

Evaluation: Connect by Confidence

Carried out by Mary Paterson, 2021



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Executive Summary | 3 |
| 2. Project Summary..... | 5 |
| 3. The Scope of This Evaluation | 6 |
| Methodology | 7 |
| 4. Evaluation Findings..... | 8 |
| 4.1. Direct impact: Inside the session | 8 |
| 4.1.1. How does Confidence engage with participants? | 8 |
| 4.1.2. What do participants gain? | 10 |
| 4.1.3. How does Confidence's work relate to other experiences available to participants? | 12 |
| 4.2. Direct Impact: Confidence's work outside the session | 15 |
| 4.2.1. How have Confidence's digital resources been used by the school?..... | 15 |
| 4.2.2. What kind of relationship building is needed in order to make each project happen? | 16 |
| 4.3.1 How are teachers engaged with the process? | 19 |
| 4.3.1. What is the lasting impact of Confidence's work on schools and participants? | 20 |
| 4.3.2. Where do participants go next? | 21 |
| 4.4. Challenges..... | 23 |
| 5. Conclusion: Mapping Confidence's Work | 24 |
| 5.1. What does Confidence do? | 24 |
| 5.2. What is Confidence's impact? | 24 |
| 5.3. Why does Confidence work? What makes it inclusive? | 25 |
| 6. What Next? | 27 |
| 6.1. Areas for Learning and Development | 27 |
| 6.1.1. Progression opportunities | 27 |
| 6.1.2. Strategic Partnerships | 27 |
| 7. Developing an Evaluation Toolkit | 29 |
| 7.1. Standardising Quantitative Data Collection | 31 |
| 7.2. Standardising Qualitative Data Collection..... | 32 |
| 7.3. Analysing evaluation information | 34 |
| 7.4. The evaluation methodology | 36 |

1. Executive Summary



Image: Dance Workshop led by Confidence at Whitfield Aspen School

Confidence is an inclusive dance not-for-profit organisation based in East Kent that works with people with learning disabilities. The company works across three strands: 'education', 'community' and 'professional.' Their education work is delivered in partnership with schools, their community work is delivered in public contexts, and their professional work is delivered through their professional dance company, ConfiCo.

Confidence defines its practice as 'person-centred and [one that] looks to challenge, support, and identify opportunities for people with learning disabilities by building long-lasting partnerships across sectors.'

In 2020 Confidence received funding from The Royal Opera Bridge trust to formalise its evaluation processes, not only in order to review its current practices but also to develop a model for future continuous evaluations.

The evaluation project's aims were to:

1. explore Confidence's methodology: how the company works, what can be improved, and what makes it inclusive;
2. ask how we can evaluate this type of work effectively and inclusively;
3. communicate about Confidence to the wider dance and art sectors;
4. develop a methodology and set of evaluation tools that Confidence can use in the future.

This report responds to each of the aims above, with the most emphasis being placed on (1) and (4). This research should, in turn, contribute to further discussion to explore aims (2) and (3) in close collaboration with participants, teachers, artists and funders.

This research is focussed on *Connect*: a participatory dance project funded by Arts Council England and led by Confidance in partnership with Creative Folkestone, Whitfield Aspen Primary School and Wyvern School. It is based on observations of Confidance sessions in schools, and conversations with participants, staff and partner organisations during the *Connect* project. It also draws on questionnaires with some members of staff, digital resources produced while in-person visits were not permitted (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and on conversations with members of past participants and their family members. *Connect* was part of Confidance's education programme, but this report uses the project to think about the company's work as a whole. It attempts to find common threads that run through Confidance's practice.

This evaluation strongly suggests that Confidance meets its aims to create work that is inclusive and person-centred. Confidance builds close relationships with participants, engaging people with a wide variety of needs both as individuals and as part of a community. The depth of these relationships and this engagement lead to a range of positive outcomes, with a particular impact on social and emotional wellbeing. Confidance works closely with partner schools to achieve these aims, but also operates as an outside influence, challenging and stretching expectations.

This person-centred approach means that Confidance's work is difficult to generalise: it is flexible in its approach and varied in its impacts. However, there are four key, structuring principles that emerge through Confidance's work:

1. Engagement – Confidance fosters deep and sustained levels of engagement with participants
2. Environment – Confidance adapts in response to the environment (people, places and ideas)
3. Relationships – Confidance builds authentic relationships with individuals and organisations
4. Creative Identity – Confidance is engaged in ongoing artistic research

These principles are interdependent. Working together they lead to a range of positive outcomes that can be as diverse as the different groups of people that Confidance works with, and as specific as each individual. For some participants, an engaging experience is measured in terms of eye contact; for others, the experience of Confidance leads to a qualification. Nevertheless, Confidance is consistent in its person-centred approach, and in its ability to exceed expectations.

Understood in this way, Confidance's work is also highly resilient. *Connect* took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, which presented significant challenges to its progress. However, Confidance was able to address them through the strength of its process – grounded in relationships and trust. Accordingly, the areas this report identifies for learning and development describe ways to develop Confidance's fundamental philosophy, rather than to adjust it. The two areas for learning and development are:

1. Progression Routes – extending progression routes for participants
2. Strategic Partnerships – developing strategic partnerships within the cultural sector

The final part of this report outlines an approach for evaluation, which includes an overview of methodology, a suggestion of tools needed, and an outline of how to build an evaluation process.

Mary Paterson, Independent Evaluator
October 2021

2. Project Summary

‘Connect’ by Confidance, September 2020 – July 2021

Connect was a participatory dance project funded by Arts Council England and led by Confidance in partnership with Creative Folkestone, Whitfield Aspen Primary School (Dover) and Wyvern School (Ashford), which took place during the academic year September 2020 to July 2021.

Connect manifested differently in each school. In each case it a response directly to the schools’ environments, was inspired by public artworks programmed by Creative Folkestone, and adapted in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

Confidance is an inclusive dance not-for-profit organisation led by Jo Frater and Grace Wranosky. *Connect* was a strategic project that expanded Confidance’s education work and linked it with the wider arts sector via the cultural organisation, Creative Folkestone. In line with all of Confidance’s work, its main aim was to ‘challenge, support, and identify opportunities for people with learning disabilities by building long-lasting partnerships across sectors.’

Connect at Whitfield Aspen

Whitfield Aspen School brings together mainstream and Special Educational Needs/ Disabled (SEN/D) pupils from Reception to Year 6, creating a truly inclusive environment with an ethos of ‘learning together.’ In their first formal project with the school, the Confidance team took as their inspiration Rana Begum’s artwork for the Folkestone Triennial, *1054 Arpeggio*: a geometric design painted across 120 beach huts. Confidance worked with teachers and pupils in all classes to choreograph dances that were performed at school, and which were filmed and edited into a single, collective production. Teachers were invited to opt-in to the project, meaning they would receive two visits from Confidance over two consecutive weeks during the summer term, culminating in the performance.

Through *Connect* at Whitfield Aspen School, Confidance worked with 131 students from 8 class groups in workshops, 250 from 18 class groups in performances, and 30 members of staff.

Connect at Wyvern

Wyvern School is a special school for children with severe, profound and complex needs that caters for learners aged 3 to 19 years old. Confidance has been working with Wyvern School for five years. For this project, Confidance was inspired by the ‘plinth’ programme of outdoor arts held by Quarterhouse in Folkestone, where the organisation’s professional dance company of dancers with learning disabilities, ConfiCo, is in residence. ‘Plinth’ is itself inspired by a Banksy artwork in Folkestone that features an empty plinth. Bringing together graffiti, public art and dance, Confidance worked with sixth form pupils to create a graffiti wall at the school and develop a new dance piece together, which was also turned into a film.

Through *Connect* at Wyvern School, Confidance worked with 32 students and 19 members of staff.

Digital Resources

During lockdown, Confidance developed digital films demonstrating how to learn a dance routine. The videos featured members of ConfiCo and were signed in Makaton. They were made available for teachers to use however they saw fit. These digital resources continued while classroom sessions began, too – particularly at Whitfield Aspen school, where Jo and Grace’s work with individual class bubbles was made available to share with the rest of the school. Online, these resources sit alongside documentation of ConfiCo’s work.

3. The Scope of This Evaluation

This evaluation was carried out by an independent evaluator, Mary Paterson, and is broadly qualitative in its approach. The aims of the research are to:

1. Explore Confidance's methodology: how the company works, what can be improved, and what makes it inclusive
2. Ask how we can evaluate this type of work effectively and inclusively
3. Communicate about Confidance to the wider dance and art sectors
4. Develop a methodology and set of evaluation tools that Confidance can use in the future

This research looks at the impact Confidance has on participants (students at each school), partner organisations (the schools, Creative Folkestone) and other stakeholders (including participants' carers and teachers). Rather than measure Confidance's work against predicted outcomes, this research is a broad scoping exercise that aims to map Confidance's work and provide the basis for future monitoring and evaluation. It uses *Connect* as a case study to think about the company's work as a whole.

Following initial observations at the schools and conversations with Confidance, I refined the initial evaluation aims into research questions that seek to explore Confidance's impact both directly (in which the company is *actively engaged* with students, partners and stakeholders) and indirectly (in which the company is not actively engaged with, but still *has an influence on*, students, partners and stakeholders).

Research questions:

Direct Impact: Confidance's work inside the session

- How does Confidance engage with participants? How do participants engage with Confidance? How does Confidance respond to participants' needs?
- What do participants gain from the experience?
- How does Confidance's work relate to other experiences available to participants (what is the same/ what is different/ what connects/ what contrasts?)

Direct Impact: Confidance's work outside the session

- How have Confidance's digital resources been used by the school?
- What kind of relationship building is needed in order to make each project happen? How does Confidance interact with the culture of the school/ the wider art community?

Indirect Impact: Confidance's influence and legacy (what happens when Confidance is not there?)

- How are teachers engaged with the process?
- How does Confidance's work inspire or engage with teacher-led learning? What is the lasting impact of Confidance's work on participants/ teachers/ schools? Where do participants go next/ What are the progression routes?

(For a detailed breakdown of the research framework, please see Appendix I, evaluation framework – June 2021)

Methodology

I visited each school at the start of the summer term, observing multiple sessions at each visit. I spoke informally to class teachers, teaching assistants and the senior leadership teams at each school, as well as to the Confidence team. I visited Wyvern School for a second time at the end of the summer term and held more targeted conversations with staff and pupils. I also conducted interviews online with staff at both schools and, where I was not able to speak directly to staff, collected feedback via questionnaires. I spoke to two former students at Wyvern School, who are now members of Confidence's professional dance company, ConfiCo. Finally, I spoke to the Head of Performing Arts and Learning at Folkestone Triennial.

Table of methods used, when and where

| | Observations | Interviews | Questionnaires |
|--|--|---|---|
| Participants (students) | Whitfield Aspen School, May 2021 Wyvern School, May and July 2021 | Wyvern School, July 2021 ConfiCo dancers, July 2021 | |
| Partner organisations (schools, Create Folkestone) | Whitfield Aspen School, May 2021 Wyvern School, May and July 2021 | Whitfield Aspen School, May and July 2021 Wyvern School, May and July 2021 Create Folkestone, August 2021 | Whitfield Aspen School, July 2021 Wyvern School, July 2021 |
| Stakeholders (teachers, parents and carers) | | Whitfield Aspen School, July 2021 Wyvern School, July 2021 ConfiCo dancers' parents, July 2021 | Whitfield Aspen School, July 2021 Wyvern School, July 2021 |

Necessarily, these methods gathered information about more than one research question at a time.

4. Evaluation Findings

4.1. Direct impact: Inside the session



Image: Confidence workshop at Whitfield Aspen School

4.1.1. How does Confidence engage with participants?

Confidence adapts its teaching methods to the contexts in which it works, aiming to be led by participants and their needs. The team uses a range of techniques from 'Embodied Improvisation' (a form of intensive interaction developed by Confidence's founder, Jo Frater), to instructing participants in a choreography that has been designed by the company. Likewise, participants engage in a variety of ways: from sensory-based responses to their environments, to learning a sequence of moves, and contributing their own ideas.

The defining principle of Confidence's approach is to adapt to the needs and interests of the individual. Every teacher I spoke to commented on the fact that Confidence tailors its programme to individual participants. Furthermore, all teachers said that Confidence's approach results in participants having high levels of engagement over a long period of time.

Whitfield Aspen

Teachers at Whitfield Aspen school said that engagement levels were unusually high amongst their learners during *Connect*. In line with their students' diverse needs, this engagement happened in different ways for different people. For example, Confidence used Embodied Improvisation techniques with younger children (see Case Study 1, below), and a more formal workshop format for older children.

One teacher described Embodied Improvisation as, 'a dance approach with intensive interaction', which meant it was closely aligned with the teachers' own practices: 'They were letting the children lead ... that's exactly the kind of thing we [the teachers] were doing.'

Teachers described Confidence's work as person-centred, with participants' engagement at its heart. In one teacher's words: 'What I enjoyed was watching them understand what engagement looks like for some children. One child might just say, "No, I don't want to do that" ... but another child – it might take us half an hour of sensory interventions and lots of propositions to see if they're even looking.'

The teacher continued: 'I think it [works because of] Jo and Grace's understanding of our children. It's not inclusion for inclusion's sake; it is really meaningful.'

Connect did not only engage children with disabilities. One teacher reported surprising levels of engagement from boys in a Year 6, mainstream class. 'There were a lot of 10-year-old boys who said things like, "I don't want to do that, it's girly." And then [afterwards] they said, "it was amazing! I love it!"' This was very important for the school, whose core aim was to create an atmosphere of inclusion across its whole community.

Wyvern School

At Wyvern School, Confidence worked with every member of the sixth form over the entire timeframe, ensuring everyone could join in on their own terms. 'Over a year,' said their teacher, 'the whole class has engaged in some aspect of the project ... whether it's dancing or photography, or something else.' One student did not feel comfortable as a dancer or performer but, in dialogue with Confidence and his teachers, developed a role as photographer and documenter of everybody's work. In this way, *Connect* did not just engage people through dance, then, but also through the wider pursuit of creativity. In the words of one teacher at Wyvern School, 'I've been surprised at the scope that they've covered it hasn't just been a simple dance class, it's encompassed everything.' Another said, 'there's something for everyone.'

Students at Wyvern described their route through the project as starting with a trip to Folkestone to see the Banksy artwork, and developing into learning a choreography through in-person sessions. They described being able to feed their own ideas into the choreography, for example by making a move faster or slower, or by developing their own solos and duets.

Students said the classroom sessions were adapted to their needs. One student says he sometimes gets tired, and so he takes a break and comes back to it.

In observations, I saw students engaged continuously throughout each session, with a sense of shared responsibility among the class: if one person was not enjoying themselves, then Jo and Grace adjusted the session so that they were. This combined support of the individual and the group contributed to a calm and safe environment, and was consistent across age groups and abilities.

Case Study 1: Early Years class at Whitfield Aspen School

At Whitfield Aspen School Confidence holds a free-flow session for Early Years learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). To prepare, Confidence has worked with the class teacher to create a multi-sensory environment filled with musical, visual and tactile elements. At the start of the class, children are brought into an outside space decorated with yellow fabric that moves with the breeze. There are different types of material available for them to feel or look at – bubble wrap, parachute material – and they move independently around the space, or are helped to locations (e.g., a mat on the floor) that allow for freedom of movement.

There are many potential barriers to engagement in this context: learners in the class each have different and complex needs, this is the second of only two sessions Confidence has with these children, and many learners missed the first one. Nevertheless, participants are engaged and activated for the entire session - exceeding the class teacher's expectations for individuals and for the group.

'Engagement levels for all the children, that's one of the things that surprised me,' he says, later. 'With one-off situations, sometimes [the learners] can just kind of dip in, say, "I have nothing", and go and find something else to do. But this was real engagement. This was a really good time.'

One boy shows his engagement by moving enthusiastically on a mat, arching his back, reaching for the materials above him and making lots of vocalisations – a reliable signal that he is happy. As the music calms, so does he, showing a clear response to the environment. Another child spends his time walking around the space, touching all the materials and looking at the trees. A third child shows surprising levels of patience and turn-taking during the session. She initiates a game with her teacher, jumping down the steps, holding onto a ring covered in ribbons. When the teacher has to tend to another child, instead of becoming frustrated as she normally does, this child waits patiently for him to return, and then resumes the game.

Jo and Grace work with learners on a one-to-one basis, and also respond to the mood of the class as a whole. When a few children begin to get tired, for instance, Jo and Grace adjust the atmosphere: **'[Confidence] changed the music to [create a] more relaxing time or them to explore more freely, and the ones that want to do that did that, and the ones that just want to chill and have a rest, they did.'**

Engagement during the session – key points

- Confidence engages participants effectively and over a sustained period of time, using a person-centred approach.
- Amongst other methodologies, Confidence uses 'Embodied Improvisation', a form of dance-based intensive interaction devised by the company.
- Confidence's work is informed by a holistic understanding of participants, gained from conversations with teachers as well as interactions with learners.
- Participants' experience of Confidence is that the company both teaches them new skills, and responds to their needs and ideas.

4.1.2. What do participants gain?

Participants in Confidence projects gain a range of practical and social skills and experiences, not only through the dance sessions themselves, but also (where applicable) through other activities that contextualise the project's ideas. For *Connect* these other activities were trips to public artworks in Folkestone, and to see ConfiCo perform.

Practical skills include improvements in movement and working towards wider qualifications like Arts Awards. Social skills include confidence, relationship building, and a sense of being part of the wider community. In all cases, these skills can be aligned by teachers with individual students' learning targets.

Whitfield Aspen School

On an individual level, teachers at Whitfield Aspen School spoke of students gaining a sense of achievement, enjoyment and satisfaction from *Connect*. On a group level, teachers described how their students benefited from a sense of belonging engendered by the project. This included feeling part of a wider artistic community, as well as part of the community of the whole school.

An Early Years class teacher attributed the personal impact of Confidence's work directly to the company's Embodied Improvisation methodology. This approach meant that learners engaged quickly and effectively with the sessions, building a relationship with the Confidence team in which their own experiences were valued. 'I think that gave them [the children] a sense of achievement; everyone was starting in the way that they were, moving in the way that they were.'

Another teacher described how *Connect* helped to bring the outside world into every classroom, at a time when learners had been particularly isolated because of lockdown. 'We can't take everyone to a gallery or anything right now, so we brought it to school. And they [the students] made it, and they painted it, and actually the feedback from the children was surprising. I thought it would be positive, but it surprised me how excited they were about it.'

One teacher was able to take her class to visit the Rana Begum artwork in Folkestone. She used this visit as a way of engaging the class with the rest of their curriculum (see 4.3.1, below), citing engagement as the most important factor in helping her children learn.

All the teachers I spoke to said that *Connect* made it possible for the school to come together as a community. The original project conceived by Confidence and Whitfield Aspen School was intended to celebrate the school's new site, creating a sense of continuity and inclusion across two locations. However, the pandemic delayed the new site opening and placed students in small social 'bubbles' – separating them more than ever before. As a project available to everyone, *Connect* brought the school together in a shared activity, with a shared outcome.

Importantly, this sense of belonging did not arise because *Connect* made dance accessible to the school's students with disabilities. Rather, it was because *Connect* began with these students and created a project based on their interests. One teacher put it like this: instead of 'having something for mainstream kids' that the other children could be included in, *Connect* was inclusive from the start. It focused on engaging individuals in the most appropriate ways, and this meant that it was able to engage everyone in the school.

Wyvern School

Students at Wyvern School also gained a range of social and practical skills through their engagement with Confidence. Fourteen pupils at Wyvern School worked towards a Bronze Arts Award through their work with *Connect*. Students described how they learnt a set choreography as well as developing their own moves. One student says she got better at balancing during *Connect*. All the students I spoke to said they enjoyed Confidence and that it made them feel good. They described their experience as 'outstanding', 'amazing' and 'inspiring.' They placed particular emphasis on confidence and social skills. One student said, 'If somebody else is nervous [about joining in with Confidence] then I can tell them – oh, I was nervous once. But I'm not anymore.'

Teachers were able to link participants' work with Confidence to individual's learning targets: examples of this include communication skills (e.g., communicating with unknown adults – achieved during the visit

to Folkestone), problem solving skills (e.g., following a multi-step instruction – achieved through learning the choreography) and information skills (e.g., accessing information independently – achieved through accessing digital resources.)

Speaking generally, teachers at Wyvern School said that students gained skills in ‘movement’, ‘confidence’, ‘team building’, ‘social skills’ and ‘friendship’ through learning a routine, practising it with others, and performing to their peers.

Teachers emphasised the role that *Connect* played in supporting the students’ transition to life after school: either by developing soft skills like confidence, or by opening up specific opportunities for employment and further training. (see 4.3.3 below).

What participants gain – Key Points

- Participants gain a range of practical and emotional skills through direct engagement with Confidence, including movement, choreography, team working, confidence and social skills.
- Participants’ work with Confidence can be linked directly to more formal learning outcomes, including individual learning targets and Arts Awards.
- Participants gain as individuals, for example by learning new skills, and as members of their communities, for example by feeling a greater sense of belonging.

Case Study 2: Sixth Form student at Wyvern School

A is a sixth form student who has been inspired by Confidence and ConfiCo. Although she appears confident and chatty, A describes herself as nervous, and says that working with Confidence helps her to feel more relaxed: **‘I can be quite shy when I meet new people so it can be very hard to show people my work. To do Confidence means a lot to me.’**

A spends her free time at school looking at old videos of ConfiCo, inspired by their progress over time. She recalls with pride a performance she was involved in at Quarterhouse in Folkestone, which took place just before a performance by ConfiCo.

‘There’s that time where you freeze up,’ she says, describing how it feels to perform, **‘when people stare at you too much. But when you see other people performing you can see by their expressions: how they’re having fun or they’re not so nervous. It’s that common feeling.’**

Working with Confidence helps A to share her feelings with other people, and to know she is not alone. **‘When it starts, I feel like I can just go with the flow. No matter however many times you fall. The most important thing is to have fun.’**

As a process, working with Confidence helps E to feel like she can express herself and connect with other people. **‘I can be compassionate with the dancing.’**

4.1.3. How does Confidence’s work relate to other experiences available to participants?

Both schools involved in *Connect* already had a strong focus on arts and inclusion, which created a base from which Confidence could thrive. However, because *Connect* took place during the pandemic, it was one of very few artistic activities available to these students at the time. Confidence was able to navigate the logistical challenges of the pandemic, and to accommodate the impact this fast-moving situation had on learners’ experiences and opportunities.

(The relationships and environment that support Confidence’s practice in face to face sessions are further explored in section 4.2.2, below.)

Whitfield Aspen

Whitfield Aspen School places a high value on creativity. In the words of one of the School Governors, it aims to 'foster a whole-school culture linked by creativity as opposed to a corporate identity'. Art activities make it possible for everyone to engage, and therefore develop what they have in common.

Connect was Whitfield Aspen's 'whole-school project' for the academic year 2020-21, led by Toni Burns and supported by the head teacher, Jason Cook. Although it had to be adapted to meet pandemic guidelines on social distancing, it still achieved this global aim of engagement across the school community. Confidence worked with 26 classes individually, rather than multiple groups at a time, and brought their performances together in film instead of a live show. Individual teachers were able to tailor the project to their class's needs, and it was integrated into the curriculum in a variety of way.

Wyvern School

Wyvern School is a Platinum Arts Mark school and is hoping to become the first Special Educational Needs school to achieve Platinum Arts Mark status twice in a row. The head teacher, John Somers, describes art as vital to all learning because it is a gateway to engagement. He also values art for its own sake, and describes bringing it into the school as 'a moral purpose.' The assistant head teacher, Jenn Lord, co-ordinates the art programme and has been working with Confidence for five years. Wyvern School also works regularly with The Primary Shakespeare Company, a theatre company that creates immersive productions of Shakespeare plays in school environments, and Confidence is involved in these productions too. Both companies were able to work with Wyvern during the academic year 2020-21.

Students could not think of any other art clubs or projects that they were involved in, apart from Confidence. (Students do not differentiate between Confidence-led projects and working with the company within a Primary Shakespeare production.)

The Wider Context – Key Points

- Confidence thrives in partnership with schools that value art as an intrinsic good
- Confidence was one of a limited number of arts activities available to its participants during the academic year 2020-21, which was subject to severe Covid restrictions

4.1.4. Conclusion: Direct Impact – inside the session: what does Confidence do, and why does it work?

Confidence works directly with young people of all ages – from Early Years learners who are three years old to school leavers who are 18+. The company adopts a wide range of models of engagement including Embodied Improvisation, a technique devised by Confidence's founder, Jo Frater. The common thread that runs through all Confidence's work is a commitment to a person-centred approach: ensuring that participants' needs and desires lead the creativity and direction of class-based workshops. How this happens is different in different contexts – for young children it might mean Confidence is literally following their movements, for older children it might mean Confidence creates a framework to which students can contribute ideas – but the philosophy remains the same. The result is that participants are actively engaged for sustained periods of time.

This high level of engagement, in turn, means that, Confidence has a wide range of positive social, emotional, and practical impacts on participants, as individuals and as members of a community. Participants develop skills and confidence in team building, friendship, and communication skills. Their work with Confidence contributes to a sense of belonging across a school or wider community, by linking different people together through dance and creative ideas. And Confidence's work supports

participants' practical and educational goals, including individual learning targets and qualifications like Arts Awards.

This evaluation took place during the academic year 2020-21 which was subject to severe Covid-restrictions. Arts provision for young people with disabilities was limited but, working closely with supportive schools, Confidance was able to adapt its programmes in line with external pressures without compromising on its person-centred approach.

4.2. Direct Impact: Confidence's work outside the session



Image: students from Wyvern School talking to ConfiCo after a performance

4.2.1. How have Confidence's digital resources been used by the school?

Confidence created digital resources for *Connect*, in part to respond to lockdown restrictions. These videos showed ConfiCo performing a dance, and invited viewers to learn the choreography. Confidence also has a range of other digital resources online, including films of past performances by ConfiCo.

Teachers used digital resources at their own discretion. Those that did use them found they were accessible and engaging to their students, and supported teacher-led learning. The videos introduced students to Jo and Grace, fostering a degree of familiarity before the classroom sessions were able to go ahead.

Whitfield Aspen School

For one teacher, whose class was not able to meet Jo and Grace in person even when the school reopened (because of behavioural issues caused by lockdown), the digital resources produced by Confidence were essential. The teacher reproduced Confidence's sessions within her classroom, using these resources as both materials (e.g., music) and inspiration (seeing other school classes perform). 'I was using music from Jo and Grace,' she explained, 'We were using videos and looking at footage of the classes. Every week there was a workshop that was made available, so I could say – "I really want to see what Chameleons [another class] did last week!" ... [My class] has been excited to see what [other students] have been doing.'

Importantly, this teacher said that she was able to use the resources so effectively because she had first-hand experience of live Confidence workshops: 'I've been to their sessions so I could see what I wanted to take from it ...'; she passed this knowledge on to her colleagues, '...and bring that to other teachers who hadn't been to sessions.'

Wyvern School

Teachers described the digital resources produced during lockdown as an important way for students to stay connected with Confidence. One teacher described how a student found the videos particularly useful, as he could rewind them in order to follow multi-step instructions – a skill he finds difficult in the classroom. This also made him feel more able to join in with classroom sessions.

Students enjoyed watching ConfiCo perform in the videos, and one student also described how she watches old ConfiCo videos online whenever she can. She finds their work relatable and inspiring.

Summary - digital resources

- Confidence's digital resources are accessible and engaging.
- Confidence's digital resources support teacher-led learning and, where appropriate, independent research. They complement and supplement the live workshops, but do not replace them.

4.2.2. What kind of relationship building is needed in order to make each project happen?

Both schools involved in *Connect* already had a strong culture of art and creativity, stemming directly from the senior leadership team and championed by at least one key contact within each school. Most class teachers involved in this project also had a personal background in art or drama. As a result, each school provided a supportive base for Confidence's work, welcoming the company's artistic expertise. Confidence built on this trust to develop close relationships with each school, both to integrate their project into the school culture, and to understand more about individual learners.

The company worked first with key contacts and then with class teachers to understand the ethos of the school, to value and incorporate staff expertise, and to offer specific support to staff where it was needed. Class teachers were encouraged to opt in to the project on their own terms, and many incorporated *Connect* into their wider curriculum. These strong relationships were crucial during the pandemic year which created an ever-changing set of restraints, and had profound practical and emotional effects on school communities.

Confidence's relationship with Creative Folkestone was a strategic one, developed to provide a channel for participants to connect to the wider cultural scene, and vice versa.

Whitfield Aspen School

Whitfield Aspen has a long-held commitment to creative projects as a model and method of inclusion across the school. The lead for *Connect* was Toni Burns, a nursery teacher who also has a background as an artist. She championed *Connect* to the governors and the senior leadership team by describing different routes for engagement.

Connect was Confidence's first project at Whitfield Aspen School, and so relationships with staff were not yet developed. Confidence paid particular attention to these relationships and to the needs of staff, in one case creating a series of sessions focused on staff wellbeing (see Case Study 3, below).

All teachers commented on how flexible and positive Confidence was, even when plans had to be changed. 'Our original vision was something very different to what we've created,' said Burns, 'I think that's a credit to Confidence – they were constantly responding to us, to what we need, and what our children need.'

Wyvern School

Wyvern School has been working with Confidance for five years. Its arts programmes are led by Jenn Lord, Assistant Head, and Confidance is one of a number of companies with ongoing relationships with the school. Lord, who has a background in teaching English and Drama, invites artists to be creative and autonomous. 'I bring in artists and do the organising,' she said, 'and then I let them do their own thing.' She says that art projects often have surprising results, and teachers can never predict which students will engage and how. This creates an atmosphere in the school of trust for artists' process and their expertise.

At Wyvern, *Connect* developed through ongoing conversations with the school and three sixth form teachers. During the project, these conversations continued. Confidance met regularly with the sixth form teachers to talk about students' progress with *Connect* and in the wider context: other activities the students had been enjoying, any difficulties they were having, and how *Connect* could support their individual learning targets. For example, some of their students found transitions hard, and the transition back to school (after lockdowns) alongside the looming transition out of school (for some sixth formers) was creating an atmosphere of anxiety. Confidance adjusted their plans in response, running classroom sessions on a drop-in basis, so students could feel relaxed about joining in.

This personal and individualised approach meant that Confidance developed a holistic understanding of the learners, and an effective partnership with the schools. One teacher said, 'When we've had sessions, we've developed it together. They've put their expertise forward, we've put the knowledge of the children, and together it has worked really well.' Another teacher said simply, 'They [Confidance] listen.'

Teachers also commented on how Confidance respected the time pressures and workload of teaching staff. 'They are really mindful of all the other things that we have to do and the time we have got. They work hard not to give us additional pressures or additional work,' said one teacher. Instead, Confidance worked alongside teachers to meet their shared goals. 'They work next to us and with us, to create something that's for *our* students.'

This partnership working included understanding the parameters and the frameworks in which teachers work. For example, to help meet guidelines on accessing 'culture', Confidance team members gave talks to sixth form students about definitions of culture, including examples of different kinds of cultural activities. This, said the class teacher, 'shows just how dedicated they are, and how they're supporting our curriculum – all areas of it.'

Case study 3: Teachers' Wellbeing at Whitfield Aspen

In spring 2021, Confidance is preparing to work in person at Whitfield Aspen School, following months of lockdowns. But in planning meetings it becomes clear that some staff have been profoundly affected by the pandemic. It is not only students but also staff who need to process the experiences they have had while school has been closed, and to return gently to the school environment.

'When you need to be so intense, so intently focused on a child,' says one teacher, describing the intensive interaction used in the classroom (and which Confidance have incorporated into their methodology), **'... you need to be really ready to connect.'** Responding to this need, and in conversation with the staff, Confidance develop a series of sessions focused on staff members alone, to take place before classroom workshops begin.

Speaking later, on behalf of her colleagues, one teacher said, **'The feedback from the staff was that they found it empowering. They felt they got more from the work with the children** [as a result of the earlier sessions], **because they were ready to start.'**

Creative Folkestone

Teachers at both schools used *Connect* as an opportunity to organise external trips to see public artworks on display in Folkestone, which Confidence introduced as their creative inspiration.

Wyvern School commented specifically on the relationship brokered by Confidence with Creative Folkestone, which made their students feel connected to a wider artistic culture. Teachers hoped this relationship could develop in the future, leading to work experience or job opportunities for their students.

Cheryl Pierce, Head of Performing Arts and Education at Creative Folkestone, said that working with Confidence and ConfiCo helped her organisation to reach its aims for audience development, and to engage with all areas of the community.

Relationship Building – Key Points

- Confidence develops long and deep relationships with teachers and schools, based on shared values and mutual respect, which make it possible for the company to attend to the needs of school staff, as well as participants.
- Confidence works successfully with schools that have a strong commitment to art and creativity
- Through strategic partnerships with cultural organisations, Confidence can build a mutually beneficial bridge between the schools and public space.

4.2.3. Conclusion: Direct Impact – outside the session. How does Confidence work outside the session, and what impact does it have?

Strong partnerships are essential to Confidence's work. The company works successfully with schools that already value art and artists, from the senior leadership down. Within this context, Confidence develops long and deep relationships with teachers and with the culture of its partner schools. These relationships help Confidence to develop a holistic understanding of project participants, and to support teaching staff to engage in Confidence's work. The work Confidence does outside the session, therefore, has a direct impact on the shape of each project – enabling it to respond to its people and its environment at every stage.

Confidence's digital resources are engaging and accessible. Their primary impact is to supplement the company's relationship building, by establishing a personal connection – either directly between students and Confidence (as in the case of Wyvern School) or between teachers, students and Confidence's work (as in the case of Whitfield Aspen School).

By partnering with other cultural organisations, Confidence creates a strategic bridge between specialist environments (e.g., SEN/D schools) and public-facing arts organisations. There is scope for this partnership work to develop, creating more concrete opportunities for collaboration between Confidence's core participants and Confidence's art world peers.

4.3. Indirect Impact: Confidence's influence and legacy



Image: part of the installation created by students at Whitfield Aspen inspired by Connect

4.3.1 How are teachers engaged with the process?

Connect was a methodology rather than a self-defined work of art. The projects that took place at each school were different, taking different creative inspirations and responding to different school environments, students and teachers. Confidence involved teachers directly in the shaping of each project by designing a framework which teachers could engage with, adapt and collaborate on, however they chose. Teachers made a positive choice to opt in to the project on their own terms.

All the teachers I spoke to who worked with Confidence on *Connect* had a personal background in the arts – they were either arts graduates (drama, fine art, English literature), former art teachers, or both. Although it is impossible to draw any conclusions from this without knowing every teacher's background, it suggests that those who take up the offer to work with Confidence already value art and creativity.

Whitfield Aspen School

Teachers at Whitfield Aspen School were working with the engagement curriculum, which meant they could choose to integrate *Connect* into any aspect of their learning plans (see Case Study 4, below). Toni Burns and Confidence prepared a teacher pack outlining the project and the minimum commitment required. Class teachers volunteered to take up the offer, and a total of 8 classes did. Teachers described how they used *Connect* to help their students meet learning targets, either individually or as a class group.

Wyvern School

At Wyvern School, teachers were working with students on a Life Skills Pathway, supporting the transition to adulthood. Having worked in the school for five years, Confidence developed this project through ongoing conversations with staff and students, and it was shaped together.

Case Study 4: KS1 Class at Whitfield Aspen School

A KS1 class has a dance session with Confidence in the Forest School area of the school site. The class has brought their own decorations – geometric shapes made out of cardboard, which are painted and decorated with different colours and tactile materials. They have also brought photos of students standing in front of Rana Begum's *Arpeggio*. In fact, taking her lead from *Connect*, the class teacher has designed a whole-term curriculum inspired by the project – first taking her class to visit Rana Begum's artwork, then using it to explore maths, music, movement, and speech and language.

'Art is a catalyst for other things,' she explains; it is something exciting, from which **'everything else flows.'**

The class has prepared a dance based on the concept and the shapes of *Arpeggio*, which they show to Jo and Grace. Then, they work together to rehearse the choreography that Confidence taught them last week, before repeating it for the camera.

How teachers are engaged – Key Points

- Teachers opt in to work with Confidence and are involved in decisions about how to structure the project for their students.
- Teachers who engage with Confidence's work tend to have a prior interest in the arts

4.3.1. What is the lasting impact of Confidence's work on schools and participants?

Both schools involved in *Connect* were already heavily invested in the arts, valuing art for its inclusivity, its engagement, and even for its intrinsic value. However, teachers at both schools also commented on the specific effectiveness of Confidence's work to break down barriers between people and to bring the school together.

Participants describe Confidence's impact in terms of social and emotional value: building confidence and friendships.

Whitfield Aspen School

At Whitfield Aspen School *Connect* successfully met the school's ongoing aims for inclusion and community. It complemented the school's work, and was the flagship, whole-school project for 2020-21

The impact of Covid-19 meant that the original project planned between Whitfield Aspen School and Confidence could not go ahead. The focus switched from celebrating a new school site to using Confidence to help the school community reconnect with its core values. Toni Burns, the school's lead for *Connect*, said that Confidence exceeded her expectations:

'We were very much focusing on a recovery [curriculum]: re-engagement with school, people, space, culture, music, art. [Confidence] has been a stepping-stone to get back to where we are. And then to go beyond it.'

Wyvern School

Confidence's ongoing work with Wyvern School is both a symbol of the school's commitment to art and creativity, and one of the reasons the factors in shaping that commitment. Reflecting on their five-year relationship with the school, one teacher at Wyvern said 'Confidence has changed everything for us.' She described how Confidence inspired everyone in the school to work together, increased teachers' aspirations, and provided opportunities for some sixth formers that expand all the students' horizons. (see 4.3.2, below)

Jenn Lord, Assistant Head, says that working with Confidence has taught her that teachers cannot predict which students will respond to a particular project, because the breadth of Confidence's projects engage people in so many ways. As a result, she says, she has learnt that 'the adults who work here should not be the [only] decision makers' when it comes to opportunities and activities for their students.

Students said that Confidence felt welcoming and safe during the pandemic: 'Confidence is like a second home.'

Two former students at Wyvern School, who are now members of ConfiCo, also reported how important the company has been to them. One described it as 'my second family'; another said it 'makes me feel happy.' Their parents described how important the group has been to their children's mental health, especially during the pandemic.

Lasting Impact – Key Points

- Confidence has a positive impact on schools, helping them reach and exceed their goals in terms of creativity, inclusion and student development.
- Confidence has a positive impact on participants' mental health, creating a safe, supportive and engaging environment that values them as individuals.

4.3.2. Where do participants go next?

For *Connect* participants at Wyvern School – approaching the end of their school careers - progression routes were an important consideration.

Wyvern School

Teachers at Wyvern School described how Confidence has created career progression routes for students – a number of former Wyvern pupils have joined ConfiCo, and one of the students involved in *Connect* has just accepted a post with the company. These paid, professional opportunities are transformative for the people who are invited to take them up. The example of ConfiCo is also inspiring for other participants, although there is no formal progression route for those not invited to join. Nevertheless, one teacher described how Confidence's work as a whole is about 'expanding people's worlds' – giving them more ideas and options to pursue in later life.

Teachers described the importance for their students of developing an interest and a hobby. When they leave school, many of these students will not have access to regular employment or activities, and so having an interest that they can pursue is important for their mental health. 'Their future looks like accessing day services, social care, going on a picnic, that kind of thing. ... There's not much out there at all, so anything we can do in school to help our students develop an interest in something ... that could be really important for their mental health and wellbeing.'

Students said working with Confidence has inspired them to join similar clubs or activities in the future.

Case study 5: Sixth Form student at Wyvern School, and new ConfiCo member

A few years ago, B was a shy student who was introverted and had some speech and language difficulties. Through her time at Wyvern School, including working regularly with Confidence, B has grown in confidence, and has now been offered a paid job as a member of Confidence's professional dance company, ConfiCo.

Confidence say that B's concentration, her ability to work as a team, and her commitment to dancing are what prompted them to invite her to join the company.

B says she is '**proud**' of her achievements, and, when the appointment was announced at a school celebration, her classmates applauded and told her they were proud of her, too. In the workshop that followed, B seemed to take on an informal leadership role – helping others perform the choreography being taught by Jo and Grace. Her teacher says that the difference in B is marked in '**the kind of options that are open to her now, and how much more confident and articulate she has become.**'

B says that she used to watch ConfiCo perform and feel inspired – she wanted to be just like them. '**Now**', she says, '**I can inspire other people.**'

Where participants go next – Key Points

- Confidence offers paid, professional work to a small number of students, which has a transformative effect on the individual and an inspirational effect on others.
- Confidence's has a lasting impact on participants' mental health by enhancing social skills, widening their ambitions and ideas of what they can do, and helping them develop mental resilience.

4.3.3. Conclusion: Indirect Impact – what happens when Confidence is not there?

Confidence works through relationships. Rather than defining a set of artistic constraints at the outset, the company devises a creative framework with which teachers and students can engage on their own terms. Where this invitation is taken up, it radically widens the impact of Confidence's work – expanding into all areas of a teacher's practice, or a students' imagination.

For teachers, Confidence inspires and enhances their teaching practice. For participants, Confidence's work builds confidence and self-esteem, which supports positive outcomes in the rest of their lives: whether this is into paid employment, or into adult social care environments.

In this way, Confidence has a cultural impact on the people it works with: encouraging people to work in new ways, to sculpt their ambitions, or to develop a personal interest. In order to work, this cultural impact is based on a shared understanding at the outset – a shared belief in the value of art.

4.4. Challenges

Covid presented huge challenges for the schools and for Confidance during this project. Lockdowns prevented Confidance from working within schools for most of the period. When lockdowns ended, limited contact 'bubbles' and social distancing meant that the structure of in-person sessions had to be smaller than planned.

However, these challenges were overcome through dialogue and a flexible and adaptable approach. By producing digital resources, Confidance was able to maintain contact with the schools during lockdowns. And by re-imagining performances as films, they were able to maintain a sense of whole-school inclusion. In fact, teachers cited Confidance's flexibility in this context as an advantage, as it helped to deepen their relationship with the company.

No teachers or students had suggestions for how Confidance's work could be improved.

5. Conclusion: Mapping Confidence's Work



Image: ConfiCo performing in front of Rana Begum's Arpeggio, Folkestone

5.1. What does Confidence do?

Confidence's education programme develops person-centred and participant led dance projects in partnership with schools and other cultural organisations. The company creates work that is engaging, accessible and inclusive, by working closely with individuals and with their communities.

Confidence begins by devising a creative framework, which is the start of a conversation with a partner school. This framework is developed and adapted throughout the project through ongoing conversations, incorporating everybody's knowledge and expertise. For example, Confidence meets regularly with class teachers to discuss individual students' needs and interests, and to support teachers in their wider practices.

Inside the session, Confidence tailors its methods to the context. The methods the team uses include Embodied Improvisation – a form of dance-based intensive interaction, developed by Confidence's founder – as well as more traditional learning techniques like call and response. In a relaxed and friendly environment, Confidence works with participants to explore how their bodies move, and to develop emotional responses to sensory experiences like sound and touch.

Confidence also uses a suite of digital resources – some of which were created specifically for use during lockdown – which support these classroom activities by providing learning resources for teachers, and a point of personal contact for students. These resources are linked to face-to-face sessions, and supplement Confidence's in-person work.

As well as schools, Confidence builds strategic relationships with other cultural organisations, acting as a bridge between schools and the cultural sector.

Confidence's education programme is connected to the company's wider work, not just in the links created between activities, but also in the philosophy it brings to all its projects (see 5.3, below).

5.2. What is Confidence's impact?

Confidence has a positive impact on individual participants' physical, emotional and learning-based skills including (but not limited to) movement, social skills and emotional wellbeing. Because the company attends to individual needs, the direct impact of their work is often very personal – from reaching a personal learning target (like turn taking), to developing friendships and social skills, to getting a job with the company.

Confidence's work has a positive impact on the school as a community, supporting community cohesion and staff wellbeing. It can contribute to formal qualifications and professional development, including Arts Awards/ Arts Mark.

Confidence has a broad, cultural impact: for participants this can mean broadening people's horizons and aspirations; for schools it can mean changing perceptions of students and increasing inclusion across the school.

For the cultural organisations that the company partners with, the main impact of Confidence's work is audience development. However, for partner schools, these relationships with cultural organisations are crucial: they provide a link to the wider world, broadening perceptions and aspirations.

In this way, Confidence's impact can be understood in terms of Emotional and Social outcomes, Learning and Qualifications outcomes, and Further Opportunities, as below:

Table of Confidence's Impact

| For whom? | Emotional and Social | Learning and Qualifications | Further Opportunities |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Participants | Increased self-esteem Increased confidence Developed relationships and social skills | Arts Awards (contributing) Reaching individual learning targets e.g., for movement, turn taking, concentration. | Pursuing personal interests Broadening horizons Work experience/ Paid work |
| School Communities | Community cohesion Staff wellbeing | Arts Mark (contributing) Teacher's professional development | Connections with cultural organisations |
| Cultural Organisations | | | Audience development |

This research considered Confidence's work in three spheres of influence: direct influence inside the session, direct influence through relationships and processes developed outside the session and indirect influence – the legacy and cultural impact of Confidence's work when the team is not there. In practice, these spheres are interrelated. Confidence's impact on participants, schools and other stakeholders operates across all spheres at once, and each sphere complements the others. Relationships developed outside the session support work inside the sessions, for instance; work inside the sessions develops participants' self-esteem which can raise their personal ambitions in myriad ways.

5.3. Why does Confidence work? What makes it inclusive?

Confidence works because it engages deeply and authentically with everyone involved in each project. By placing people at the centre of its processes, Confidence supports individuals and their communities. This includes participants – young people with SEN/D – as well as teachers and support staff. The company's practice is inclusive because it focuses on shared abilities rather than differences. This approach ensures that everyone can take part on their own terms, and also fosters a sense of cohesion and belonging amongst groups.

In this way, Confidence's philosophy is similar to the engagement curriculum: a framework used by schools for people with SEN/D, which underlines the importance of engagement as the basis for all other outcomes. Indeed, Confidence's impact is amplified by its close synergy with schools and their teaching practices. For example, teachers apply Confidence's work to students' wider development like meeting individual learning targets. In turn Confidence shares ideas and approaches that complement teacher's practices, such as Embodied Improvisation – a type of intensive interaction translated to a dance context.

But Confidence is also, importantly, different to other activities that take place in schools. Confidence's workshops achieve unusually high levels of engagement and have broad and long lasting emotional and social effects. Because of its creative focus, Confidence's work can engage participants in new ways – students develop new interests, broaden their horizons, and build new relationships. And because of its links with other cultural organisations – like ConfiCo and Creative Folkestone – Confidence represents a bridge to other opportunities and ideas. While a strong partnership with each school is essential to Confidence's practice, therefore, it is also important that the company remains distinct from the school environment.

Considering Confidence's work as a process, four key, recurring themes emerge:

- Engagement – Confidence fosters deep and sustained levels of engagement with participants
- Environment – Confidence adapts in response to the environment (people, places and ideas)
- Relationships – Confidence builds authentic relationships with individuals and organisations
- Creative Identity – Confidence is engaged in ongoing artistic dialogue with the wider creative community

In its practice, everything that Confidence does is connected, and all its work contributes to its positive outcomes. By building strong and authentic relationships with people, Confidence responds sensitively to its environment, and develops work that is engaging and enriching for everyone involved. This engagement, in turn, supports strong and authentic relationships, and enables Confidence to understand the wider context. Understanding the wider context helps Confidence to engage with people, and to build relationships, and so on.



6. What Next?



6.1. Areas for Learning and Development

The process outlined above creates a virtuous circle of strengthening bonds and engagement, leading to positive outcomes. No participants or stakeholders suggested any changes to this process, but this survey of *Connect* has identified two areas in which the process could be further developed.

6.1.1. Progression opportunities

Confidence currently offers a small number of paid jobs to a small number of workshop participants. While these opportunities are transformative for those who get them, they are made by invitation only. This process is naturally limited and may feel exclusive.

To address this, Confidence could make its invitation processes transparent. It could signpost other opportunities (such as community dance classes) and develop partnerships with other organisations who may be able to offer opportunities, too.

6.1.2. Strategic Partnerships

Confidence has a strategic partnership with Creative Folkestone that supports Creative Folkestone's aims for audience development, and Confidence's aims for increased visibility and connection to the wider cultural community. This relationship greatly enhances Confidence's work in schools by establishing the company's cultural identity. But its impact on Creative Folkestone is limited. For example, while

Confidance may bring new audiences to Creative Folkestone's work, Creative Folkestone's audiences do not tend to see Confidance's work.

There is scope to develop this relationship, along with similar strategic partnerships, to create more fluid interactions between audiences and participants for Confidance and other organisations. There may also be scope to create concrete opportunities with cultural organisations for Confidance's participants and partner schools – such as work experience, further performance opportunities, or targeted talks and events.

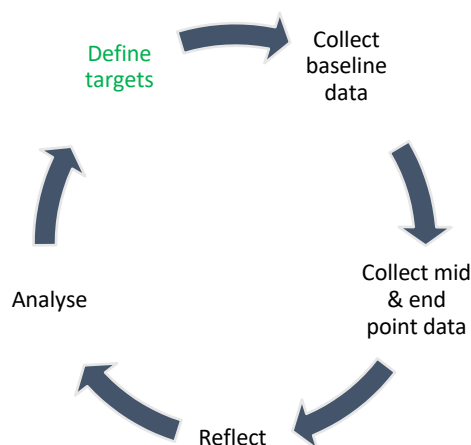
7. Developing an Evaluation Toolkit



As a broad scoping study, this research has not attempted to assess Confidence's work in relation to predicted outcomes. Instead, it has surveyed Confidence's education practice as a whole, and identified four consistent, structuring principles that lead to a range of positive outcomes. These principles – Engagement, Environment, Relationships and Creative Identity – represent Confidence's philosophy as well as its methodology. As such, they provide a useful framework for evaluating the company's work in the future:

- Who is Confidence **engaging** with, and how?
- What is affecting the **environment** we are working in?
- Are our **relationships** positive and effective, and what extra support do they need?
- What is the **creative** context for this work?

The diagram below shows an effective evaluation process. The process begins with defining targets. This flows into collecting data – baseline data, mid and end point data, and reflections. The final stage is analysis, which feeds into future targets, and so on.



Typical data collection methods for quantitative and qualitative information can be mapped onto these principles, as follows:

| Principle | Quantitative | Qualitative |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Engagement | Numbers and demographics of participants Numbers of sessions Number of Arts Awards achieved Numbers of further opportunities reached Numbers of personal learning targets reached | Participants' reflections / distance travelled Teachers' reflections/ distance travelled Stakeholders' reflections/ distance travelled |
| Environment | Number of partnerships developed | |
| Relationships | Number of stakeholders Number of planning and evaluation meetings | |
| Creative Identity | Number of creative outputs | |

This table shows that reflection processes are crucial for Confidance in collecting qualitative information. In fact, the company already embeds reflection processes into its work – for example through ongoing conversations with partner schools.

Although quantitative methods appear to be more onerous, many of these figures are already collected, too. And many are collected by schools, if not yet by Confidance. Indeed, the continuous monitoring and evaluation undertaken by schools can also support and contribute to Confidance's evaluation.

By building on these existing processes, Confidance can create a standardised and flexible evaluation methodology that flows from its key principles of engagement, environment, relationships and creativity; in other words, a methodology that evaluates Confidance's work but remains true to its ethos.

The following sections show which evaluation methods Confidance already uses, and how these can be adapted or developed to create a re-usable evaluation methodology.

7.1. Standardising Quantitative Data Collection

| Quantitative | Existing methods | New methods/ adaptations |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Numbers and demographics of participants</p> <p>Numbers of sessions</p> <p>Number of stakeholders</p> <p>Number of planning and evaluation meetings</p> <p>Number of creative outputs</p> | <p>Data collected on an ad hoc basis when required by funders, often at the end of a project</p> | <p>1/ Pro-forma for internal use: during conversations at the start and end of a project.</p> |
| <p>Number of Arts Awards achieved</p> <p>Numbers of further opportunities reached</p> <p>Numbers of personal learning targets reached</p> | <p>Data collected by schools for internal monitoring/ by Confidence on an ad hoc basis when required by funders.</p> | <p>1/ Pro-forma for internal use: during conversations at the start and end of a project.</p> <p>2/ Ask schools to share internal monitoring and evaluation that is linked to Confidence activity</p> |

Confidence already has detailed conversations with funders, partners and others about the information required for quantitative data analysis, including:

- who is taking part
- who else is involved (partners/ stakeholders)
- how many workshops will take place
- how many performances, films and other creative outputs will take place

Confidence also has detailed conversations with partner schools about participants' needs and interests, including:

- individual goals that Confidence can contribute to, like Arts Awards and personal learning targets
- other opportunities that participants access as a result of Confidence

Finally, schools already collect a lot of information about their students, and carefully monitor individual progress.

However, Confidence does not currently collate this information, or collect it systematically. This means that the data collected may not be complete, and that gathering it may add extra stress to the people involved.

Recommendations:

1/ Pro-forma for internal use

Without changing the existing framework of conversations, Confidence can bring pro-forma templates of the information they need to collect (one for demographics, one for other information) to each meeting. This will help Confidence staff to record the information they need, and to remember to ask for anything they are missing. By collecting this information at the beginning and end of a project, Confidence will be able to see what changed over the course of the project.

Please see Appendix II for suggested templates.

2/ Ask schools to share internal monitoring and evaluation

Confidance staff can ask schools to share the monitoring and evaluation that they carry out for students, where this is linked to Confidance's work.

For example:

Student A has an Individual Education Plan (or 'Individual Action Plan' / 'Individual Learning Plan') which includes the target 'improve ability to hold eye contact.' The teacher notices that A's ability to hold eye contact is improved immediately after a Confidance class, and notes this down. This information is shared with Confidance by the teacher at their next meeting.

7.2. Standardising Qualitative Data Collection

| Qualitative | Existing methods | New methods/ adaptations |
|---|---|--|
| Participants' reflections / distance travelled | Informal conversations with participants | <p>1/ Ask participants to define their own interests, ambitions etc. at the start of a project.</p> <p>2/ Survey participants at the beginning, middle and end of a project in relation to their own interests.</p> <p>3/ Formalised reflection conversations at a project's end</p> |
| Teachers' reflections/ distance travelled | Ongoing conversations throughout the project | <p>1/ Ask teachers to define their own interests, ambitions etc. at the start of the project, and to think about their students'.</p> <p>2/ Survey participants at the beginning, middle and end of a project in relation to their own interests.</p> <p>3/ Formalised reflection conversations at a project's end</p> |
| Stakeholders' reflections/ distance travelled | Informal conversations with stakeholders | <p>1/ Ask stakeholders to define their own interests, ambitions etc. at the start of a project.</p> <p>2/ Formalised reflection conversations at a project's end</p> |
| Confidance's internal reflections/ distance travelled | Informal conversations amongst Confidance staff | <p>1/ Create an internal list of interests, ambitions, etc. at the start of a project</p> <p>2/ Formalised reflection conversations at a project's end.</p> |

Confidence already holds ongoing reflective conversations with project partners and participants, as well as internal conversations and reflections. But these conversations are not standardised, which means some information may be missed, or mis-remembered.

Recommendations

1/ Define interests, ambitions etc at the start of a project

Confidence should invite all participants, partners, stakeholders and internal Confidence staff to define their interests, hopes and ambitions for the project before it begins. These definitions can be standardised in advance by Confidence, defined by individuals, or a mixture of both, but should adhere to a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timebound) target format as much as possible. This information creates a baseline of expectations that the project can be measured against.

e.g. Confidence wants to run a schools project that engages nine participants. Confidence asks participants to choose which of the following is most important to them:

- a) improving my social skills and making new friends
- b) becoming more confident at speaking and performing in front of people
- c) learning a new skill

Three participants choose (a)

Three participants choose (b)

Three participants choose (c)

Confidence works with each individual to make these into SMART targets related to the project, e.g.

“I want to improve my social skills and make new friends by dancing a duet with one other person by the end of the term.”

2/ Surveys carried out at the beginning, middle and end of a project in relation to pre-defined interests.

Taking the baseline information collected at the start of a project, use simple surveys to ask participants, partners and internal staff (and project partners, if appropriate), how far they think they have reached these aims or ambitions. This process will also collect information on how projects change during their timelines.

This process collects information about the content of activities – how the project unfolds.

See Appendix IV for survey templates.

3/ Facilitated feedback sessions at the end of a project

Formalise feedback sessions at the end of a project, so that everyone has the opportunity to share their thoughts, and Confidence has the opportunity to listen. ‘Formalise’ in this context does not mean to make the feedback sessions more formal, but to make the thinking around them more formal.

This process will collect information about what the project achieved – what has changed.

How these sessions are run will vary from context to context, but it will be useful to return to Confidence’s four principles in setting up each meeting.

This table shows an example of this process:

| Principle | Detail (for example) | Questions (for example) | Outcomes (for example) |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| How are people engaged? | People may have different ideas about what 'feedback' means, whether they can be critical, and how their information will be used. | Does everyone know the context of the meeting? Does everyone have access to relevant information? Are the sessions engaging and accessible to everyone? | Accessible information circulated in advance. |
| What is affecting the environment? | People may have different energy levels at different times of the day, or in different parts of a building. | Where and when are the sessions held, and what impact might this have? | Meetings held in a familiar room – a class room. |
| Which relationships are present? | Some people may not want to give feedback in front of Confidence; for others, it will be important to talk to people they already know, and not to bring strangers into the room. | Can everyone speak freely here? Who needs to be present or absent for people to feel comfortable? | Confidence is not present at participant meetings but another trusted adult is. |
| What is the creative context? | some people may feel more comfortable to give feedback creatively, such as through a picture or a poem. | Does this feedback session feel like a creative space, or an administrative space? How can people be supported to be creative and imaginative in their responses? | Participants are given materials to feedback in more than one way. |

7.3. Analysing evaluation information

Evaluation takes place in the relationships between information collected – the differences between participants' expectations and their outcomes, for example, the differences between stakeholders' interests, or the relationships between quantitative and qualitative data.

For example, information about a participants' journey may be collected as follows:

| 1/ Baseline | 2/ Midpoint and Endpoint | 3/ Reflections on distance travelled |
|---|--|--|
| I want to improve my social skills and make new friends by dancing a duet with one other person by the end of the term. | I danced a new duet with one other person and performed it at the end of term. | Learning the duet was difficult and I was not sure if I could do it. I felt a great sense of achievement when I performed it in front of my friends. |

Finding: Participant A met their ambitions of increased social skills during the project. In addition to dancing a duet with a new partner, Participant A gained a sense of achievement from performing to their friends.

This information is further enhanced by a teacher's point of view:

| 1/ Baseline | 2/ Midpoint and Endpoint | 3/ Reflections on distance travelled |
|---|--|--|
| I want student A to improve their social skills by learning to collaborate with one other person in a duet. | Student A worked with a new partner and developed a positive relationship with them over the course of this project. | Student A has gained in confidence through making a new friend. They have also shown more confidence in other school activities, and I asked them to help a new student settle into the school. I would never have asked them to do this before this term. |

Finding: This process had a positive impact on Participant A's self-confidence, and their teacher is now calling on them to support their peers in social situations.

Finally, this information is contextualised by its relation to quantitative data. For example:

Total number of participants: 10

Total who said their expectations were not met: 1

Total who said their expectations were met: 4

Total who said their expectations were exceeded: 6

Finding: Participant A's experiences are broadly representative of the project. It was mostly successful at meeting the expectations identified by participants and their teachers at the start of the project and, for those who were engaged, it was likely to exceed expectations. But the project was not able to address the needs of every participant.

Collated findings:

Participant A met their ambitions of increased social skills during the project. In addition to dancing a duet with a new partner, Participant A gained a sense of achievement from performing to their friends. This process had a positive impact on Participant A's self-confidence, and their teacher is now calling on them to support their peers in social situations.

In this way, the project met and exceeded the expectations of both the participant and the teacher.

Participant A's experiences are broadly representative of the project. It was mostly successful at meeting the expectations identified by participants and their teachers at the start of the project and, for those who were engaged, it was likely to exceed expectations. However, the project was not able to address the needs of every participant.

7.4. The evaluation methodology

Returning to the process diagram above, Confidence's bespoke methodology maps onto a typical evaluation process as follows:

