

Building Resilience and Overcoming Adversity through Dance & Drama (BROAD) 2019 Research and Evaluation Report



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In the summer of 2019, Odd Arts Theatre and Company Chameleon (dance) collaborated to deliver a new dance-theatre workshop called BROAD in secure settings in the criminal justice, health and educational sectors. Part-funded by Arts Council England, the project's long-term aims are to improve and develop communication and self-esteem, in order to reduce violence and self-harming behaviours; and to improve wellbeing, increase resilience and overcome the barriers caused by previous adverse experiences. The Psychosocial Research Unit from the University of Central Lancashire partnered with the team to carry out a qualitative study of the pilot workshop in three of the five settings, which included a category C prison and two secure homes for children. The three settings were very different in terms of the participants and the spaces used. The workshop ran for 2½ to 4 days, ending with a final performance before an audience, consisting of members of staff. Group numbers ranged from 3 to 6 service users, plus available staff and 3 facilitators. This report draws evidence from observations of the workshops' process, and conversations with the workshop facilitators. The researchers found that:

- Participants went on a journey of discovery into their expressive range, as they extended the means whereby they could communicate with one another physically and verbally
- Facilitator participation and participant leadership demonstrated that each individual brought something unique to the group, increasing enjoyment and self-esteem
- Dance/movement and theatre enabled participants to learn experientially about the relationship between their feelings and their bodies, and move together in relation to one another
- The intimacy and trust produced by the combination of dance/movement and theatre created the conditions for self-revelation and reflection.

Alongside these findings, the report identifies priority themes, principles of good facilitator practice and recommendations for workshop development:

- The facilitators should remain the same throughout the workshop because the relationships formed are an important part of the process
- The choice of music, by facilitators and participants, is a key aesthetic and relational factor
- Acknowledging when participants leave or join the workshop is an important part of maintaining the group-based effectiveness of the process
- The timing of the 'Trust Walks' exercise is crucial because it is a pivotal experience
- Reflective discussions should vary in length depending on how they are being used
- The duration of the workshop should be maintained wherever possible because it emphasises the distinctiveness of the workshop space and provides containment

A longitudinal study that qualitatively evaluates the outcomes for individuals over a longer period of time would deepen our understanding of the workshop's effects.

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Introduction

Building Resilience and Overcoming Adversity through Dance & Drama (BROAD) is an innovative dance theatre pilot programme designed for vulnerable groups in prisons, secure children's centres and secure hospitals. It was co-created by Odd Arts company (OA) who have a significant track record of working with theatre in such settings. Odd Arts, who have been delivering forum theatre-based work in such settings for many years, partnered with dance Company Chameleon (CC). Its innovation derives from the combination of theatre and dance underpinned by training in non-violent communication and strengths based and trauma informed work within a restorative practice framework. OA & CC facilitators worked with psychologists to design the programme, based on a 24-month R&D collaboration which included shadowing, co-design and delivery of specialist projects. The project was part-funded by an Arts Council England grant.

Programme Aims and Design

- Increase the resilience and wellbeing of young adults in custody
- Improve communication and self-esteem thus reducing violence and harmful behaviours
- Improve mental health and overcome the barriers caused by adversity

The aims are to improve or develop individual attributes which together contribute to reducing violence and harmful behaviours. The workshop pursues these aims through a series of movement and drama-based exercises punctuated by discussions about relationships, feelings and emotional self-management in challenging situations, based on participants' experiences. The exercises and discussions encourage teamwork, self and group awareness, and communication; and are adapted according to the needs of the group.

Programme delivery is designed to meet the aims by adopting a **restorative practice** approach which is designed to develop concern for and recognition of others. Most importantly, it aims at repair of fractured relationships through care and communication and personal responsibility for harm caused by one's own behaviour. It involves setting clear goals and boundaries for dialogue and active participation which will challenge the participant. In this project restorative practice is supported by non-violent communication, a strengths-based stance and the more recently developed trauma-informed practice. In this report we will show these principles at work in Odd Arts and Company Chameleon's distinctive combination of dance movement and theatre.

Non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 1999) is an important technique which essentially requires facilitators to be non-judgemental in their responses and to lead by example in

communicating sincere thoughts and feelings. It encourages people to talk about how they feel, recognising that there are needs and values influencing the expression of anger and other emotions which may lead to violence.

The strengths-based approach involves focussing on people's abilities or competencies, rather than problems or failings in the choice of exercises and in communication. It is a 'can-do', positive approach to participants' abilities and potential, which addresses lack of confidence and the likelihood that individuals are more capable than they often realise. It requires the exercising of interpersonal sensitivity and support and involves encouragement, care and adaptation to the abilities of participants. This builds confidence and competence to address new and more challenging tasks. Arguments or refusal to participate are viewed as learning opportunities rather than situations to be avoided.

Trauma-informed practice closely resembles long-standing principles in person-centred care which involve careful listening, positive regard, attunement to the needs and capacities of individuals and awareness of the potential for the 'triggering' of emotions connected to past traumatic events. It acknowledges that behaviour that appears dysfunctional may reflect adaptive capacities developed in response to adverse childhood experiences (Ferlitti & Anda, 1998). It aims to repair harm through relieving tension and increasing a sense of agency in body and mind (van der Kolk, 2014). If trauma is 'held' within the physical body, dance is a particularly useful tool for trauma-informed practice, because it enables participants to focus on physical and emotional states, working through expressive and aesthetic movement and responding to the movements of others (Lapum et al. 2018). The trauma-informed dimension also involves reflective listening and affirmation, and so complements the strengths-based and non-violent communication approaches in these respects.

In sum these theoretically informed approaches to improving communication and increasing responsible agency complement each other and are potentially very helpful for the participants this programme is designed for, as well as supporting a wider aim of reducing violence in the controlled settings where they live.

The Settings

Each setting was very different in terms of participants and the spaces where the workshop was delivered. The category C prison¹ was typical of similar settings in that it faces continual challenges of accommodating overspill from other prisons, including other category offenders, under-staffing, violence and drug-use. The participants were men in their twenties and early thirties, with one man in his forties. Their offences and lengths of sentence were not disclosed but included disposals for serious offences, including one prisoner with an IPP

¹ NRC Research Application 2019-207 B.R.O.A.D. approved by North West Psychological Services and the Governor.

(Imprisonment for Public Protection). Some participants had experience of living in other prisons, including therapeutic communities. The workshop took place in a triangular-shaped room approximately 12 x 6 metres. The workshop was delivered in two and a half days.

The secure care home is in a very remote and beautiful location high in the Pennines. It was formally a private residence now converted for a small number of residents who are intensively supervised by the staff group. Residents stay for varying lengths of time for welfare reasons, and as we heard from one of them, they may not know when they are likely to leave. The participants were three teenage girls, aged between 13 and 16. In accordance with Odd Arts usual practice their backgrounds were not disclosed prior to the workshop, but researchers and facilitators knew that they all had experience of sexual or other physical and mental abuse, and had come from environments where they were considered to be at significant risk. The workshop took place in an attic space in an outhouse approximately 8 x 5 metres, but also on a slightly larger decked outdoor area. The workshop was delivered in four days.

The secure unit is purpose built and well-equipped. It includes educational and recreational facilities, a diner and a gym. The participants were two teenage boys, a teenage girl and a boy aged approximately 11 years old. The workshop took place in two rooms, the first a classroom and the second the gymnasium and was delivered in three days.

The programme was also delivered in a mental health hospital, which the researchers did not observe. A summary report of outcomes of this workshop was given to us. The workshop was delivered in three and a half days.

The Groups

In the care settings the groups can be very small – often as small as three members. There would normally be two or three facilitators to a session, with a staff member present. This high facilitator to participant ratio means that reluctant or vulnerable members of the group get plenty of one to one attention when needed. The prison group we observed was larger (6 on average) and attendance unstable with participants coming and going for various reasons such as mobility, transfers or visits. This could have had serious consequences for the continuity of the workshop but was mitigated by a consistent core of five who quickly developed a commitment to the work.

The exercises are an important medium of self-expression in their own right, especially for people whose verbal abilities or willingness to speak are limited. However, they also have the effect of 'loosening up' participants, enabling them to talk about their feelings and lives. The physical and creative activities are followed by reflective discussions on personal experiences that would otherwise seem out of place or difficult to broach. Talking about feelings from a 'standing start' generates discomfort but the embodied experience of performing re-activates and symbolises experiences so that they can be shared. Where movement and performance themselves are the most challenging aspect of the work, as with the group of girls in the care

home, this process is reversed: talking provides access to feelings and experiences which can then be processed and symbolised through dance and acting. This flexibility is described further in the section ‘Psychosocial and Bodily integration: Speech and movement’ below.

Both service users and staff take part in the workshop, which lasts 2½ to 4 days, and works up to a final performance before an audience, usually consisting of members of staff. Workshop facilitators tend to rotate the leadership throughout the sessions and also participate on an equal basis as group members when not directing the activities. Different facilitators worked in each setting and on different days of the workshop, with one lead facilitator present at all the workshops.

The Process

The workshop process begins with warm-up exercises which quicken responses and heighten awareness of the body and of others. Simple exercises build confidence, and then the level of difficulty gradually increases. The following table shows how the workshop develops:

Process Recording	Commentary
<p><i>The workshop began with a series of games requiring listening and movement. In ‘Name and Cross’ everyone says someone else’s name in turn and moves across the room towards them. In ‘Anybody Who’ everyone shares something about themselves and swaps places with someone who also shares the experience. These created a lot of laughter amongst the group as people relax and get to know one another. With ‘Mindful Walks’ gentle music begins to play in the background. Everyone is walking around the room but can only stop and start again by watching each other, so that they move and stop as a group. Participants replace the facilitator in issuing the stop and go instructions. ‘Movement Commands’ develops the previous exercise by introducing more complex instructions and allows the participants the freedom to be expressive in how they respond. The facilitators encourage participants to ‘feel free to play’ with the instruction as much as they want to. In addition, the group is now responding to instructions as a group and different participants are issuing instructions. Two actions stand out, one involved the group gathering closely together and uttering a loud Spartacus-like roar of defiance and strength. The other involved gathering closely</i></p>	<p>Facilitators take part after demonstrating and explaining. They develop the tasks based on their observations of the group. These initial exercises raise awareness of self and others in movement and drama.</p> <p>Facilitators model respectfulness thanking participants for voluntary participation.</p> <p>Requires concentration, listening and then responding through movement.</p> <p>Enjoyment and playfulness are valued.</p>

<p><i>together and then moving across the room as if the floor of the room was tilting, like a boat in a heavy storm. Both are carried out with laughter and smiles. The next exercise, 'Walking Names' involves eye contact and increased interaction with a partner in slow motion or at high speed. There are sometimes varying levels of comfort with this activity, but most appear comfortable with being physically expressive. Another facilitator then asks each participant what their emotional needs are. In small groups the participants then create a movement and body sculpture to represent the emotion. The group watch each other's pieces and correctly identify the emotions being represented and are very happy about being able to guess correctly. This exchange of short performances then develops into a mature and frank conversation about emotional needs between different members of the group. At the end of the discussion a facilitator commends the group on their maturity.</i></p>	<p>Depends on willingness to actively engage as a group without competitiveness.</p> <p>Cohesion and commitment to the workshop is achieved through expressive activity which also builds in graduated challenge.</p> <p>The group is moved on to embodying needs as a means of developing emotional literacy.</p> <p>Mini-performances build confidence and are staging posts in expressing emotions. Emotional expression is mediated through performance reducing self-consciousness. Group feedback confirms that communication is effective.</p>
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Main Findings

The main findings are organised into five overlapping themes of the workshop experience: performance; challenge; psychosocial and bodily integration; using space creatively; working in and through the group, and embodied learning. Under these themes we describe different aspects of the workshop across the three settings.

Using space creatively

Extending physically and emotionally into space.

This is perhaps the most striking and paradoxical aspect of dance theatre in prisons and secure units. It invites participants to express themselves and work together with others who are similarly confined. Spatial confinement is not only the most obvious form of deprivation for people who do not have freedom to move outside of the boundaries of the institution, it is also the most keenly felt. Even where the space offers containment, and a degree of respite from the chaos of a previous mode of existence, loss of agency, the ability to decide when and how to come and go, is experienced as a mark of shame. From the perspective of the participants this was a major loss they had suffered and re-gaining mobility in space was an indication of adult status worthy of respect. However, it is fair to say that few if any of them would have thought of this in terms of dance and performance prior to joining the course.

Even the participant who most naturally took to the dance movement form expressed his aspirations for the future in terms of “doing something in sport”.

The psychological counterpart to physical confinement

Mental constraints experienced in secure settings lead residents to defend themselves or rebel. The latter course of action can result in disruptive and futile violence, while the effort expended on defences can lead to a ‘locked down’ state of mind that inhibits human interaction or conversation. It was common to observe participants entering the room in a physically and mentally defended state. The group in the care home retreated under blankets as soon as the first session got going (it was a very warm day). More commonly individuals would sweat under their jumpers until wearing them became unbearable. One young woman, finally impelled to take her jacket off, continued clutching it throughout ever more vigorous routines despite its increasing inconvenience.

These were some of the outward physical signs that gave a sense of how exposed the participants in these workshops felt. Other indications were in the awkwardness that was especially evident at the initial sessions. We observed every manner of shambling, stumbling, stiffness, clumsiness and embarrassment, sometimes partially disguised under a veneer of nonchalance.

A Safe Environment

The role of facilitators in co-creating an environment where creativity and change can occur is central to the success of the workshop. Facilitators were prepared to make the most of any space they were given, and their expressed attitudes towards the rooms were pragmatic and positive. None of the rooms in which the sessions were held resembled a dance studio. Most were too small, too hot or too airless, or else too large, like the echoing gym provided as an alternative to a classroom at the secure unit.

It is vital that the settings are sufficiently protected against the intrusive gaze of outsiders so that participants can work free of criticism or ridicule and find a way to move that feels comfortable, authentic and pleasurable within their own limits. Privacy is as important as having space to move. Feeling safe enough, with space enough, to be physically expressive in these ill-adapted environments, nevertheless reflected a key challenge of daily life. The workshop addressed this challenge in a number of ways:

1. **Facilitators adapted to the affordances of the space and atmospheric conditions.** Rather than bemoaning inadequate facilities they actively made use of them varying the choreography and modelling ‘can do’ rather than ‘make do’. When there was an opportunity to change location to move outside or into the gym the relocation was

used as an opening up of opportunity rather than merely a relief. In the secure unit for example, the move to the gym enabled an outburst of manic energy which was then channelled into a purposeful exercise that made use of the whole space.

2. **The 'Trust Walks' exercise was significant in all of the groups.** Where it worked well it enabled a very sensitive use of space, demonstrating that through reciprocal bodily awareness it was possible to move in relation to others without collision or harm, even in constrained conditions; and that this depended on sensitivity and consideration towards one another. (We elaborate further on this in the section 'Embodied learning').
3. **Movement is not only about the body in space but space in the body.**² This made sense of the loosening up that we invariably witnessed whereby self-protective behaviours were progressively abandoned in favour of a freer range of gesture and speech. Participants literally 'grew' in the sense of taking up more of the space available while using it judiciously and collaboratively with others.
4. **Participants began to experience space as a dimension of possibility.** They became progressively more mobile and more ambitious in what they were prepared to do. Bloom observes that immobility is often a psychological counterpart of dissociation (Bloom, 2006, p. 52). As people become more mobile they necessarily do so in three-dimensional space, where they discover themselves to be 'rounded' human beings. Conversations within the group invariably became more rounded, as the workshops progressed. By this we mean they became more complex, less binary, better able to confront a range of moral and relational issues.
5. **The space of discovery is a potential space** (Winnicott 1971). In a potential space the distinction between inner and outer worlds is suspended, allowing personal experience to be reconciled with external reality. This is at the root of creativity and the capacity to 'discover' a personally meaningful world. Cultural spaces serve this purpose. Although we cannot observe a potential space we saw participants undergoing journeys of discovery, albeit brief; most obviously in their capacity to perform, more subtly in their expressive range, as they extended the means whereby they could communicate with one another to include rhythmically attuned bodily interaction. This demonstrates that the facilitators successfully co-created a secure, holding environment where creativity and change could occur.
6. **There was a productive tension between free expression and the limits of space.** There were times of frustration when the sessions observably flagged. However, there was also the paradoxical effect (expressed by Rebecca Friel, Odd Arts) of the effects

² Thanks to Penny Collinson for this insight, delivered in our workshop we held at the University of Central Lancashire to consider the Odd Arts/ Company Chameleon model

of dance being heightened because of the physically restrictive settings "so that dance became even more dance" through overcoming these restrictions.

Indicative outcomes for participants

- Learning to work expansively in conditions of confinement
- Respecting other people's personal space
- Expressing the rounded personality through three-dimensional mobility
- Using physical space freely as an expression of mental space
- Feeling safe in space with other people
- Transforming space from a barrier to an opportunity

Working in and through the group

Forming a group, dealing with the competing needs of other participants, overcoming self-consciousness in the service of group activity, experiencing the conflicts and pleasures of a group, working towards a group performance, being interdependent, dealing with the group's shortcomings and sharing in its successes – these were all intrinsic to the experience. It should be remembered that these groups came into being in situations of group living which had not been freely chosen by the participants and which themselves could be supportive or isolating. For many of them being excluded or belonging to the group was part of the problem. None of the groups began with any visible demonstration of fellow feeling or even the sense that participants were at ease in the company of one another. In various ways they demonstrated that the group could feel like a dangerous place to be. They showed this by virtue of their defended behaviour, especially at the beginning of each workshop series, or when tensions broke out. We have referred to the way in which they used protective or unsuitable clothing (jackets in hot rooms and sandals for dancing) to mark their ambivalence about taking part in a group activity; reluctance to join or sitting out was common. In the care home there was an undercurrent of friction between the participants right through to the end. Continuing to work, and even to perform together, while tolerating the level of discord they were experiencing, was in itself a valuable lesson and an indication of self-containment in response to the discipline and structure of the workshops. It meant that participants had to manage their interpersonal tensions and keep the potential audience in mind. This audience then represented a third position – a wider community of interest with a third position beyond the binary conflict. The facilitators played a key role in helping participants to manage this discord and demonstrating how it could be alleviated through having one's needs acknowledged and recognising those of the other.

1. **A carefully structured and calibrated series of exercises** ensured that participants were initiated slowly into the group and variation in activities enabled variation in

mood and expression. (This has been explained and illustrated in the earlier section on process)

2. **Facilitators had to work with changes in group composition.** This demanded unity of purpose and concept while allowing responsiveness to the group's needs and emergent working. In the prison participants came or absented themselves for reasons that were sometimes reported and sometimes just seemed to happen.

Participants laugh and chat to one another. New participants are visibly more self-conscious than the others. The facilitator says to the participants that there is no right or wrong to their movements, that they can choose how they move. There is some giggling and more playing to one-another, and smiles may be concealing embarrassment (Prison Group).

In the care home attendance was disrupted by a social worker visit and by other appointments. In the secure unit a participant dropped out and another joined part way through. This instability had to be handled by the facilitators and one of our early recommendations was that these comings and goings should always be acknowledged.

3. **Clarity and unity of approach between Odd Arts and Company Chameleon.** During the development phase of the programme one of the researchers participated in an intensive session in which the two companies worked to combine dance and theatre and to achieve a sophisticated understanding of the potentials of each other's art form. The value of this preparation was evident in the confidence that facilitators showed in one another and the frictionless ways in which they transitioned or more often blended dance and theatre, so that it often appeared to be a single discipline. Particularly impressive was their ability to judge when to switch between theatre and movement and between active and reflective exercises.
4. **Facilitators took part in the workshops** alternating leadership and participating on an equal basis in the activities and reflective exercises. This served to emphasise the point that each individual brings something unique to the group and has areas of strength and weakness. Of particular importance was the fact that the facilitators could 'hold' the group, ensuring the safety of the workshop space while also admitting to their own insecurities in performing certain exercises. Everybody was stretched in parts of the process, though not necessarily in the same parts, and learning to be vulnerable in the group and respectful of the vulnerabilities of others was part of the learning experience.

The group had to accommodate its youngest member who the teenagers found quite silly and juvenile. Eventually they found a role for him by common consent at which he could excel. In Halifax the group had to form in the face of the studied disengagement of one potential member and then had to survive and carry on working in the face of overt tensions. The urgency and pressure of a shared performance had an essential function in keeping them together. (Secure Unit)

Indicative outcomes for participants

- Experiencing the pleasures of forming and being in a group
- Negotiating the frustrations and frictions of working with others
- Sticking to task in the face of tension and conflict
- Learning from the collaborative approach modelled by the facilitators
- Learning to be vulnerable in a group and respect the vulnerability of others
- Experiencing complementary and mutually supportive ways of interacting with others

Embodied learning

Prisons are intentionally designed as environments of sensory deprivation, or places of sensory impingement by the harshness of the textures and soundscapes. In this respect they are different from secure care settings where the goal of the institution is nurturance as well as education and welfare. In the care settings there are greater opportunities for residents to personalise their surroundings. However, they are still institutions and their organisational and physical structures are designed to endure assault from residents who will challenge them. Their arrangements are always overlaid with systems of security. In this sense and regardless of presence or absence of features designed to impart a degree of physical comfort, these secure environments are fundamentally unyielding, offering little opportunity for residents to imprint their personalities upon them. The risk is that the unyielding environment becomes the architecture of unyielding relationships.

Attending to one another

This capacity is developed by degrees through exercises in which participants learn both to attend to their own feelings and express them in movement, and to move together or in relation to one another. This requires an attentiveness which is built up gradually in the course of the workshops. It is worth emphasising that in the three groups that we observed there were initially varying degrees of difficulty with embodied expression. The girls in the care

home who may have previously been at risk of sexual exploitation appeared particularly inhibited:

The first exercise was to 'embody the need' (the needs discussed before lunch) and this was obviously much more challenging for them – unsurprisingly since their relations to their own bodies have been to embody the 'needs' of others. (Care home group)

The realisation that emotions are expressed through bodily states and can be read and communicated through the body was a vital first step:

The third exercise is a 'body scan' encouraging mindfulness, focussing on the present moment and relaxation. Participants lay on the floor with their eyes closed and the facilitator directs their attention to their bodies and their breathing as they do several stretches. Participants are told to find their own way up to a standing position any way they want to. The facilitator then gives a countdown to opening their eyes. This set of warm-up exercises attunes participants to each other, particularly through listening and attending to how their own bodies feel. (All groups)

Attunement via entrainment

Whereas any group based creative activity demands a degree of interpersonal attunement among members, the combination of dance and theatre intensifies the potential for participants to move in time and in tune with one another. This is a deeply satisfying experience of coming together in the realisation of a common activity and for people who have experienced the disruption and fragmentation of relationships that has inevitably preceded their confinement in a secure environment, it produces a powerful and reparative sense of group belonging.

Movement, and especially dance, when it is structured by the musical qualities of rhythm, beat and tempo achieves this sense of togetherness through 'entrainment': the process whereby people unconsciously shape and regulate their actions by reference to one another.³ The simplest expression of entrainment in daily life is when two people walking side by side spontaneously fall into step - each of them in willing surrender to the rhythm of the other - thereby producing something new. Entrainment is a source of enjoyment and is good for people and hard to resist. It is a powerful instrument of integration and group formation and to an extent can cut across verbally expressed discord. However, it is impeded where there is social disharmony. In BROAD the carefully graduated games and exercises, designed to

³ Entrainment "appears to involve the perceptual inference or abstraction of a regular periodic pulse or beat from a sequence of rhythmic events, and the intuitive or cognitive organisation of the timing of actions and sounds around the motivating pulse" (Cross & Morley 2009, p.67).

increase perceptual awareness of other people's moves, laid the conditions for entrainment gradually building attentiveness and responsiveness. In the prison this was particularly successful in that the pleasure of moving together helped the group affirm a sense of a common purpose and this was reflected in increasingly complex routines from which participants derived great satisfaction (see the process note on page 2 for details). In the secure unit two of the group resisted moving together without episodes of sitting out and acting out. Nevertheless, when given the space to up the tempo they eventually produced a high energy dance routine in step and carried this through into the final performance with brio! In the care home this did not occur, as a result of the disharmony between the participants which reached a peak on each morning of the workshop and which then gradually dissipated through the day.

Being 'in touch'.

Being in touch becomes literally and figuratively possible once participants feel comfortable in themselves. It is linked to yielding - in Bloom's words (2006) "the ability to yield and be in touch underlies the ability to take appropriate and effective action – then pushing, reaching, grasping and pulling are modes of extending into space". (pp 12-13) Learning to share that space is the prelude to touch in the workshops.

The progression to touching in the course of movement exercises comes about as an organic part of the dance theatre process. It is worth emphasising what a delicate achievement this is in settings where touch can so easily be conflated with physical violence, or else provokes anxieties of inappropriate sexualisation. Even the fact that participants arrive at touch through yielding rather than imposing is potentially tricky given the associations with bullying and exploitation. The ability to touch and be touched (emotionally and physically) without anxiety is linked to trust. This is why the 'Trust Walk' exercise occupies a pivotal position in all of the workshops. A partner is led 'blind' around the room, full of hazards (bumping into others or the walls), by gently placing hand on hand. The follower relies on the touch of a hand to know in what direction to move. The leadership role demands extreme sensitivity and responsibility in physically directing someone else's body.

'Trust Walks' is much slower than the pacey activity of the first part of the morning. Participants get into pairs and lead their partner, who shuts their eyes, around the room. The OA facilitator provides instructions in a direct and assertive manner: "complete responsibility...don't let them walk in danger...in different pathways, not circles". The word "safe" is repeated and other assurances of trust, dependence and control are used to describe the activity. (All Groups)

The timing of this exercise needs to be finely judged. In the programme schedule it is part of the second day. In the prison the moment was chosen perfectly as an expression and

summation of developing confidence. In the delicacy and care with which it was performed partners showed utmost respect towards one another. In the secure unit where the exercise seemed to come too soon the group clearly felt awkward – one member literally parked himself by the researcher, as if for protection, while another would only extend one finger and spent the time flicking hairs off her jumper with the other hand as if to erase even the minimal touching she had just consented to. In the care home the exercise necessitated moving the workshop outdoors to provide sufficient space. It produced two key moments in the development of the participants as individuals and as members of a single group. One participant, who had been very reluctant to participate on the first day, was visibly touched by the experience of this exercise. Being led by someone they trusted to look after them, and then having the freedom to lead them as they chose, had a powerful emotional effect and marked this young woman's first meaningful engagement in the workshop. The group chose this movement sequence to include in the final performance.

The exercise then develops into participants moving or being moved by their partners, so in effect one person dances through the body of the other by gently manipulating their movements. Participant 'D' joins in, accompanied by a female facilitator. This activity provides an opportunity for participants to experience touching each other's bodies in a very deliberate and directive way. A feeling of caginess, strangeness or uncertainty in making someone else move is observable. During the exercise the staff members stop participating and leave the space or observe, taking photos. At the end of the exercise each pair performs their sequence to the rest of the group and they then discuss the different characteristics of each one as 'fight', 'help' and 'finale'. Facilitators respond to the comments of the participants and ask questions about responsibility and the experience of trusting someone. The performance is a significant step forward in participation and engagement for 'D' who had not fully participated until this point. Perhaps 'D' feels more comfortable in the larger space outside. She was captivated by the lead-follow trust exercise. There is a clear change in her disposition, and she appears happier. (Care home group)

In learning to yield physically and psychologically, rather than simply imposing themselves on the action, participants open up to what they could learn from the environment and other people within it. Whereas much of the theatre work we have observed in the past has been notable as a vehicle whereby participants *project into* role and impose their conception on the performance, dance theatre allows them to combine this important experience of being in control of their self-presentation with an embodied *receptivity* to the movements of others and the emotional states that they denote.

Indicative outcomes for participants

- Learning how to be attentive as well as assertive
- Understanding that responsiveness to others depends on feeling at ease with oneself
- Experiencing the pleasures of being in tune with one another
- Gaining receptivity by trusting and yielding to what the environment and others bring.

Psychosocial and Bodily integration: Speech and movement

The dance-theatre combination accommodated varying degrees of physical and verbal capacity, and practically every participant was initially inhibited in either one or the other but developed in the form of expression they found most difficult.

When words are not readily available, or movement is inhibited

In the secure unit one participant who had come to the UK from another country in difficult circumstances had lost use of his first language and had somehow barely acquired a second. His linguistic skills were extremely limited. Nevertheless, he was wiry and athletic and excelled in dance moves - a virtuosity that was readily acclaimed by the others. He would have struggled with theatre alone but in the combined form he readily found a mode of self-expression at which he could excel.

Conversely, verbal self-expression and dramatic skills came naturally to some who were less at ease with movement. In a short and very intense workshop such as this it was very important to be able to ensure accessibility to participants that were quite diverse in what they could do, what they enjoyed and what they would take away. The repertoire of action and reflection available to the facilitators meant that there were always exercises that felt comfortable to some and stretched others, and this situation could be reversed. This enhances the inclusivity of the workshop model and tends to equalise the challenge for participants.

Action, Reflection and Trust in the Environment

Particularly noticeable was the fluidity of reflective episodes after movement exercises. The following description is of a discussion following the 'Trust Walk' exercise described above among the prison group. It enabled a follow-up that placed the participants knowingly in the psychologically vulnerable position of willing submission. This felt particularly risky in an environment where overt vulnerability is liable to be abused:

Participants take turns to lead and manipulate the other's body which creates empathy and connection based on their shared experience. Participants remark "eyes shut, proper relax" and "eyes open, a responsibility", "comfortable, relaxing",

“challenge of doing the moves”, “head cabbaging”. The group discuss the exercise in a circle for about ten minutes, discussing behaviour, trust, misplaced loyalty leading to distrust. This was led by a participant explaining his own experience. Both examples discussed were of harm resulting from trusting someone in personal relations, either friends or partners. A facilitator asked about ‘the other side of the coin’. The conversation continues about trust in personal relationships with women ... (Prison group)

The intimacy and trust produced by the combination of touch and movement within a secure holding environment which includes other people as much as the surroundings) (Winnicott, 1965), creates the conditions for self-revelation and reflection, even in this unlikely setting. We noticed that the most mature and relaxed reflective episodes always followed calm, flowing, controlled, movement which appeared to perform an integrative function. The movement from a sense of fragmentation to integration was important. Bloom affirms the value of ‘unintegration’ which has its moment in the dance movement process: “the parts are allowed the freedom of release into a trusting but unknown relationship with the environment” (2006, 62). The discovery that the environment can be trusted provides the containment that enables them to be re-integrated. The world is experienced momentarily as benign and accommodating rather than impinging on the liberty of the subject.

Indicative outcomes for participants

- The range of strategies for engaging participants ensured that even the most inhibited could find a mode of self-expression and contribute to the group
- Everybody found something they could do and something that stretched them
- Movement led to quality discussion and made the theatre work more dynamic
- Participants found ways to re-claim parts of self that felt fragmented and ‘split off’.
- Participants experienced the integrative power of an environment that can be trusted.

Challenge

Tolerating Frustration

Challenge refers to the process often encountered in learning situations of frustration, embarrassment and realisation of personal limitations. Among some of the participants in the workshops tolerance of frustration was very low and attainment in formal education had suffered accordingly. The aim of the facilitators is to enable participants to move to a position where they can remain ‘on task’, try things out and work with imperfect outcomes. If they can gain the satisfaction of achievement in some parts of the learning process they are more likely to be able to accommodate or overcome their limitations in others.

Graduated Difficulty and Structure

Challenge represents the nexus of what a participant brings to a workshop and what the workshop involves the participants in doing. This process is carefully managed, or 'scaffolded' by informal workshop structures established at the beginning. These are a set of rules for behaviour suggested and agreed upon by participants, and a framing of the workshop's demands in terms of 'comfort, learning and panic zones'. Combined, these provide the participants with clear and shared expectations at the beginning of the workshop that can be referred back to whenever needed. This gives participants a degree of agency in relation to the workshop from the outset. It also establishes that some things will feel familiar and enjoyable whilst others may be strange and difficult. Learning occurs in the intermediate 'stretch' zone between the two.

Modelling the learner role and leading by example

A noteworthy aspect of the workshop model is the way in which facilitators take part in all the exercises, admitting when they are out of their own comfort zones and contributing to the reflective episodes. The fact that some come from a theatre background and some from dance means that they there are always some skills which they themselves are learning. In this way they model the learner role and the necessity and benefits of *struggling* with the material. In addition, using different facilitators to lead exercises and provide instructions, demonstrates the teamwork the workshop aims to establish and develop in the participants. In this way and others, such as how facilitators speak to one another and respond to comments, the facilitators are successfully modelling the behaviours they wish to encourage. Whilst the workshop is ostensibly about teaching movement and acting for performance (the 'intersubjective third object' of this workshop), the workshop actively encourages teamwork, mutual respect, playfulness and self-reflection. All the facilitators model these behaviours.

Challenge from the participants

The prisoners and young people come to the workshops with troubled histories although these are only explicitly brought into the frame as and when they choose to do so in one of the reflective episodes, or as the basis of a dramatic scene. Nevertheless, their relationships can be turbulent, and this inevitably affects the dynamics of the group. In both the secure unit and the care home there were tensions and antagonisms between participants which facilitators had to contain. The short time frame and small participant numbers of the workshops also heightened the facilitators' desire to resolve or adapt to these conflicts so that the workshops could still progress.

In the care home group there were three participants. One of the residents had recently left the small home and this had caused upset and a change in the small group dynamics. One of the participants, 'D' had only been living at the home for 4 weeks and was inclined to be provocative and resistant to participation:

Asked what they wanted from the week S. said 'food' and M. said, 'to be outside'. As the project unfolded it really did become plausible to read these statements as a bid for nurturance and a more socially expansive environment. D. still looked fairly sullen and I thought at first she would refuse to answer. Then she resorted to shock tactics, with a sexually explicit comment. We had been warned by a member of staff that she was likely to use very sexualised language ("she needs to be able to be a child") and she did seem very young and vulnerable with this attempt to shock. Odd/Chameleon reacted without consternation - or even surprise - and the session moved on in the pacey and positive way that is their trademark style. (Care home group)

The key to the success of the workshop is the reaction and response of the facilitators to discord or refusal to participate. These provide opportunities to demonstrate the principles of the workshop informed by the restorative, trauma-informed and non-violent communication approaches. For example, in the care home group one participant swore and shouted after the 'Danger and Shield' exercise, which involves discussing dangerous and disruptive behaviours and the protective factors which 'shield' or keep participants safe from these. Part of this discussion 'triggered' a participant.

There followed a group discussion on her ability to express herself, which then led to the group exploring the issue through dance movement. Once participants had been reassured that the facilitators would listen when they refused to participate, they then relaxed and really engaged in the activity. They were also offered the choice of working in a different room so as not to be affected by other peoples' scenes. When two members of the care home group had an argument on the morning of the final day of the workshop one facilitator worked individually with one participant to ensure that they were still able to contribute to the final performance. The facilitators maintained a consistent and caring approach to all participants based on non-judgemental observation, dialogue, empathy, encouragement and flexibility in delivery.

Indicative outcomes for participants

- Tolerating frustration in order to learn
- Familiarity with the idea of comfort, learning and stretch zones as moments in the learning process
- Understanding that everyone struggles with something
- Appreciation that respecting a structure confers agency
- Engaging in dialogue and self-expression to find ways to continue participating in the workshop

Performance

Working towards a final performance was important in all three groups and pulling it off made their cumulative learning visible as much to themselves as to their audience. Achieving a credible final performance in such a short time frame involves several experiences of 'mini-performance' throughout the workshop. As mentioned previously these are key staging posts in the process of acting differently, both in the literal theatrical sense and the fundamental everyday sense which the programme aims to achieve. Each mini-performance, and its discussion, is an embodied reflection of the issues and behavioural choices it contains.

Typically, the final performance involved the construction of a few scenes, the contents of which arose out of the movement exercises and reflective discussions over the preceding days. The discussions themselves were made possible through the dance movement and were then embodied in the scenes - anger, frustration or aggression were depicted in several different scenarios followed by a consequence or resolution, such as the physical representation of trust. Producing the scenes demanded both emotional and theatrical literacy and also heightened the maturity of the reflective discussion bringing in both personal emotions and ethical considerations. They were produced in collaboration with the facilitators, which is consistent with the co-produced content of the entire workshop:

Y (facilitator from CC) with X (facilitator from OA) stage a cyberbullying scene – Y as the bully and X on her laptop at the receiving end. Y is enjoying himself – she is crumpling and eventually distraught as the messages she is reading on screen become progressively nastier. M and O (participants) circle as the taunting inner voices “You’re useless”, “nobody respects you” - they begin to elaborate on these moves relaxing into the roles and their vocabularies enlarge. In the sequel Y, now trying to deflect his own feelings of inadequacy, puffs, struts and hits out with simulated aggression at his imagined persecutors. He overreacts to a brush from a passer-by (E). She slaps him and he retreats in terror at her reaction. The self-aggrandising is a funny and pathetic portrayal of an insecurity that has its roots in his own cruelty and that of others, leading to a violent encounter that neither party sought. It is very good material for discussion and all the participants see the emotional and behavioural pitfalls that lead Y to back off behind a chair. They then segue effortlessly in a change of mood to ‘rescue’ Y as each character approaches with compassion, collectively lifting off the chair under which he has immured himself. The sequence flows into the dance routine constructed from elements practised on day one. They have enacted in movement and gesture a scenario of full of aggression, insecurity and dysfunctional response that is very recognisable to them and shown there is a way out with the help of others. The dance celebrates this discovery. (Secure Unit)

In this scene we witness an extended enactment of fragility and human motivation and - momentarily at least, an embodied 'language' of moral growth.

Co-operation in a common task

The knowledge that the outcome of their collective efforts would be on display to an audience helped the groups to focus even where there were tensions between participants that could have distracted them from their task. Not only did this demand cooperation it also meant that what they were doing had to be intelligible to others. The participants in the prison relished the devising and the opportunity to translate the work they had done in the reflective exercises into action.

The participants are working together in small teams and listening to one another's suggestions. One other facilitator talks at length to a staff member and explains the rationale for the exercise. Communication, co-operation and awareness of one's self and others are all being practised. Fifteen minutes later each group performs its emotion scene to the rest of the group and the audience are asked to name the emotions. The first group all demonstrate a more or less equal involvement in their performance, at times all moving in unison. (Prison Group)

Devising a performance

The process of crafting a performance involves the exercise of judgement with regard to both theatrical skills and choreography and choices have to be made. The performances were approached with intense seriousness and patience, a willingness to receive critical feedback from one another and to consider different ways of doing things.

One facilitator explains and demonstrates the difference in bodily posture between off and on stage. Then each group performs their dance and still image to the rest of the group, receiving positive feedback from everyone in the room. One group chooses to collectively represent single feelings, moving together as a single unit, whilst the other group represents different activities and associated emotional responses individually in a montage. (Prison Group).

Integrating skills and experience

A difficulty that had to be surmounted was that performance demanded the integration of varying levels of skill and commitment. The variability of group composition, already referred to above, added an extra layer of complexity. The learning points for the group were partly about making the best of an imperfect situation, and more specifically about adapting roles and narratives to give everybody a chance to play to their strengths.

In the absence of the participant who had to leave the prison, another participant explains to the new participant how to perform the scene, so they are demonstrably engaged and involved in the work. This is no mean feat as the participant who has left was highly involved and the new participant is understandably not as confident or committed given this is the first time they have properly engaged with the work. (Prison group).

Indicative outcomes for participants

- Performing in front of an audience and receiving positive and constructive feedback affirms skills and develops confidence
- The high-risk group activity develops trust in self and fellow performers
- The devising develops choice, judgement and good group communication
- Participants learn inclusivity and respect working with variable skills and experience
- Confidence to try new things is increased

Summary: Programme Processes and Outcomes

Alongside the description and analysis of how this pilot programme was delivered, this evaluation indicates the immediate or short-term effects of the workshop on participants. This can inform a longer-term programme which would aim to deliver sustainable improvements in communication and reductions in violence and other harmful behaviours, as well as contributing to overall wellbeing.

The BROAD programme progressively increases participants' confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. In so doing it directly addresses individual and group modes of thinking and feeling which influence self-harm and violence.

Improving Communication

This develops from:

- devising which develops choice, judgement and good group communication
- working in a group helps overcome inhibition
- reflective discussion and dynamic forum theatre supported by movement
- responsiveness to others which is enhanced through feeling at ease with self
- groups experiencing the pleasures of being in tune with one another
- physical space used freely as an expression of mental space
- awareness of other people's personal space demonstrates sensitivity and respect
- learning how to be attentive as well as assertive improves listening skills

Once participants were enjoying the workshop, they were motivated to communicate well with one another to continue enjoying the workshop and produce a good performance. This included verbally explaining and physically demonstrating moves and actions and listening to each other's suggestions.

Increasing Self-Esteem

This develops from:

- performing in front of an audience and receiving positive and constructive feedback affirms skills and develops confidence
- everybody finding something they can do and something that stretches them
- novel and challenging participation without negative judgement which increases confidence to try new things
- the expression of a rounded personality through three-dimensional mobility
- developing inclusivity and respect which allows each to perform and be acclaimed according to their capacity
- learning to tolerate frustration in order to develop
- enabling expansive work in conditions of confinement
- the collaborative approach which is modelled by the facilitators

Improving mental health and overcoming the barriers caused by adversity

Participants experience:

- feeling safe in a space with other people
- the integrative power of a trusted environment
- taking risks in a group which demands trust in self and others
- understanding that everyone struggles with something
- re-claiming parts of the self that feel fragmented and 'split off'.
- the benefits of receptivity

Increasing resilience and wellbeing

This develops from:

- being vulnerable in a group and respecting vulnerability in others
- negotiating the frustrations and frictions of working with others
- sticking to the task in the face of tension and conflict
- experiencing the pleasures of forming and being in a group
- making best use of skills and experience

- transforming space from a barrier to an opportunity
- Being stretched, learning something new, gaining confidence to learn in the process

Reducing the risk of violence and harmful behaviours

- Becoming more self-aware and relieving built-up tension through self-expression in physical activity and discussion
- Learning to listen to others and dispel conflict

Recommendations

During delivery and in discussions after all workshops were completed, we provided constructive feedback to the facilitators.

- Our first recommendation was that as far as possible the facilitators should be the same throughout a workshop series. It became clear that particular relationships formed with facilitators were an important part of the process, and that the facilitators all brought something distinctive to the program. They were therefore no more interchangeable than the young people they were working with.
- Music is a really important element of the workshop because it contributes to the environment of the workshop. The facilitators provided music for the workshop, but participants were also at times able to choose music that they preferred. There was usually a very fluid and accomplished transition between theatre and dance movement. Sometimes the choice of music seemed somewhat random as if it were an expendable component, rather than something that contributed to the aesthetic of the workshop experience. Yet whenever music was played and, especially when it was well chosen in relation to the activities in progress, it had a noticeably 'enlivening' impact and helped participants to enjoy moving together. Judicious pairing of music with dance movement exercises would be beneficial.
- As participants join or leave the group their presence or absence should be acknowledged. Sometimes an absence can have a marked impact and adjustments need to be made.
- The 'Trust Walks' exercise is of enormous importance in the development of individuals and a pivotal moment in group relations. If the participants do not feel

ready for it – perhaps because of inter-personal tensions, thought needs to be given to deferring it until right time.

- The reflective discussions can be important in consolidating and articulating the needs of participants and new learning in the workshops. Facilitators need, if practicable, to make on the spot judgements about how long to let them go on – a little longer when the discussion space is being well-used and features sensitive personal material, shorter when it flags.
- Timings of start and finish are often beyond the facilitator's control, especially in the prison environment. Nevertheless, losing scheduled time in such a short workshop risks compressing the work unduly. In addition, firm time boundaries emphasise the distinctiveness of the workshop space and provide containment. This should be emphasised with staff in the settings concerned when the programme is negotiated.
- A longitudinal study of a longer programme which systematically measures and qualitatively evaluates outcomes for individuals over a minimum of six months, would be highly desirable.

Conclusion

The dance theatre model developed by Odd Arts and Company Chameleon is a strong and innovative intervention, which can engage participants with a range of capabilities and very diverse preferences. It does this because it manages to be both challenging and enjoyable, sensitive to participants needs yet demanding in what it asks of them. This is a programme that based on a well-developed and committed partnership between two organisations that bring their considerable experience into the field of restorative practice. The underpinnings of their work in strengths based and trauma informed approaches are evident in the process of the workshop and the group outcomes for participants. It delivers a great deal in a short space of time and we would like to see a more sustained version, in which individuated responses and the process whereby personal change occurs in response to the programme could be recorded and better understood.

Taken together, as a sum of developmental experiences and effects on participants, the observed outcomes listed above can reduce the risk of violence and other harmful behaviours. The programme works with the connection between violence and harmful behaviour and inhibited or limited communication skills, low self-esteem, poor mental health, and barriers caused by adverse experiences. In these settings, challenging situations, disagreements and

frustrations are part of daily life and produce tensions that are brought into the workshop space. Facilitators use dance-theatre to support pleasing and generative ways of working together to achieve a shared goal. They take opportunities to intervene in arguments and demonstrate relationally aware, non-violent modes of tolerance, negotiation or resolution. This means that participants gain experience of dealing with conflicts non-violently, by locating, enacting and talking about the sources of potential conflict in their feelings and needs. Developing communication, as an alternative to violence is central to the programme's effectiveness. This was evident when conflicts between participants threatened the continuation of the workshop.

Simple but sincere demonstrations of reflective listening and empathy by the facilitators introduce participants to alternative modes of interpersonal interaction while enactment of the dilemmas and conflicts ensures that their reality is acknowledged and represented in aesthetic and symbolic form. This is a vital point as the scenes that are performed and the final performance itself create symbolic 'thirds' allowing participants to stand aside from their personalised tensions with one another (where the dynamic of conflict leads to them positioning themselves as 'doer' and 'done to', or perpetrator and victim). They can observe those emotions in the interactions of the third space of the performance where they can be shared and thought about. The use of theatre as an art form that generates a symbolic third has previously been explored in Odd Arts Forum Theatre work (Froggett et al 2019), and Froggett (2008) has considered more generally the importance of art as intersubjective third in restorative practice. The combination of theatre and dance expands the richness and complexity of the form and offers participants a wider range of expressive potential.

The regular use of performance focusses participants on honing their ability to communicate feelings and experiences through movement, acting and speech. Violence is often the result of intensely felt emotions that cannot be put into words, and this programme provides participants with drama and dance to express those emotions. Participants gain immeasurably in confidence from rehearsing and performing before an audience, and take visible pride and pleasure in their achievement. Feedback from staff in the settings where this programme has been delivered has been universally positive – particularly in recognising that the workshop drew forth abilities that had not previously been recognised.

The substantive content of the workshop – the potentially violent situations that participants dance and act – are provided by the participants, hence the workshop directly addresses situations in which violence has occurred in the past. Previous experiences where violence of various forms has played a part increase the future risk of violence. The facilitators introduce alternative, non-violent means of making sense of these experiences drawing on the various approaches that have shaped the design of the programme.

At a broader level the workshop enables self-expression in a variety of forms. All the exercises, whether they are dance, acting or discussion require participants to express feelings and re-enact experiences, hence building emotional literacy. The workshop provides an extended opportunity to relive and re-evaluate these experiences and how they could be understood and processed.

Limitations of this evaluation

This is a pilot programme to refine and modify a new dance and theatre-based model. Hence the study is formative and small scale. The focus is on process and on the work of the facilitators with the groups and on immediate group-based outcomes, rather than outcomes for individuals. The evaluation aimed to identify opportunities for improvement in programme delivery and explain how the programme achieved its effects on participants. We assessed the effectiveness of the programme in terms of what was observable: facilitator skills in securing engagement, in developing self-expression and communication skills and in responses to conflict and non-participation. When participants told others what they had gained from the workshop these statements were unsolicited and were voluntary expressions that were part of the social interactions of the workshop participants and their audiences.

This is a small qualitative study where participation was entirely voluntary, and the groups were thus formed with people who were in some degree already amenable to dance-theatre. Its findings are indicative and generalisation from them will be theoretical rather than statistical. Its main limitation is the lack of longer-term follow up of outcomes for participants. Any future evaluation would ideally include pre- and post- intervention assessments of participants incorporating indicators of self-esteem and mental health.

Ethical review

In line with the University of Central Lancashire's research governance procedures, an ethical review was carried out and approval granted by the PSYSOC Ethics Committee.

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Appendix: Methodology

The evaluation was delivered by the Psychosocial Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire. Psychosocial research combines a focus on the individual with an understanding of social setting and the wider environment. It has at its disposal an array of methods to understand the dynamics of social interaction and the emotional and cognitive transactions between individuals and within groups, including those that are not articulated and often beneath awareness. The overall aim of the evaluation was to improve the design and delivery of the sessions. The evaluation was both formative and summative, and used an action research approach based on detailed ethnographic observations of sessions, followed immediately by process recording. Several of Donald Winnicott's concepts: transitional and potential space, and a secure holding environment, are employed to further extend interpretations of the facilitator-participant relationship in its physical context. The research questions of the evaluation were:

- How is the programme delivery established and sustained through challenging moments?
- What are the conditions in which insight, emotional engagement and reflective capacity are achieved, and where are they limited?
- Which behaviours and activities best facilitate engagement with the programme by the participants?

Action research framework

Formative evaluation was combined with iterative feedback and review with Odd Arts/Company Chameleon, who implemented changes in the course of the programme. Feedback and recommendations were evolved in dialogue and formal feedback meetings, so that staff could refine the model and its impact. While conducting sessions facilitators had to think on their feet, innovate and adapt to unanticipated material presented by participants. The research offered an opportunity for them to articulate what they were doing and why and to reflect on particular strategies and on the psychosocial processes that unfolded during each session.

Observations, process recordings, on-going feedback

Our primary method was non-participatory observation through a psychosocial lens (Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 2002), although we joined in exercises occasionally if invited, in order to naturalise our presence.

In the course of attendance in the workshop we engaged continually in dialogue with the facilitators and at times with staff from the facility who were also present. This enabled us to check their perceptions of progress and to feed in observations, to understand where they felt there were points of resistance and hence to understand their decision-making in real-time regarding choice and timing of exercises. This was important not only as action research because facilitators were often working emergently adapting to the needs of the group.

Reflexivity

The research team consisted of one woman and one man, with academic and professional backgrounds that included Psychosocial studies, Arts and humanities, Sociology, Social work and Cultural studies. Our diverse disciplinary lenses implied different understandings of risk, responsibility and repair. Diversity of response was recorded and compared in the analysis, which was conducted in dialogue.