



Cheshire Dance

Board Report

19th March 2024



Young dancers from The Spotlight Project perform their own original choreography at their performance evening at Winsford youth and Community Centre on 13th February.

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Board Report 19th March 2024

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Key to ACE Outcome Elements

(shown as 'ACE Outcome elements A-R in document)

Creative People

"Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life"

A – supporting people at all stages of their lives to design, develop and increase their participation in high quality creative activities

B – promoting creative opportunities in the local community to people at all stages of their lives

C – providing high quality early years activities that reaches families from a wide range of backgrounds

D – Widening and improving opportunities for children and young people to take part in creative activities inside schools

E – Widening and improving opportunities for children and young people to take part in creative activities outside schools

F – improving teaching for creativity in schools

G – Supporting Children and young people to develop their creative skills and potential

H – Developing and improving pathways towards careers in the creative industries

Cultural Communities

"Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture"

I – Improving access to a full range of cultural opportunities wherever people live

J – Working with communities to better understand and respond to their needs and interests, resulting in increased cultural engagement and the wide range of social benefits it brings

K – Working collaboratively through place-based partnerships to support and involve communities in high quality culture, improve creative and cultural education for children and young people, improve health and wellbeing through creative and cultural activity, build skills and capacity in the cultural sector and grow it's economic impact

L – Connecting people and places, including diaspora communities and nationally and internationally

Cultural Country

"England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international"

M – Supporting new types of creative practice, new forms of cultural content and new ways of reaching new and existing audiences and participants

N – Collaborating with other cultural organisations and/or with the commercial creative industries and/or with further and higher education that focuses on innovation, research and development and training, especially in relation to the use of new technologies
O – Strengthening the international connections of cultural organisations and creative practitioners, including co-production and touring
P – Bringing world class culture to audiences in England
Q – Giving more opportunities to people to start a professional career in the creative industries, especially those who are currently under-represented
R – Ensuring people have opportunities to sustain their careers and fulfil their potential in the creative industries, especially those who are currently under-represented

Key to Cheshire West and Chester Council Priorities

(shown as 'CWaC Priority 1/2/3/4/5' in document)

CWaC Council Priorities 2023:

- 1 Support children and young people to make the best start in life and achieve their full potential.
- 2 Enable more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives.
- 3 Grow our local economy and deliver good jobs with fair wages for our residents.
- 4 Make our neighbourhoods even better places to call home.
- 5 A fairer future: tackling the poverty emergency

1. Creative People

“Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life”

1.a Regular Programme update

ACE Outcome Elements A

CWaC Priority 2

Our regular programme continues to develop with our key partners, responding to local and community need, priorities and participant feedback.

As of January 2024, 21 regular sessions are running across the Cheshire Dance programme of which:

- 7 older adults (inc 1 D2H Crewe supported)
- 3 adult disability
- 3 youth disability
- 5 youth
- 2 adult capoeira
- 1 open adult professionals and mixed community

These are joined by a range of other sessions which we are developing in partnership with organisations such as the Neuromuscular Centre (Winsford), Live! (Chester), Chester Pride and Warrington and Vale Royal College.

1.b Dance and PIMD – Vivo Care Choices Dance Artist in Residence / Wanna Dance? Project

Postcode Lottery - £14k, Marjory Boddy -£5K, Anne Duchess of Westminster Trust - £5k, Vivo Care Choices £5k plus Cheshire Dance in-kind

ACE Outcome Elements A, B, G, E

CWaC Priority 1,2

Wanna Dance Film

The Wanna Dance film continues to create impact and ripples across the dance, social care, disability and education sectors, with it most recently being shared as part of Joanna Grace’s ‘PMLD Conference IV’ (online). Since release the film has had over 3.6K impressions, 760 views and a watch time of 68.4 hours (to Jan ’24).

“The joy elicited by your dance has radiated in a magnificent way from this film. I can no longer count how many people have in the real world, or in a virtual world kind of a way, grasped my arm, given it a squeeze and said how good this film is. It is perfect in so many ways, and an utter utter joy. Thank you for sharing it all with us.”

Joanna Grace, founder of the Sensory Projects and PIMD researcher



"What a powerful and inspiring film about the impact of music and dance!" Conference attendee: Lila Kosyvaki - Autism Centre for Education and Research: Birmingham University

"This is the most exciting thing! I hope this becomes a widespread practice, it is communication at the most fundamental and honest level. Bravo!" Conference attendee: Peter Blaker - adult PMLD specialist teacher

"A beautiful poignant & uplifting film. I can't tell you what as parents this means to us." Lesley Halliwell, Parent

The film can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/geMGLPX4Gks>

Coronation Centre Dance Artist in Residence

Ruth Spencer continues her residency at Coronation Centre and is beginning the second phase of 1:1 sessions with 5 more people who use Vivo Care Choices services at Coronation Centre.

Canal Street and Lightfoot Lodge Dance Artist in Residence

Since January, Jane has been able to return to her weekly residency at Canal Street and Lightfoot Lodge. This means we are able to keep all the dancing partnerships from year 1 going and begin working with one new person.

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership PIMD sub group

Ruth Spencer joined the Cheshire and Wirral partnership PIMD sub group meeting online on 12th October. The group have asked Jane and Ruth to give talk on the Wanna Dance? programme as part of their next meeting on Thursday 13th March 2024.



Craig and Ruth dance together at Coronation Centre (Ellesmere Port)

Northern Chamber Orchestra

Northern Chamber Orchestra have approached us offering a day at Storyhouse with a string quartet! We are in discussions about how this might work and who might like to explore dancing with live music.

Choreographies of Care Symposium: University of Central Lancashire

On the 18th June '24 Wanna Dance? will be part of a symposium exploring how embodied practices support and challenge us as dance artists to care for ourselves, for each other and for those who we work with.

We are also in conversation with **People Dancing** about how we might work together to share this practice in the coming year.

A full update on recent Wanna Dance? Activity can be found here: [WANNA DANCE Feb 24 Update.pdf](#)

1.c Young Producers

ACE Outcome Elements E,G,H

CWaC Priority 1,3

Cheshire Dance Core funded (with additional funds from Without Walls Audience Development TBC)

Cheshire Dance Young Producers have been working hard over recent months designing, planning, commissioning and creating for their Now Northwich programme. They have developed an interactive creative trail for families inspired by nature and connection, *"Follow the route around the town centre, taking part in creative activities as you go. From pop up performances, butterfly making, circus skills and more, there's something for everyone to try or explore."* Keep an eye out on the [Now Northwich](#) website for more info and come along to the festival to complete the trail!

1.d Dance in Education

ACE Outcome Elements D, F, G

CWaC Priority 1

- Our partnership with Edsential continues with several sessions being booked at the Tattenhall Centre for the Spring 2024 term, largely on the theme of 'Earth Summit'
- During creativity week for the schools that are a part of the Fallibroome Trust, we delivered dance workshops on the theme of 'reflection'. We delivered half or full day workshops for Park Lane Special Needs school, Winsford Academy, Over St Johns Primary, Winsford High Street Primary and Marlborough Primary school. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the delivery.

1.e Young Creatives (Formerly Project #2 – Queer Histories)

ACE Outcome Elements A, B, E, G

CWaC Priority 1, 4

Funding from Chester Pride (via UKSPF) of £4.1k

Project partner Chester Pride have been successful in a UKSPF bid and are able to fund the next round of the project with three sessions having already been delivered in 2024, including banner making at Storyhouse as part of Storyhouse Queer, a visit to Cheshire Archives to explore their Queer Histories collection and a craft workshop.

The format of the sessions is shifting towards more open, creative spaces which are process and experience led (rather than requiring an outcome/product).

After discussions with Freelance Project Manager **Connor Elliman**, Lead Artist **Chloe Robinson** and Chester Pride, it has been decided that the best approach moving forward is for Chester Pride to take ownership of the group and integrate it into its developing youth programme. Cheshire Dance will still offer support, training and mentoring to the project and the facilitators, with Chester Pride taking responsibility for fundraising for the group and overseeing the running of it.

1.f The Spotlight Project

ACE Outcome Elements A, B, E, G, H, I

CWaC Priority 1, 4

Funded by Cheshire Community Foundation Improving Outcomes in Deprived Neighbourhoods Fund £15k, Cheshire West Voluntary Action - £3k, Police and crime Commissioner Community Action fund £5k and CWaC Member's Budget £2.1k

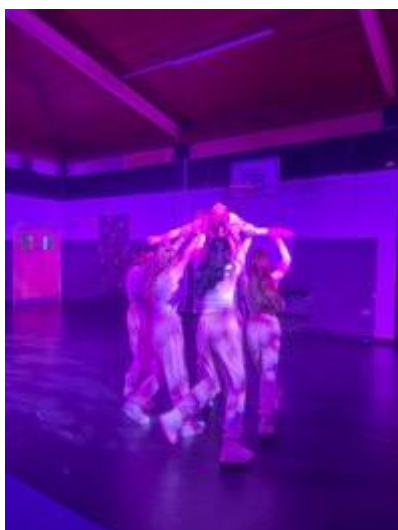
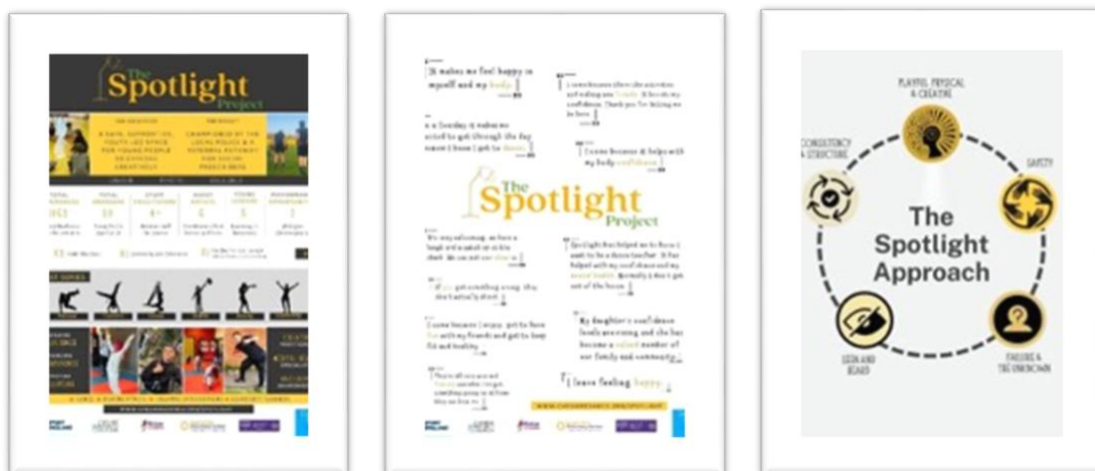
Partnership with Winsford youth and Community Forum (WYCF), Winsford NHS Care Community, Youth Fed and Mind Body Balance Academy.

The Spotlight Project (for 11-18 year olds in Winsford, particularly those experiencing mental health challenges or other barriers to participation) continues to be as important as ever for young people in Winsford.

Winsford youth and Community Forum have been successful in a Million Hours funding bid which includes some support for The Spotlight Project over the next 2 years and they are hoping to match this with another local fund – outcome due in March.

With the Spotlight Project now having run for over a year and nearing the end of some of its funding streams, Cheshire Dance produced some infographics to highlight the success of the project and to provide a visual evaluation report of the initiative.

To view these infographics, please **click on the images** below.



The Spotlight Project Performance and Sharing – 13th Feb 2024

A full house of friends, family and supporters came to watch Spotlight dancers and boxers share their skills and creativity in a special evening at Winsford Youth and Community Forum. Supported by **Rachel Gittins** and **Josie Hepplewhite**, the dancers shared their original choreography which was professionally staged and lit, followed by a boxing demonstration and opportunity to eat, chat and meet with young people and their families/friends. The energy, joy and pride in the room were palpable and the young dancers have now been invited to perform at Cheshire West Voluntary Arts Awards in March.

A reminder that The Spotlight Project film is available to watch [here](#).

2. Cultural Communities

“Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture”

2.a Now Northwich Festival

ACE Outcome Elements I, J,K, L, M, N, O, P, R
CWaC Priority 2, 3, 4

On 10th February, Cheshire Dance announced the return of its Now Northwich International Dance and Street Arts festival (27th April) to the public via a [press release](#). The event was ‘launched’ on Facebook on 14th February. Within a single day of the launch, the Now Northwich Facebook page achieved a reach of 4.5K for this single a 24-hour period.

Conscious that organic reach is plummeting year-on-year on social media in general due to a change in algorithms and as a push for business to spend increasingly more on paid advertising, for the promotional campaign this year Cheshire Dance will be working

very closely with the partners to ensure the message reaches as many people as possible. A budget is in place for paid advertising, but it is hoped that this collaborative approach will also yield results organically (without a hefty spend).

Other actions which will work toward enhancing audience engagement for this year include a 30K print distribution, outdoor signage, extensive promotion across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – particularly within targeted groups as per the Audience Engagement Plan – direct mailers and a number of planned press releases.

Press Release 1: <https://www.northwichguardian.co.uk/news/24106627.now-northwich-returns-kick-off-towns-2024-events-calendar/>

Press release 2: <https://www.northwichguardian.co.uk/news/24145553.now-northwich-dance-arts-festival-calls-volunteers/>

As part of the festival Chester based [Company Carpi](#) have been commissioned to create a showstopping community performance with professional and community dancers and musicians from in and around Northwich and Cheshire West. Their ‘dance-opera’ **“In This Place, Upon This Earth”** will be based on stories about Northwich that are being collected from the people of Northwich, which will be performed at Northwich Plaza and celebrate the creative communities in Cheshire and the rich history of the region.

Community Call out: <https://www.cheshiredance.org/community-dancers/>

Meanwhile the professional programme continues to take shape with a mixture of high quality dance, circus, acrobatics, theatre, aerial, music and more from the UK and Europe... companies and shows to be announced soon! Watch this space and expect the unexpected...



2.b Creative Health Placements with University of Chester Nursing Students

ACE Outcome Elements I, J,K, N

CWaC Priority 2, 3, 4

Between January and April 2024 dance artists Jody Morgan and Bettina Carpi will be delivering 12 'dance and health taster days' as part of the University of Chester's Creative Health placement which involves all 500 first year nursing students across four sites.

Feedback so far from dance artists, students and staff is incredibly positive with students seeing connections between their learning and what dance can offer in a health care setting.

2.b Chester 12 Days of Christmas Parade – 24th November

ACE Outcome Elements K

CWaC Priority 2, 4



As is the tradition around the Christmas period, a group of Cheshire Dance freelancers took part in Chester's 12 Days of Christmas Parade as 'Nine Ladies Dancing'.

As with every year, it was wonderful to be part of the city's festivities with huge audience numbers stepping out despite the threat of rain to immerse themselves this annual event.

3. Cultural Country

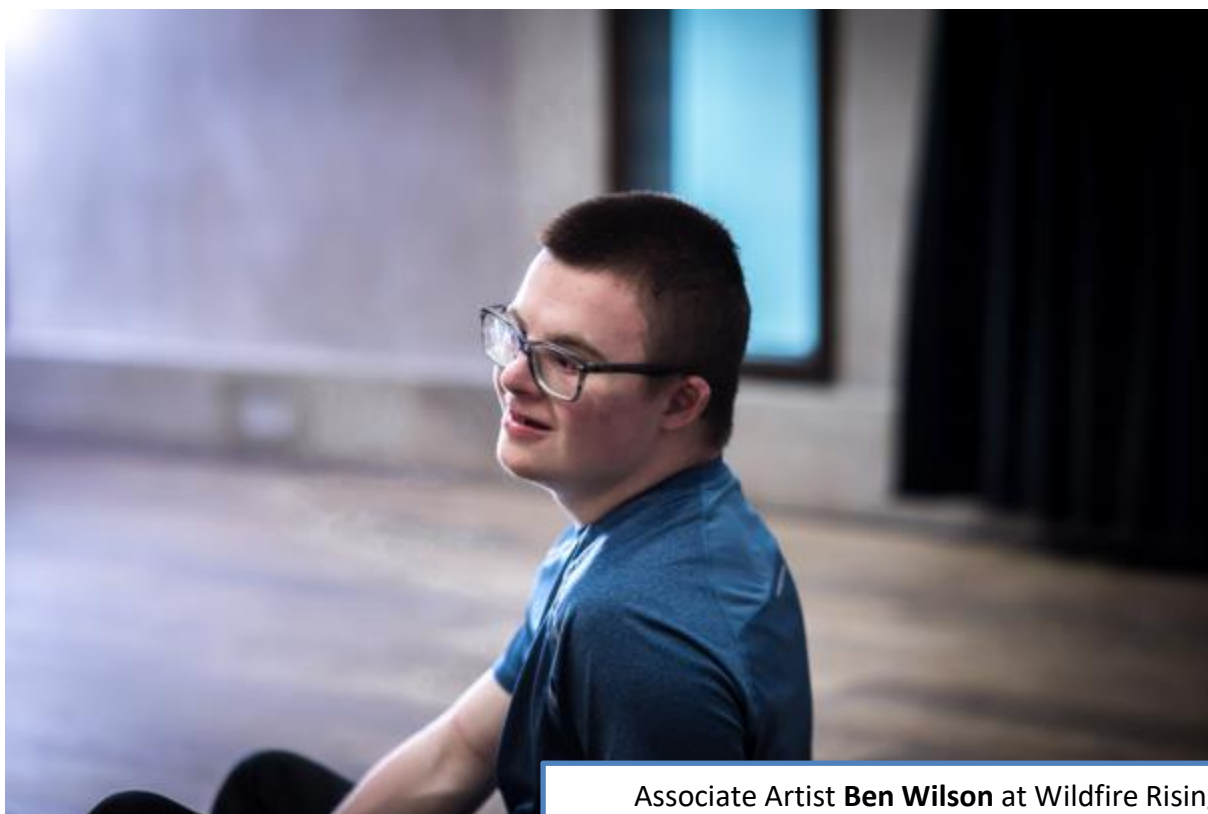
“England’s cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international”

3.a TIN Arts Talent Development

ACE Outcome Elements N,Q,R

CWaC Priority 2, 3

Funded by TIN Arts NPO Talent Development Programme £7.5k + £4k artist budget with in kind support from Cheshire Dance



Associate Artist **Ben Wilson** at Wildfire Rising Artist Development Day. Photo by Tommy Wong.

The Talent Development Programme is a peer-to-peer programme of enquiry with organisations and artists working collaboratively to identify, develop and embed working practices that enable professional Learning Disabled and Autistic dance artists to create and make great art, changing perceptions and inspiring others. The partners are TIN Arts, Yorkshire Dance and Cheshire Dance. At Cheshire Dance our Associate Artist is **Ben Wilson** who has been dancing with DS Winsford for several years.

Ben continues to engage in regular development sessions focusing on hip hop, capoeira and choreography and has been working with artists **Emma Thomas, Josie Hepplewhite, Dina Robinson, Jack Evans, Rafael Braga Araujo and Alex McCarrick.**

Ben is currently choreographing a duet that will be performed at Now Northwich. You can find out more about Ben’s experience so far in our blog with him here:

<https://www.cheshiredance.org/ben-wilson/>

3.b Wildfire Rising – Associate Artist Programme

ACE Outcome Elements M,N,Q,R

CWaC Priority 3

Collaboration with [Movema](#). ACE Project Grant Funded £65k (ACE grant awarded to Movema) with ink kind support from Cheshire Dance

Wildfire Rising year two finished at the end of 2023. Evaluation of the project has resulted in the creation of:

- A short film telling the story of the project in the artists' words. See the film [here](#).
- The creation of infographics to share key reach, information and reflections on the project (see below and read here: [2b WFR Artists and Programme Evaluation infographics and visual minutes.pdf](#))
- The writing of a report by Evaluator **Rachel Gnagniko** of Amiokka which you can read here <https://www.cheshiredance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Wildfire-Rising-Programme-Year-2-Evaluation-compressed.pdf>
- To celebrate the end of Wildfire Rising Year 2, Cheshire Dance and Movema premiered the film and subsequently ran a joint communications campaign to showcase the project, its depth and success. This campaign comprised a direct mail and social media posts across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, resulting in a reach of over 2.5K on social media and an open rate of 45% on the mailer.



(Click on images above to enlarge and view Evaluation of the Programme)

Whilst the Wildfire Rising Associate Artist Programme has now concluded its second year, we are continuing to support the artists, working with them and guiding them to develop themselves and their practise. Suzi has also been spending time with Sheetal Maru, providing ad hoc guidance as well as 1:1 Artist Surgeries to help her raise her profile and increase her digital footprint following her engagement with Wildfire Rising.

Planning has begun with Movema on exploring the next phase of Wildfire Rising and how this might embed the learning deeper into our organisations and engage a larger range of North West dance organisations.

"The project embodied collaborative values by fostering partnerships between organisations and guest participants in dance and movement practices. Each event and gathering adhered to these principles, with meticulous planning, delivery, and review, resulting in remarkable progress between each activity. Accessibility, inclusivity, support and learning opportunities all showed notable improvement, as evidenced by feedback forms completed by participants and assessed by the team after each event.

The lessons gleaned from the programme will benefit future iterations of the programme, as well as inform broader organisational planning. Additionally, they can serve as a valuable resource for key

sector actors, including Dance Consortia North West organisations and the wider dance sector..”

Excerpt from Amiokaa Wildfire Rising Evaluation report written by Rachel Gnagniko December 2023

3.b Inquiring Bodies 2024 - 3rd February 2024



ACE Outcome Elements
M,N,Q,R
CWA C Priority 2, 3
Cheshire Dance in collaboration with University of Chester hosted Inquiring Bodies 2024 with guest artist, [Cai Tomos](#). Cai explored ‘*Ways of Listening*’ with a day of allowing our own inner rhythms to guide us in a creative context; moving between making, resting, being in conversation, and dancing what needed to be danced. As with previous iterations, this Inquiring Bodies was an

event by dance artists for dance artists that created a mutually supportive environment for exploration and open dialogue for experienced dancers/movers. This event was particularly aimed at those with a practice in dance/arts and health and those with desire to engage in dialogue and enquiry into this practice.

In order to ensure that we could hold space for authentic enquiry and exploration, the day was limited to only 20 places - FREE for freelance artists and £25 for those in employment.

Bursaries were available for Cheshire Dance Freelancers to attend with six artists taking these up.

The event was fully booked and feedback from artists reinforced the need for more spaces like these to be created and held to support the development of practice and of communities of artists.

Feedback from artists attending:

“I came away with questions and reflections to bring to my own practice in both facilitating and making work.”

“Thank you for committing to supporting artist development!!! When we’re out in the world trying to make a living it can be so easy to forget about the importance of replenishing/nourishing yourself and your practice!”

“Days like this definitely enrich/inform my practice.”



“These events remind me of the power of connection between people, they help me to centre myself and they offer inspiration that I can take into my own arts practice.”

3.c Knowledge Exchange: Working with Young People – 13th February 2024

ACE Outcome Elements N,Q,R

CWaC Priority 2, 3

On 13th February, Cheshire Dance delivered a Knowledge Exchange Day aimed at practitioners and professionals working in a youth context across dance, sports and the arts. This day was about sharing the learning from Cheshire Dance’s Spotlight Project initiative, which is championed by the local police and is a pathway for Social Prescribers.

The Knowledge Exchange invited practitioners and professionals to come together to explore ‘The Spotlight Approach’ – an initiative that has seen people aged 11-18 take part in Creative Physical Activities for improved mental health and wellbeing. The day explored best practice when working with young people and included an excellent Trauma Aware Arts Practice training led by [Kazzum Arts](#) to develop knowledge, insight and relational capacities when working with participants who have lived experience of trauma.

The afternoon was facilitated by **Josie Hepplewhite** and shared ‘The Spotlight Approach’ – developed throughout the course of the project.

This Knowledge Exchange was free for all participants with 10 people gathering at New Images Youth and Community Centre (home of the Spotlight Project in Winsford).

In addition, the young people from the project delighted attendees with a dance performance at the end of the day. (See page 7).

3.d Support for Freelancers and Artistic Community

ACE Outcome Elements M,Q,R

CWaC Priority 3

Cheshire Dance team members facilitated **20 Artist surgeries** between October and December 2023.

Meanwhile, the following artists received more bespoke support from Cheshire Dance:

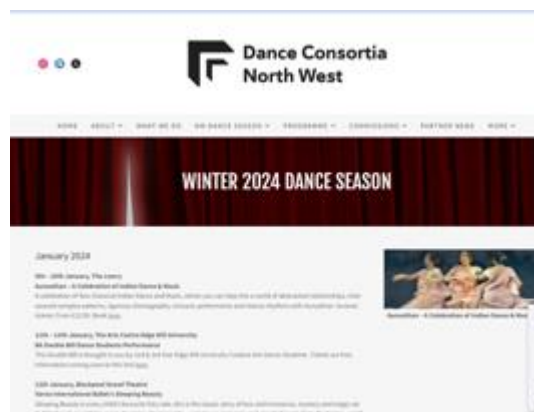
- **Rachel Gittins** – Has been using the studio space to explore working with Carrie-Ann from Mind Body Balance – a collaboration brought about by The Spotlight Project.
- **Penny Collinson and Amy Voris** – support with hosting and promoting their [‘Qualities of Presence’](#) series which emerged and was developed following their collaboration at our Inquiring Bodies event in January 2023. Studio space and Cheshire Dance staff/artist time given in kind for sessions on 28th October 2023, 6th January 2024, 9th March 2024.

3.e DCNW Updates

ACE Outcome Elements M,N, Q, R

CWac Priority 3

DCNW New Dance Season Campaign – 8th January



As with each season, Cheshire Dance/Dance Consortia North West led the region's Winter 2024 Dance Season launch with a communications campaign that encouraged dance lovers to go and see more dance performances at number of venues across the north west.

For the campaign, DCNW hosted a webpage that collated all the performances that were taking place from a variety of artists and companies, showcasing the talent and range of dance on offer in the north west. This was

complemented by two email campaigns and a collaborative social media marketing campaign with GIF across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with DCNW partners all taking part together for one week starting 8th January.

Whilst it is not possible to track the marketing efforts of the partners, Cheshire Dance and DCNW alone achieved the following: 4.2K reach across Cheshire Dance and DCNW social media platforms with 55 individuals and organisations taking part or interacting (NB: this figure does not include their recorded reach so the total will be much, much higher) and direct mailers to 879 recipients that received an open rate of 41%. In addition, there were 261 website views during the first 7 days of the campaign with the [landing page](#) being the most visited page on the site during the campaign period.

Once again, it was fantastic to come together with the partner organisations, working collectively to support each other and the art form.

Research Programme Updates

Round 3 of the Research Programme continues to tick over. 24 Hope Street have now concluded their project and are in evaluation stages and Chad Taylor concluded his project with a [performance and 'process sharing'](#).



Projects by the UCLan Dance artist collective and Mel Brierley / Penny Collinson are still in progress.

In addition to Round 3 and in an effort to continue to support artists and organisations from Rounds 1 and 2, DCNW continues to share any news/updates that are relevant to the wider North West sector. In fact, many now look to DCNW as a vehicle to get their news out and reach greater audiences in the north west and beyond.

More information about the Research Programme can be found at:
<https://danceconsortianorthwest.org/about-research-programme>.

Company Carpi Regional Tour Completed – November 2023



Company Carpi completed its first regional tour with the performance *“When you Light a Candle You Also Cast a Shadow”* – an original DCNW Commission and Research Programme Round One Project Commission.

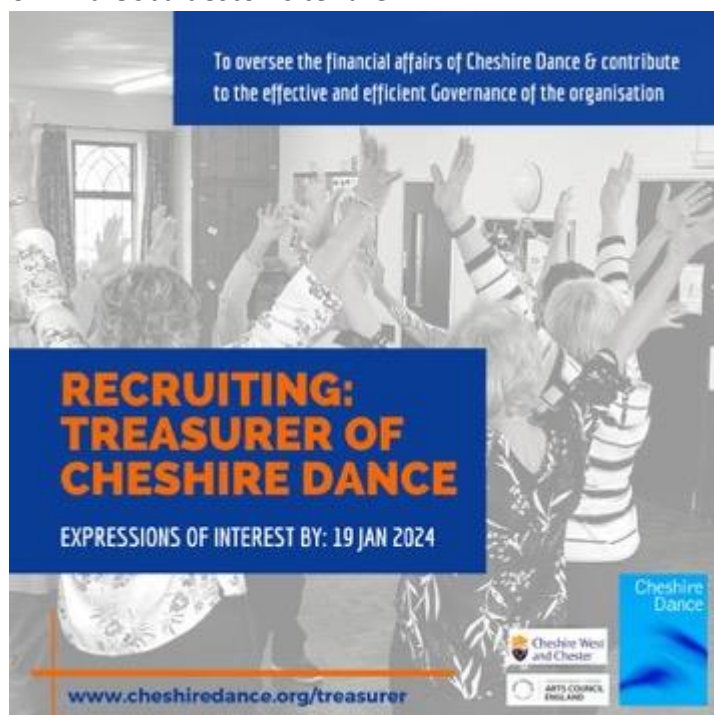
With shows in Chester Cathedral, Whitworth – Manchester, The Crypt Hall – Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, Hale Hall for The Arts Centre Edge Hill University and Pyramid Arts Centre – Warrington, audiences have given overwhelming feedback on the piece that featured a trio

of dancers alongside a string quintet and a specially commissioned poetry cycle by the Costa Award winning writer Mary Talbot. A full evaluation report will be made available soon.

4. Other News

4.a Recruitment: Treasurer of Cheshire Dance – November 2023

November/December saw a recruitment drive to bring on board a new Treasurer following the end of Nina Osbaldeston’s tenure.



To complete our newly refreshed Board, we have been looking for an individual with accountancy and finance experience to oversee the financial affairs of the organisation & to contribute to our effective and efficient Governance. The ideal candidate would be required to share our passion for our work in underrepresented communities and our mission to ensure everyone has access to dance.

A revised [Board Information Pack](#) was created to give a comprehensive overview of Cheshire Dance and the role.

Efforts to recruit included distribution: via E-Digest / Arts Anchor, Charity Job, Reach Volunteering, DCNW Mailing List, LinkedIn, Chain Links, Kinetic (CWVA), RIAC and via

partners, as well as a targeted social media campaign.

We are delighted to share that the call out resulted in **Ros Thomas** being welcomed onto the board during February.