

She was the first to arrive on January 13th, she was up for everything and I could visibly see her confidence grow, she developed a passion for drama and asked really interesting and thought-provoking questions. She would still apologise about everything and then she would produce amazing work.

Right from the go get she identified that she would like to learn to do what I was doing.

When Covid happened and we moved onto Zoom, N was there, always encouraging others and sharing her creativity and wisdom.

She enrolled on the Confidence through Creativity Course, in which she excelled and then in September joined the new cohort of Radical Makers, training to be a facilitator and artist in her own right. She talks about having a clear idea now of what she wants to do next and is on the way to doing it.

She is on the Participants Advisory Group for Above and Beyond where she has been involved in interviewing the digital theatre maker, being on the creative and production teams for the Legend of the Mermix and taking on the roles of the Narrator in Fred's story and Penelope in Suzanne's.

She still has wobble and crisis in confidence, but don't we all. I am excited to see what she will do next and how that will impact on her community.

"I personally got involved in voluntary roles in drama groups and being part of Radical Makers, so for me it's been a stepping stone into doing different things and challenging myself a bit more."¹⁰²

Some participants chose to remain offline, in response to the demands of virtual participation and varied personal circumstances, others got involved from the outset and several left and rejoined as they adjusted to changing needs. Ongoing contact has accommodated for this, providing encouragement and support for those wanting to take part, while acknowledging and respecting participants' choices. This sensitive facilitation and support is a subtle distinction in practice consistent with the community and youth outreach activities of partners. Access, trust and understanding are crucial to challenge internal boundaries and test new things, in ways that respond to personal motivation:

¹⁰² N. Participant interview, 28.04.2021

"We had a young person that was a bit older, and a bit of a jack the lad, and it wasn't very much his thing. So we said to him 'look, come as a mentor' and he said 'yeah ok' and he's now known as 'the ballerina' because he was doing ballet dancing, he was involved in all the things... he took them to the park and showed all his friends so they were doing it in the park. All of that, every young person is different but it benefits them in every way."¹⁰³

Sufficient support, capacity, skill and understanding is necessary to deliver these benefits and ensure meaningful participation for different individuals. This must be accounted for in any evidence base.

Bootle participant case study by Abi Horsfield (2021)

M's involvement began on the 6th November 2019, when she walked into the Kindfulness Coffee Club. I was there to run a series of taster workshop exploring what issues were important to the local community creatively. I noticed M as she had her head down and spoke in a voice so quiet it was hard to hear. She created a great poem but didn't have the confidence to share it with the group.

The following week M came back, the group was smaller, and she managed to share in the check in, the next week she was back, and she was able to share a creative response she had worked on. The following session she was a no show, but she came in as the session was finishing to apologise for missing it, we got chatting and she shared lots about her life and said that she would love to have the confidence to do drama and write, I asked if I could have her email address as we would be starting some core group sessions and I would love for her to attend.

I kept in touch with M and saw again on a couple of occasions I was at the Kindfulness Coffee Club at meetings. Then in January I started the core group workshops at Strand by Me. She didn't come to the first three sessions and then she walked in on session four. She asked to watch the first session, which of course was fine, by her third session she was participating. In verbal evaluations she would talk about feeling really outside of her comfort zone but wanting to push herself. Then Lockdown came and things became really different.

For the first few weeks of lockdown, I communicated with the group by telephone, it was a way of checking in, offering support and assessing digital needs as we planned to move the sessions onto zoom. M was in her words a 'Technophobe'. When the Zooms started in April 2020, her son helped and by week two she managed it.

On Zoom M was a changed person, in the first session she talked about how much easier it was to do drama on zoom in her kitchen than in the room. Throughout the year she has attended zoom sessions when her health has allowed, she has excelled in writing, improvising, and devising.

"If you'd said to me 12 months ago, when I was in the Strand, you're going to get up and do an improvisation, I'd have said 'no way on this earth' there's no way, and I have... I've realised how

¹⁰³ CR. Liverpool Children's Services interview, 21.03.2020

acting creatively helps your inner self, your inner healing, for me personally, so I'd like to take it further, I'd like to see what else is out there, because it's all new to me all this.”¹⁰⁴

Outcome 3.4. New models of empowering marginalised communities are adopted

This outcome is tied to the process of embedding creativity within communities (aim one, restricted by the pandemic), the influence of creative outputs on those that engage with them, and of the increased role of participant groups within the wider organisation. The small network would have enabled and supported longitudinal analysis into changes to practice in response to this shared learning. Despite disruption and delay to some of the planned activity due to the pandemic, elements of existing and new practice have still been adopted, with the digital terrain now providing unexpected new approaches and learning.

At this interim phase of delivery and evaluation, it has not yet been possible to establish and capture a replicable model around existing Collective Encounters' practice within Above & Beyond. Nonetheless, the learning from previous and current work is already being shared through sector events, resources and wider network sharing. Based on feedback survey responses to the question 'Do you feel able to put the training into practice?', more training and continuous engagement, will be required to reliably support adoption of new working practices.

Rediscovering the Radical - Summer School (17-18 July 2019), delivered before the lockdown found that while 79% of attendees felt that the training exceeded expectations, and 93% felt that they learnt relevant new things, only 47% responded 'Yes' to the question 'Do you feel able to put the training into practice?' (53% selecting 'somewhat').

The more in depth 'masterclasses' delivered online (in 2 hour long sessions) - while being positively received, with 83% feeling it met or exceeded expectations, only 67% felt they could put the training into practice¹⁰⁵. Feedback indicated the need for greater depth (including advance reading and resources) and referenced the challenge of time constraints for online delivery.

The case study examples and exploration of different models and processes were valued elements that many wanted to expand upon alongside discussion exploring attendees' experiences, evaluation methods, theatrical forms and artistic direction:

“I would have loved you to go more in depth about everything I feel like you only touched the sides but I understand this is due to being online and times limits. I would have happily started on the Zoom for longer.” (sic.)¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ M. Participant interview, 30.09.2020

¹⁰⁵ Feedback survey, Making Political Theatre with Communities (16.07.2020) and Political Engagement in Youth Arts Practice (04.06.2020) 6 respondents

¹⁰⁶ MPTwC feedback survey, 16.07.2020

Learning

The proposed process and outputs changed in the second year of delivery and the learning that has taken place predominantly reflects the responsive approaches that Collective Encounters took to continue addressing programme aims, as a direct result of pandemic constraints.

Under 'normal' circumstances and in 'normal' times, the proposed plan (as delivered in year one) offered a structured process to engage with and undergo collaborative development with participants, partners and the Collective Encounters' team. This is the aspect for which the most unexpected and unprecedented learning has taken place, as the TfSC practice, no longer led by interaction within live spaces, environments and contexts and shifted to make use of the rapidly changing affordances of technology and the losses and gains associated with these. Recognition was given to these changes from the beginning of the pandemic and timescales shifted to accommodate this pivot to online delivery.

The move online demanded high levels of individual support and content became very responsive to the personal and collective experience of the pandemic, with a particular focus on mental health and isolation (both issues that had consistently arisen in outreach and sessions, see 1.2 detail). The core groups remained separated on digital platforms, to limit immediate change while testing platforms and approaches.

Collective Encounters has been successful in maintaining a group and producing creative outcomes within this new context (providing practical and technical support, from devices to one-to-one guidance). This led to a scratch production in Autumn 2019 which drew together the groups devised characters and responses to ongoing media coverage and information.

The new demands experienced as a result of the pandemic have altered PAG engagement (with group changes following a temporary pause) who contributed to production decisions (by joining creative, production and marketing teams and recruiting practitioners and designers) to respond to the initial Theory of Change developed in year one.

The production process itself, while largely digital, was the first opportunity for some face-to-face delivery, as the group rehearsed (online) and recorded audio and visual performances over a two-week period, before a post-production phase. This was led by the Collective Encounters' team, with many of the group indicating an interest in developing these skills further.

The combination of live and online activities, to reach and accommodate different groups will be necessary to remain as inclusive as possible, taking advantage of new forums to connect, while keeping capacity and focus on local engagement - and re-engaging groups and activities that have been temporarily lost.

Feedback from the sector also reflects the challenges and opportunities that digital platforms and delivery present. The reach that this has afforded has been valuable and many have responded well to the formats offered:

*"I was surprised at how well it worked, maybe even on par with the live version."*¹⁰⁷

With constructive commentary and feedback reflecting the diversity of personal preference, that Collective Encounters can continue to respond to as delivery is refined:

*"As always in Zoom, it would be nice to feel more conversational - which the platform doesn't support as well."*¹⁰⁸

*"Zoom is so irritating - you can never fully replicate being in a room - but a good job done here"*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ DPT-OP, Forum Theatre, survey respondent, 05.11.2020

¹⁰⁸ DPT-OP, Young People, survey respondent 13.08.2020

¹⁰⁹ DPT-OP, Playback Theatre, survey respondent 22.10.2020

Next Steps

As the multiple strands of Above & Beyond move to the next phase - with research and engagement recently started in new communities, continued youth programme planning and the 2021-2022 sector programme launched, there are a number of considerations that can strengthen this work:

- *How will the resources, creative work and groups produced support and guide the next phase?*

It would be valuable to consolidate the significant learning to date internally and externally. This report was produced to support that reflection and the decisions being made across programmes that will deepen participant involvement, sector sharing and learning internally and externally.

Significant objectives (of embedding this work, supporting the ongoing trajectory of participants and maintaining and developing relationships with partners) are at a crucial stage, with a robust foundation, and the connection between this accumulated resource and future plans will maximise the impact of this.

- *What mechanisms can be formalised for ease and consistency, without constraining the action oriented and responsive approach of Collective Encounters?*

The pace of delivery and change has meant that reflection has been retrospective at points, catching up with actions taken.

The information gathering at outreach stage needs to be flexible, light touch but consistent (to provide reliable baseline data). It is currently reliant on the lead artist/facilitator for each programme strand to instigate this and given capacity, focus on other areas, and the fact that group and individual milestones vary, it would be valuable to consider how this is adapted for differing audiences and entry points across the organisation (e.i. Membership forms do this with monitoring data but not all participants are confident with online completion, supplementary creative exercises could accompany this to capture formative positions such as aspirations and expectations).

A person-centred approach is crucial, but supported by a responsive system that is not arbitrary but considers the movements and motivations of people engaging with differing programmes. This could include a schedule that includes both programme and participant prompts.

- *How will the changing circumstances influence delivery of programmed activity?*

As Collective Encounters continues to assess the climate and responsible delivery within the ongoing pandemic, these will continue to be major influences. It will be useful to capture and reflect upon the groups encountered (particularly during outreach), their delivery needs and how the organisation is managing capacity and achieving programme aims within an increasingly hybrid context.

Appendices

Appendix A: Framework

AIM	ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	INDICATORS	OUTCOMES
1. Embed long-term cultural production and cultural activity in marginalised communities	<p>Deliver a theatre for social change residency for marginalised communities in Birkenhead & Bootle (20).</p> <p>Co-commission a new play articulating the concerns and passions of the marginalised communities in Birkenhead & Bootle</p> <p>Deliver two specialist programmes for young people with experience of care or migration</p>	<p>Ten taster workshops in public places</p> <p>Twenty-week theatre for social change residency in a deprived area</p> <p>Meetings with at least 15 community groups and support services for marginalised individuals and communities</p> <p>1 x summer arts school for looked after children and young people</p> <p>20 session outreach arts outreach project for young people with experience of migration</p> <p>Meetings with at least 6 decision makers (Councilors & MP's), adult</p>	<p>100 marginalised individuals participate</p> <p>10 new community groups play a role in residencies and tasters</p> <p>Formative data on participants shows 70% have rarely or never previously engaged or participated</p> <p>20 young people with experience of migration and/or the care system report positive personal and civic benefits from participation</p> <p>60% of participants report positive personal benefits of participation</p> <p>80% of community groups report positive civic benefits of participation</p> <p>Summative data on year one participants shows 50% have continued to engage or participate</p>	<p>Increased access and engagement by marginalised individuals and groups</p> <p>Marginalised individuals and groups experience the personal and civic benefits of participation</p> <p>Continued access and participation beyond the life of the project</p>

		<p>services, children's services and voluntary sector networks in two boroughs</p> <p>Two articles in local press outlets published</p>		
2. Become a more resilient organisation	<p>External evaluation consultant recruited and engaged</p> <p>Training events for staff on participatory evaluation takes place</p> <p>Meetings with at least 15 community groups and support services for marginalised individuals and communities</p> <p>Communications with appropriate press outlets</p> <p>Training events for participants on</p>	<p>Advocacy and marketing material published</p>	<p>60% of workforce trained in participatory and longitudinal evaluation methods</p> <p>100% of workforce report positively on training and development interventions</p> <p>Three new and diverse board members identified, trained and inducted</p> <p>10 partnerships with local voluntary or statutory service providers formed</p>	<p>A highly skilled workforce and diverse governance team</p> <p>Increased evidence base on the social impacts of the organisation</p> <p>Increased profile and recognition as a leading provider of theatre for social change</p>

	governance takes place		One article in national press outlet published	
3. A more resilient participatory arts sector	<p>Deliver day long courses for the cultural sector in working with looked after children and young people; making political theatre with communities and creative ageing.</p> <p>Deliver a summer school for participatory theatre practitioners</p> <p>Participatory evaluation group formed and trained</p> <p>Launch an information network for national theatre for social change providers</p>	<p>9 training events for wider workforce</p> <p>Year one evidence consolidated into a report</p>	<p>40 participatory artists report an increase in skills</p> <p>At least 6 participants trained in evaluation skills and join participatory evaluation group</p> <p>One article in national press outlet published</p> <p>At least 4 participatory arts workers and organisations take part in network</p>	<p>Better networked participatory arts workforce</p> <p>Better skilled participatory arts workforce</p> <p>Increased evidence of the benefit of arts engagement and participation by marginalised communities</p> <p>New models of empowering marginalised communities are adopted</p>
PAG 1: To Connect and celebrate community while sharing and understanding the challenges being experienced by different groups	<p>Strategic links with representatives of different groups</p> <p>Workshop programme, performances and local resources</p> <p>Producing work with diverse and inclusive group</p> <p>Open Final Product: Developed through creative process - sharing</p>	<p>Record of meetings/conversations/ joint activities</p> <p>Process recorded, capturing experience to be shared beyond immediate participants and exercises/activities for future use.</p> <p>Registers and engagement records</p>	<p>Strategic partnerships, resulting in: connection w. wider group; sustainable legacy</p> <p>Local/self-led groups and partnerships</p> <p>A diverse/ representative group (participants/ audience) from outset and retention/ increase</p> <p>Feedback from all parties: Positive</p>	<p>Positive connections with all members of community and shared understanding</p> <p>Sustainable connections</p> <p>Different groups brought together</p> <p>Different areas brought together</p>

	products/process in social and communal way (with food and positive stories)	Documentation and circulation	personal experience, relevance of issues and approach	
PAG 1 ASSUMPTIONS AND BARRIERS				
The issues/needs identified during the research were multiple: TfSC could offer positive connections Reaching different groups; in particular marginalised/stigmatised Creating an experience that feels relevant and worthwhile Bridging diverse perspectives, experiences, preferences and needs	Local links to different groups must exist to be cultivated Mutual aims and outcomes need to be identified A relevant and welcoming experience for diverse groups with differing expectations (may require a variety of approaches during tour)	Opportunities in common Finding readily communicable and replicable exercises Consent for recording and sharing process and product Attendance (Understanding reasons for participation and non-attendance)	Skills and resource for ongoing work (partnerships and groups representing viable legacy) Group/audience demographic data for comparison and robust qualitative data.	Reaching all groups within the community and providing opportunities that are responsive to diverse perspectives, experiences, preferences and needs Appropriate venue and resource Knowledge, skills, resource and trust to maintain groups

Appendix B: COLLECTIVE ENCOUNTERS QUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE INDICATORS (2011)

QUALITY

Process: 'For Collective Encounters, a high-quality process is:

- *Inclusive*: participants are treated equally and fairly; their contributions are valued and their differences are respected; the environment is safe.
- *Creative*: the process involves artistic and creative development for all involved; it is exciting, fun and enriching; it increases understanding and appreciation of theatre and the arts.
- *Challenging*: participants are encouraged to ask questions and explore ideas that they might not otherwise have done; and to try out new ways of tackling old situations.
- *Empowering*: participants are supported to make sense of their place in the world, to think in different ways, to break down barriers and challenge received wisdom.
- *Responsive*: to the needs of individuals and the group; as far possible, the process and subject matter are guided by participants; and there is a strong sense of ownership.
- *Developmental*: the process offers opportunities for progression, the chance to develop new skills and affects or changes participants in a way that they deem positive.

Product: 'For Collective Encounters, a high quality product is:

Exciting: in its theatricality, invention, ambition and communication of ideas; reinforcing the value and distinctiveness of live performance.

- *Provocative*: in stimulating its audience to think in new ways, ask questions they might otherwise not have asked, offering new insights to old problems, and challenging the status quo.
- *Technically accomplished*: demonstrating an appropriate level of technical expertise, sound production values and seamless delivery.
- *Important*: in helping us to make sense of our place in the world, lifting the audience above the realm of the day to day, offering something beyond simple entertainment; and holding the possibility of change

SOCIAL CHANGE

'All Collective Encounters' work is focused on contributing directly to positive social change. We believe that our society is inherently unequal and our work focuses on tackling this. For Collective Encounters social change can occur on three levels: personal, civic and political. In order to evaluate how successful our work has been in contributing to social change we have set out the kinds of transformations we believe excellent theatre for social change can help to achieve.

Personal transformations may help to alleviate the impact of poverty, improve life chances, lead to better educational attainment, improve job prospects, and result in happier, more active citizens. They are likely to

include:

- *Empowerment*: people feel that they have had their voices heard; that they and their opinions matter; that they have the capacity to bring about changes in their world; have widened their horizons and lifted their expectations; have an increased sense of self-determination and of how they are perceived by others

- *Skills development*: people have learned new, or enhanced existing skills. These may be inter-personal skills, life skills, creative skills and/or subject/topic specific skills. They may have improved coping strategies and increased knowledge.

- *Confidence and wellbeing*: people have increased self-esteem, self-belief; perhaps an increased optimism for the future; they may have improved physical and/or mental wellbeing; they may feel happier; and have an increased sense of achievement.

- *Attitudinal change*: people think about things in new ways; are perhaps more open minded and more questioning; have an increased understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens; and/or an increased understanding of important life issues

Such transformations may help to alleviate the impact of poverty, improve life chances, lead to better educational attainment, improve job prospects, and result in happier, more active citizens.

Civic transformations may contribute to improved local democracy and civic engagement, lower rates of anti-social behavior, regeneration, and stronger communities; and are likely to include:

- *Social capital and cohesion*: barriers have been broken down between groups; social isolation is lessened; new networks are formed and friendships are forged; there is an improved understanding of cultural difference; and increased tolerance.

- *Identity and belonging*: group identity is formed or found; individuals identify themselves positively as part of a wider group or community; there is an increased sense of pride in the group or community; groups are self-defining.

- *Attitudinal change*: perceptions of marginalised groups are improved; public awareness of an issue is raised.

Political change is likely to include:

- *Provision*: positive changes to the ways in which services are delivered.

- *Policy*: positive changes to public/social/political policies.

- *Culture*: positive changes to the operational culture of an organisation; or the prevailing mind-set of a community/group.

- *Political activity*: an increase in people voting and becoming more actively involved in decision making/local democracy.'

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