

# HAMPSHIRE YOUNG CREATIVES: ANDOVER MENCAP & DANCE UP



## The People

Hampshire Young Creatives  
Andover Mencap  
Dance Up (formerly Hampshire Dance)

## The Project

The aim of the project was to improve participants' wellbeing, both physically and mentally, through 10 creative dance sessions 30-45 minutes in length. These sessions were co-delivered by two artists and focused on balance and engagement. The participants were between the ages of 5-16 years old, with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties. The sessions were run as part of an existing after-school club at the centre, run by Mencap.

Due to the nature of the session, the participants could choose whether to join in with the creative dance class or do another activity such as computing or sensory activities, therefore the attendance for some pupils was not regular but others joined in every week. The sessions were mostly 40-45 minutes long, however, on occasion this was shortened to 30-35 minutes – this was due to the mood and level of focus within the group, as some weeks a member of the group could be very disruptive and distract the whole session.

Each session incorporated an introduction in a circle, a fun name game and then cardio-based warm up games. The session then progressed, using props to bring a creative and sensory element to the class and 'travelling' and choreographing was explored. Each element of the class was 5 minutes long as the artists found that shorter exercises were the best way to retain the groups' attention. We aimed to improve participants' concentration, engagement and to improve balance through engaging with a fun creative dance class.

The young people benefited from the use of dance, to channel their energy and improve their concentration and engagement. Through using creativity within a structured dance class environment, the participants were encouraged to express emotion, build social

skills and team building, strengthening their interactive/social skills.

**The group grew to be more committed and take ownership of their creative output, especially when sharing work with their peers.**



## Successes

- The participants often worked in pairs and they verbalised what they liked and disliked about each session, allowing the dance artists to tailor each session to the needs of the group.
- The group grew to be more committed and take ownership of their creative input/output, especially when sharing their partner work amongst their peers – this allowed them to work together to aid in their individual growth and development, which in turn impacted positively on their wellbeing.
- Their physical fitness increased through high energy activities, developing stamina, strength, coordination and balance.
- There was a large number of boys in the group, who said initially that they didn't want to take part in dance, but they were encouraged to try it and found that they actually enjoyed the creative tasks.

## Challenges

- The success of the sessions depended greatly on the mood of the group. There were three participants who were quite volatile emotionally and this had a big impact on the rest of the group.
- The group enjoyed repetition but new work didn't go down so well.
- There was a lot of trial and error in the delivery process itself.
- More support staff were needed in the sessions to manage the more challenging

**In a creative, structured dance environment the group were encouraged to express emotion and strengthen their interactive social skills.**



behaviour of group participants. After the first few weeks, the staff supporting the sessions left to do other things in the centre. There were lots of young volunteer staff present, but they didn't engage with the activities or manage bad behaviour. This environment needed two teachers to run the session and other support staff on hand as well.

**The young people benefited from the use of dance, to channel their energy and improve their concentration and engagement.**

”

## **Suggested improvements for future projects**

- The artists did have a planning meeting with the venue staff and expressed the need for extra support. However, further discussions should have been had to follow this through when the support dwindled.

## **Recommendations for other organisations doing similar projects**

- As an after school club, there needs to be extra support staff that join in.

## **How could the project partners best support this kind of work in the future?**

- For an environment like this, the artists would recommend changing the activity often. The attention span of the group was small and they were only able to engage in an activity for 5 minutes before they became restless.
- A change in artist and creative activity every term would be advisable.

---

## **Credits**

**Taken from: Hampshire Young Creatives Development Programme 2012/13 Report and Recommendations**

Edited by: Laura J. Smith  
Artswork  
laura@artswork.org.uk

[www.artswork.org.uk](http://www.artswork.org.uk)