

Social Impact of the Paragon Programmes

Report for Paragon Music



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

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This report has been prepared by Social Value Lab on behalf of Paragon Music, supported by Jobs & Business Glasgow.

The report presents the findings from the social impact assessment of Paragon's Play-On, M3 and Horizons programmes.

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Index /

1: Introduction	1
2: Impact of Play-On	4
3: Impact of M3	9
4: Impact of Horizons	14
5: Impact on Staff and Volunteers	17
6: Impact Map	19
7: Conclusion	22
Appendices	23
A1: Observation Report Play-On	
A2: Observation Report M3	

1: Introduction

This report describes the social impact created by Paragon Music through the delivery of its Play-On, M3 and Horizons programmes.



Paragon Music

Paragon Music, established in 1984 as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, is an inclusive music company inspiring people to create and perform their own music. Paragon believes that music and the arts have the power to transform lives and through the two most important principles within music - equality and inclusion - Paragon aims to inspire and empower people.

Paragon creates inclusive learning and performance environments where people from all walks of life and with a wide range of additional support needs, can come together, develop new skills,

meet new friends and discover their true potential through dance and music. It uses highly trained professionals as musicians and facilitators to achieve this goal.

Paragon wants to get a better understanding of the social impact of its programmes and therefore approached Jobs & Business Glasgow (J&BG) for assistance. Under the Social Enterprise Consultancy Support programme J&BG commissioned Social Value Lab to undertake a social impact assessment of Paragon's programmes.

The Paragon Programmes

Paragon delivers a range of programmes and services. The main programmes that are included in this impact assessment are: Play-On, M3 and Horizons.

Play On

Play On is a music tuition programme aimed at young people with additional support needs. Play-on provides the young people with a fun and inclusive way to learn to play a musical instrument, meet new friends and play in performances.



Students are taught by professional tutors in piano/keyboard, guitar, bass, percussion/kit, saxophone and clarinet.

M3 (Make Music Move)

M3 is an inclusive dance and music programme aimed at teenagers with and without additional support needs, where the aim is to encourage movement, creativity and more importantly to make friends and have fun!



M3 is being delivered in partnership with Y-Dance, bringing together groups of wheelchair-bound (sitting) dancers and more ambulant dancers. All tutors are trained, professional musicians and dancers.

Horizons

Horizons is a mentoring programme that enables adults with additional support needs to progress their musical aspirations. Mentees receive regular one to one mentoring sessions with Paragon musicians and are supported in achieving their goals and ambitions whether that be to perform in public, compose their own music, or begin a career in the music industry.



Study Objectives

Paragon provides music and dance programmes for people with additional support needs. Paragon wants to get a better understanding of the wider social impact of these programmes.

More specifically, Paragon wants to use this social impact assessment to:

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- show Paragon's impact to students, their parents, Paragon staff and volunteers;
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- influence the future strategic direction of the organisation;
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- provide evidence to key stakeholders, partners and (potential) funders of the impact of the programme;
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- promote Paragon Music and its work to a wider audience; and
-
- improve Paragon's monitoring and evaluation practice.
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The Study Method

The study was carried out by Social Value Lab between November 2013 and March 2014. It was based on a qualitative research design that involved a number of main stages.

Inception

The first step was an inception meeting with Paragon's Creative Director and the J&BG Social Enterprise Advisor to understand the origins of the project, the timeline of activities, and a first level perception of impact.

Theory of Change Workshop

We started the process by facilitating a workshop with Paragon staff, Board Members and volunteers to develop a 'theory of change' for the organisation - a simple representation of how the activities (the inputs) produce particular results (outputs) that in turn help to bring about a change (the outcomes).

Interviews

We then conducted a programme of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with:

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- 6 Play-On students
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- 4 parent/carers of Play-On students
-
- 4 M3 students (sitting dancers)
-
- Group interview with 4 Y-Dance students (ambulant dancers participating in the M3 programme)
-
- 3 Horizons mentees
-
- 4 Paragon staff and volunteers
-

Observations

We then commissioned Robert Lacey, B.Mus, CQSW., PGCE, a highly experienced music tutor and facilitator of performing arts provision for people with additional support needs to attend both a Play-On and M3 session to report his observations. His reports are appended to this study.

Reflection Workshop

We then facilitated a workshop with the Paragon Board members where we reported our findings and further fine-tuned the 'impact story'.

The findings of the impact assessment are set out in the following pages.

2: Impact of Play-On

This Section assesses the impact of the Play-On programme on the students and their families.



Play-On provides blocks of music tuition and opportunities to perform to a group of 15-20 young people with additional support needs. The programme is delivered in blocks of six Saturday sessions.

The students are taught a variety of instruments in separate rooms and come back together at the end of the session to showcase what they have learned to the group and to play together as a group.

Learning to play an instrument

Many of the students started to learn to play an instrument when commencing with Paragon. Students practice at

home, many daily and for long periods, so naturally their ability to play an instrument has improved dramatically.

Building confidence

All students reported an increase in confidence from the Play-On sessions. For some this confidence was related to performing, but for others the confidence stemmed from being better able to cope with daily life.

One student commented: "Music cheers you up when you need it". A parent added: "he is proud of it and identifies himself with the group and feels part of it, and he doesn't do that anywhere else".

A Paragon staff member recollects a recent performance: "He was very nervous before the performance, after he did it his confidence went through the roof".



Many Play-On students are not very communicative and have problems making their voice heard. Through Play-On students are better able to communicate with those around them and to stand up for themselves. A parent of one of the students commented: "he is now much better to express himself and is opening up to communication." Another said: "he now shouts out and wants to be heard".

The Observer noted: "One participant was taciturn and appeared to talk only to individuals whom he already knew. ... Headphones were being used by him and his head was down to avoid eye contact. Importantly this participant changed his social and task related interaction behaviour once the work had begun".

A Paragon staff member confirmed this increase in assertiveness in the students: "They have something to say, and now they make sure their opinion is heard".

Another comment from the Observer reads: "... this session started as most jams do with unrelated musical doodlings by tutors and participants. Ninian began to create structure by either echoing or answering the participants' musical comments Clearly and self-evidently this is one of the known successful strategies of Paragon Play On, through which the programme helps participants enhance their communication skills and social awareness, possibly also giving a 'taste' of successful communication which could for the most taciturn individuals give them reason to use words. "

One parent who has to accompany her son everywhere said: "It's brilliant; he is now asking me to go out of the room while he is in with everybody. That's a huge leap for us".

For one student his increased confidence has encouraged him to join other groups. His parent said: "He is not normally confident around strange people, but now he started to take part in a drama class and a singing class outside Paragon".

The Observer concluded: "It is worth highlighting the peculiar value of music as a surrogate language both giving alternative routes to verbal language and the language of social interaction...It is self-evident that participants were clearly communicating more effectively through their music making than through their speech and social behaviour".

Learning to focus

Many Play-On students have problems with focussing on tasks. Playing music in a structured environment and practicing at home helps the students to improve their ability to concentrate.

This increased ability to focus is helping the students in other parts of their life as well. One student said: "I now know that I should not talk to my friends during class."



The observer noted: "A third participant was accompanied by her carer at all times. This participant needed constant guiding and supervision ... and concentration and focus for this young person were clearly not well developed. Later in a one to one session the response to guidance and suggestion greatly speeded up and a genuinely impressive series of interactions was observed between the musician and the student amounting to a sustained dialogue of musical sonorities... For an individual who showed such poor focus and

concentration earlier in the programme to have been able to capture this level of participation in itself was a powerful indicator of the effectiveness of this particular use of musical experience as a significant intervention for participants with additional support needs".

Happier and healthier

Students said that attending Play-On and the things they learned there has a positive impact on their mental health.

Many students said that playing music and listening to music helps to make them feel calm when they are upset, sad or angry. One student said: "I feel happier and that makes me healthier". A parent added: "music is his anchor into happy times". Another added: "he has now a skill that he feels he is good at, which has improved his self-esteem".

Making friends

One thing all students agreed on was that they have made new friends through Play-On. Although the interaction between students is mainly within the Play-On setting, one student said: "I now play with some of them [other Play-On students] at school."



One parent told: "My son has been in the same class with X and never spoke to him. Recently they started talking

and discovered they both like Elvis and they have started sharing photographs". Another parent said: "People assume he has learning disabilities, which he hasn't. Paragon was an absolute godsend, the way he feels in there is just as any teenager feels in a group".

A brighter future

Many of the students mentioned music and arts as the focus for their future. One student will be starting a drama-course at College, another is to study music at College and yet another student is looking into setting up his own music company.

Paragon challenges assumptions and preconceptions that the students and their parents may have. Succeeding and developing at Play-On makes students and parents raise the barrier for themselves. One of the tutors tells: "One student was about to leave school and no one thought there were any opportunities for her. Through Play-On her mother had seen her daughter was able to do more than she thought which helped her find a suitable place for her daughter".

A student with cerebral palsy who is quadriplegic and communicates via tapping his head to activate the computer is now composing music for others to play. He commented on hearing his compositions played by others: "It feels good, it feels terrific".

Better family life

Naturally happier children make for a better family life. Parents reported their son/daughter being calmer, more confident, more communicative and happier, which has had a positive influence on their happiness and that of their family. Some parents noted that their son/daughter has become more

sociable. One parent said: "Paragon has helped him to socialise and participate in new things".

Raised ambitions

Parents were encouraged by the abilities of their son/daughter and were sometimes surprised by their progress and achievements.

The fact that their son/daughter did well in Play-On, has started parents thinking about what else their son/daughter could achieve. One parent commented: "This has been a fascinating experience and it was a pleasure to listen to my son playing".



The Observer noted: "In this instance what seemed most important was the transfer of playing and performer mannerisms that was evident The power of the experience this will have created for the student and the elevated quality of the performance outcome are clearly a conscious strategy of Paragon Play On to maximise the opportunity they are creating for the participants. Any young musician who experiences a greater fluency as they perform with their tutor can know that they can do even better. The

taste of what they can achieve has been created.

Focus on ability as a musician

One of the key success factors of Play-On is that the project focuses on the ability of the students as a musician or composer, rather than on the limitations of their disability. This positive way of thinking about themselves and their abilities will have a positive influence on the rest of their lives.

The Observer commented: "This activity was nothing more unusual than a one to one music lesson. It had all the value that any music lesson has to a motivated student working with an intuitive and skilled teacher. This ordinariness was what made this special. It may be that this participant had taken some time to reach this level of skill but the expectation of the Paragon Play On process would appear not to measure ability by the speed of learning, or indeed predetermine the outcome based on standard expectations. As there was no evidence to suggest that this was the perceived limit of this participant as seen by either the participant or the tutor, it suggested that time taken and capacity achievable had been de-linked".



And: "Perhaps the most interesting lessons in terms of the notion of 'an ordinary music lesson' were the two students who were given individual lessons in guitar. Both students were expected by the tutor to hold the instrument in the traditional way, to observe all the good practice aspects that a good tutor will impart to their students, and both students were committed to achieving this correct approach. It seemed that this very attention to correctness acted as a kind of validation to the students in that allowances relative to their support needs were made only in terms of the time allowed for the learning to occur – not in the eventual style and standard of their playing".

Conclusion from the Observer

Our expert Observer concluded his observations: "It is important in viewing this project not to underestimate the nature of the intervention being undertaken. Observed repeatedly throughout the session were expertly timed opportunistic interventions to catch the moment for participants where cognitive skill, creative skills, communication skills, self-presentation skills could be taken a step forward through tutors manipulating the experience they were creating along with the participant.

If the costs of this type of project could be more readily met and its promulgation was not subject to economising on the expertise of tutors and carer tutor ratios, many more individuals, who would otherwise become a significant cost to the community, through never having had the opportunity to develop their slowly emerging abilities, can become

contributors of new types of energy
and input to the common good.

(The full Play-On Observation report is
appended).

3: Impact of M3

This Section reports on the social impact created by the M3 programme.



Make Music Move or M3 provides dance sessions for a combined group of up to 10 wheelchair dancers (sitting dancers) and up to 8 ambulant dancers.

Become better dancers

The M3 sessions have helped the students become better dancers. In particular, practicing with ambulant dancers has improved their skills.

Increasing confidence

Progressing and achieving in the M3 sessions has increased the confidence of the students. Performing in front of an audience is scary for most people, and can be even scarier for someone in a wheelchair. M3 students have been performing in front of large audiences,

which has been a confidence booster. One student said proudly: "I performed in Edinburgh and Dundee".

Another student has been selected to do an audition for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The acceptance of her as a wheelchair dancer at such a prestigious institution was a real confidence booster. She commented: "If I don't get in it's not because I'm not ready, it is because they are not ready for me".

The Observer noted that another wheelchair dancer waiting for the doors to be opened welcomed the observer, "you look a bit lost, can I help you?" thereby showing high levels of self-assurance.

For one student M3 helped her to feel less conscious about her body and how she looks, which increased her confidence in general.

Another student said that she was now able to talk for herself, without her grandmother 'interpreting' for her.

Improved health

The M3 sessions have had an impact on the student's general health. Dancing is a physical activity and provides excellent exercise for the students. One student commented: "I come out of my chair for my sequence, which takes a lot of my physical strength". Another added: "I can now easily lift up objects around my chair".

M3 also has an impact on student's mental health.



Equality and inclusion

Throughout the sessions sitting and ambulant dancers were treated equal, the focus being solely on dancing and the performance of the exercises.

The Observer commented: "Nothing beyond normal body and language courtesies were evident suggesting no sense of differentiation being indeed a norm of the group".

One student said: “dancers have to learn what wheelchairs can do and this is a learning experience for them”.

The Observer noted: "During the arrival period participants, who were all seated in wheelchairs and able bodied dancers, blethered and caught up. Confidence levels in the participants appeared high. Their demeanour suggested equal rights as all others present. There was no 'supplicant' behaviour evident or indeed any compensating behaviour suggesting self-consciousness of feeling 'different' as a seated participant. Interactions were all apparently balanced and well judged".

The students all felt that they have made new friends, but the interaction is generally limited to the M3 sessions. Students, however, do communicate on-line through Facebook.

A brighter future

Through the M3 sessions and the performances they have been involved in the students have got a better understanding of their future careers and became more optimistic that their ambitions could be realised.

One student is currently auditioning for the Contemporary Performance Practice at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. If accepted, she would be the first student in a wheelchair at the Conservatoire.

The Observer noted: "The approach taken by the workshop director was to engage imaginative, problem solving, creative and interpretative cognition from participants. So instead of training participants

as dancers the workshop was used to engage participants in complex thinking out processes of how they might use their bodies to exemplify and create from the stimulus given. ... This detailed self-knowledge of 'how did I do that' is a very important foundation process that can allow an individual to benefit more effectively from educational or training opportunities as well as improving important generic skills concerned with motivation and problem solving.

Another student, who has studied childcare at College, now wants to become a Playworker in a nursery or school to use her skills gained through M3.



Another student, who has been in charge of a theatre production through Paragon, now wants to pursue a profession as a producer.

The Observer commented: "There would seem to be evidence that an outcome of the workshop experiences for participants of Paragon is the formation of a sense of life purpose and ambition. If this is indeed the case it will further add support to the feeling that Paragon participants do better in training and have improved chances of gaining employment".

Changing perceptions

The students feel that through their M3 achievements they have changed the way people view them. They have successfully challenged the perception that wheelchair users cannot be involved in high quality dance productions.

The Observer commented: "Compared to other disabled individuals seen in other settings alone or in groups, where behaviour can be heavily influenced by self-perceptions of their own limitations, limiting perceptions imposed by the expectations of others, supplicant behaviours responsive to controlling carer processes and supplicant or submissive behaviours created by institutional contexts, no such behaviours were evident".

One student said: "I want to get the placards out and tell every teenager [in a wheelchair] to get out there. Things have changed and you can be what you want to be".

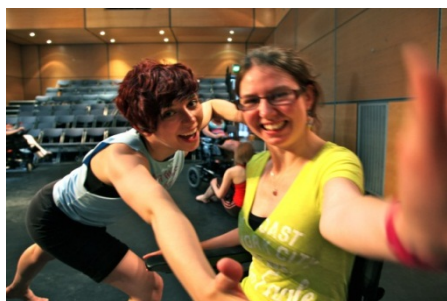


New skills for ambulant dancers

The M3 programme is the only opportunity in Scotland for ambulant dancers to work with sitting dancers in a professional environment.

The Y-Dance dancers that participate in the M3 programme reported a number of new skills and techniques. They learn to use their bodies' differently to adapt to the movements of the sitting dancers.

The Y-Dance participants also became more flexible in their approach. For example, it turned out to be difficult to point their little finger for some of the sitting dancers; therefore they changed the routine to another finger.



Normally dancers copy movements as part of their training, but that would not always work when working with sitting dancers. Rather than mimicking movements they had to ask the sitting dancers to talk about their intentions to develop a routine. The ambulant dancers have learned from this way of working.

The Y-Dance participants noticed the great upper body strength of the sitting dancers and the excellent control they have over their upper body. This has caused the ambulant dancers to change their training practices.

The Observer also noted: "The standing dancers' contribution was of a very high standard but only began to show the problem solving aspects when working in the duets with the sitting dancers".

A changed view on disability

The Y-Dance participants were at first a little anxious to work with sitting dancers. They had limited experience with and knowledge of the uses and potential of wheelchairs in dance.

The ambulant dancers have changed their perception of disability somewhat. Now they do not really see the sitting dancers as disabled or different but the same as their able bodied colleagues.

Conclusion from the Observer

Our expert Observer concluded: "Somewhere in the UN declaration on disabled people is a statement to the effect that the greatest force to reducing disability is the intelligence of the disabled individual. It seems to be the case that in the dance workshop observed, the core skills that were being developed were thinking and brain skills. Sitting participants were constantly being asked to find a solution to being the equal participants in the dance by making full use of individual personas and physique combined with whatever support equipment or support individual was available to them. That 'solve it yourself by using your brain' skill is surely what is being referred to in the UN declaration. After all brains are more likely to be under functioning because of factors like, lack of use, lack of self-belief, or others saying you're 'no very bright' than because of intrinsic or physical issues. The presumption of the Paragon workshop is you definitely have a brain, so use it.



This last point may sound grandiose but there may be a truth in there that would further validate, and perhaps help explain and track the mechanism that Paragon has developed that has undoubtedly transformed the life opportunities of their programme participants.”

(The full M3 Observation report is appended).

4: Impact of Horizons

This Section explores the impact of the Horizons programme on the mentees.



The Horizons programme provides one-to-one mentoring support to adults with additional support needs. The mentors, experienced Paragon musicians, help the mentees to develop their music, perform in public, and build a career in the music industry.

There are currently 8 mentees in the Horizons programme who on average attend a session once a week.

Developing music skills

As Horizons is primarily aimed at music practitioners, developing their musical skills is a natural result of the mentoring programme.

One student came to Scotland in her early teens as an asylum seeker, with very limited language skills and quite unsettled. Through Paragon's support she was able to develop playing the Santur, the instrument of her native country, and eventually perform as well.

She said: "being able to play the Santur helped me to keep my roots, and at the same time helped me to integrate into a new society".

Now, through her mentor, she is learning to play the piano, a long fostered desire. She commented: "Music has been a healing process for me. Playing with others was even better" and "to be able to play with others was like having a conversation in a very uncertain and stressful time".

Another mentee is helped with developing his composing skills. He has since written a number of classical compositions that have been played by professional musicians.

The power of performance

Most mentees are supported in public performances. The possibility to perform is important for any musician, it is even more so for those with additional support needs, because the opportunities to perform in a professional environment are limited to non-existent without support.



One mentee said: "It was an eye-opener for me, when I heard my music played for the first time".

Mentees do not only play music as a hobby, but have aspirations to perform in public and show their music to the world. Performing in public gave the mentees a feeling of achievement and pride. One mentee commented on performing in public: "When I stood up in front of the audience, the respect shown to me meant the world". Another added: "performing all over the UK made me proud, it showed what asylum seekers can contribute to society".

Building a career

Through the Horizons programme the mentees will be given the opportunity to try music as a career. One mentee is

performing regularly in care homes and other venues. Recently he is starting to organise and play at gigs by himself. He commented: "I am delighted that Paragon supports me to perform more often, as before opportunities were rather limited".



Another mentee said: "I was composing music for a long time, but I struggled to find people to play my work".

One mentee has composed various pieces of music, that have been played by professional musicians and he also has made professional recordings of his compositions and sells his music on-line.

Growing confidence

All mentees reported a strong increase in confidence from the mentoring programme.

Adults with additional support needs are marginalised in society and their musical efforts are not taken seriously. In many cases mentees' involvement with Paragon is the first time that someone takes a serious interest in them as a musician. One mentee commented: "It was the first time that someone took an interest in my music". Another added: "The confidence in myself has grown".

Another important aspect in building confidence were the performances. Performances, in a professional setting,

helped mentees feel valued and taken seriously as musicians.

One mentee commented: "The audience is enjoying what I do, I feel part of the occasion". He added: "First I was very nervous before a performance, now I'm not getting nervous anymore".



Improved mental health

Mentees that struggle with mental health issues found that the support provided by Horizons improved their mental health.

Music has a calming influence on the mentees and made them happy. One mentee commented: "Making music helped me to keep order in my mind and helped me deal with difficult issues in my life". She added: "School was very difficult, music was the only good thing in my life".

Making friends

The Horizons support helped the mentees make new friends. One mentee said: "I am now more sociable and less scared to approach people or when they approach me". Another mentee added: "I am now able to work with others" and "since being on the Horizons programme I have enabled another individual with additional support needs to find himself musically".

Towards a brighter future

Being part of Horizons has influenced how mentees see the future in a positive way.

One mentee said: "Horizons has shown me that with the right support I can do what I set out to do musically for the rest of my life".

Another mentee has gone to university and is hoping to graduate this year. She attributed her academic success for a great part to the confidence and skills she acquired through Paragon. She said: "Paragon gave me the confidence to pursue my goals and encouraged me to go to uni".

Another mentee commented: "Horizons gave me a brighter outlook on the future and spurred me on to do more things".

5. Impact on staff and volunteers

This Section reports on the impact of working with Paragon, whether as a staff member or a volunteer.



There are a number of powerful impacts on Paragon's staff and volunteers.

Learning new skills

All Paragon staff and volunteers are musicians themselves, and have an education related to music (from Conservatoire to research PhD). Most staff start as volunteer, sometimes through a University placement, or are part paid staff and part volunteer tutor.

All staff/volunteers reported an increased knowledge, understanding and skills in working with disability groups. All thought that this would be very useful in the rest of their career.

One volunteer said: "I now realise what I want to do; use music to help people". She added: "Now it's not an idea anymore, it's actually happening". Another one added: "I didn't know this existed, I now would like a career in this field".

Most staff/volunteers said their listening skills have improved dramatically.

Becoming a better tutor

Most staff/volunteers are also music tutors, with and outside Paragon. Working with Paragon has made them better tutors. It made them more confident and gave them valuable work experience, especially in working with groups.



One staff/volunteer said: "I always wanted to teach the piano, but I did not have the confidence to teach people with additional support needs". Another added: "I learn about music, but in an unknown context".

Another volunteer said he had become more confident in his own ability to teach. He said: "There is a great discrepancy between what you think you need to know about disability and what you actually need to know".

A changing perception on disability

All staff/volunteers acknowledged that their perception of disability has changed. By their nature all volunteers had a very open, non-discriminatory and equal attitude towards people with additional needs. But this was mostly a theoretical concept. Working with

Paragon has put a sort of practical reality to this belief.



One volunteer commented: "People with a disability only need confidence and someone that believes in them". Another one added: "I did not know this was possible".

One staff/volunteer said: "before I was a good person, I did not discriminate. I may have even been a little patronising. Now I just see them as a person." She continued: "I still remember my 'flash' moment. I was sitting in a café and a girl in a wheelchair sat at the table next to me. Before I would have thought 'poor girl', now I realised, she was just having fun with her friend."

Another volunteer commented: "I have no fear anymore at all [to work with people with additional needs]".

One staff/volunteer changed her PhD research subject from 'approaches to learning in informal music tuition' to 'inclusive arts'. Before working at Paragon she aspired to an academic career, now she wants a career in inclusive arts.

6: Impact map

This Section shows the relationship between input, outputs, outcomes and impact for the different stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Input	Output	Short-term Outcomes	Longer-term Impact
Play-On Students	Tutoring time	Play-On sessions	Improved skills	Increased independence More positive outlook on the future Better career prospects
	Funding		Increased confidence	
	Parent’s time and effort		Improved mental health	
	Volunteers		More social contacts	
			Improved ability to focus	
			Raised ambitions	
Play On		Improved family life	More positive outlook on the	

Stakeholder	Input	Output	Short-term Outcomes	Longer-term Impact
Parent/Carers			Improved family life	future
			Raised ambitions for their child	
Stakeholder	Input	Output	Short-term Outcomes	Longer-term Impact
M3 Students	Tutoring time Funding Volunteers	M3 sessions	Improved skills	More positive outlook on the future
			Increased confidence	
			Improved mental health	Better career prospects
			More social contacts	
Y-Dance participants			Improved skills	Better career prospects
			Changed view on disability	

Stakeholder	Input	Output	Short-term Outcomes	Longer-term Impact
Horizons mentees	Mentor Time Funding	Mentoring sessions	Improved skills	More positive outlook on the future Better career prospects
			Increased confidence	
			Improved mental health	
			More social contacts	
Paragon Volunteers	Time and Effort	Work experience	Improved skills	Better career prospects
			Better teaching skills	
			Changed view on disability	

7. Conclusions

This Section draws conclusions from the research

Paragon succeeds in what it has set out to do. It delivers equal and inclusive music and dance programmes for people with additional support needs. This leads to a range of short term outcomes for the students, mentees, their family, non-disabled co-dancers, and staff and volunteers.

For students and mentees the short-term outcomes include new skills, increased confidence, better (mental) health, more social contacts, an increased ability to focus (for Play-On students), raised ambitions and a changed view on their disability.

In the longer term this leads to improved career prospects, a more positive future and increased independence.

The Play-On parent/carers share the raised ambitions of their child and a better family life. The parents share as the longer-term impact the more positive outlook on the future with their children.

For the other non-disabled stakeholders, the Y-Dance participants and the staff/volunteers improved skills, and teaching skills for the staff/volunteers and a changed view on disability emerge as outcomes. The longer-term impact for them is an increased career perspective.

Appendix A: Observation of Play-On Workshop

Narrative

On arrival the team of tutors and organisers were focussed on clearing the suite of rooms available for them to use. An issue appeared to be a requirement to both, clear rooms of desks and chairs – and student left rubbish – and after the Play On session, restore the rooms to pre-set plans posted on the walls. This was in addition to setting up musical instruments in the 7 work areas available.

During this set up period around three participants with carers arrived. The age group was secondary school age from perhaps 11 years to perhaps 18 or 19 years.

One participant was taciturn and appeared to talk only to individuals whom he already knew. This participant was one of the older students. On greeting this participant there was no reply or acknowledgement. Headphones were being used by him and his head was down to avoid eye contact. Importantly this participant changed his social and task related interaction behaviour once the work had begun.

A second participant showed a tendency to disinhibition in his initial greetings of individuals he knew, requiring a full hug in greeting. The response of tutors to this form of greeting varied from relaxed to nervous to apparent attempts to enforce norms of social distance. Again this type of interaction modified during the

morning to an eagerness to get involved in all things at all times bordering on obscuring the contributions of others. This participant would be perhaps aged between 11 and 14 years.

A third participant, a girl perhaps as young as 11, was accompanied by her carer at all times. This participant needed constant guiding and supervision and all requests for her to do something had to be repeated several times. The carer was calm and persistent and usually successful in achieving a response, but concentration and focus for this young person were clearly not well developed. Later in a one to one session with Ninian the response to guidance and suggestion greatly speeded up and a genuinely impressive series of interactions was observed between the musician and the student amounting to a sustained dialogue of musical sonorities.

A number of other participants arrived with two clear groups emerging, those who quickly bee-lined familiar faces in the tutor/organiser group, deserting their carers, and those who stuck close to their carers as they accustomed themselves to the location and activity.

Room Layout and Set Up

Room layout included a large room which was to be used for the all participants warm up and at the end of the session for the 'Sharing' or 'Performance' part of the Play On programme. Rehearsals also took place in this room. The floor level of a lecture

theatre with raked seating was used to set up two drum kits. Five classrooms were used for the following activities. The first was Ninian's space where, in addition to his double bass, bells and small chime instruments were available. The second was set up with desks cleared and at floor level miscellaneous percussion instruments, both tuned and un-tuned, set out. The third was a teaching room for table top percussion instruments. The fourth was equipped initially with a couple of acoustic guitars and an electric bass guitar with amplifier. The fifth room was set up for acoustic guitar tuition.

All of these rooms were entered from a large central foyer and its entrance corridor. This foyer area was used mainly by the carers who had been deserted, and by the participants' siblings. The organisers also occupied this space and administered the changeover timings from one individual lesson to the next as well as trouble shooting any issues to do with equipment.

Groups and Interactions

As participants' and tutors assembled in the large room for the start of the Play On programme Ninian and some other tutors were 'jamming' with participants on the set out instruments. This revealed highly developed rhythmic skills on the part of one participant in particular who was able through his improvisation on the xylophone to handle complex, rapid, responsive and interacting syncopations to the others in this informal moment of music making. There was a sense of this being more an instinctive rather than cognitive activity for the participant but in terms of skill level would be mouldable to deliver music performance well up the Associated Board Grading system.

It was of note that this session started as most jams do with unrelated musical doodlings by various people, tutors and participants. Ninian was quick to hear this going on and began to create structure by either echoing or answering the participants' musical comments using his double bass as his 'voice'. Ninian also took opportunities to form themes from the material being created by returning to these at effective moments. The themes were in the main rhythmic in character rather than complex melodically. Participants' who may have been familiar with this kind of process quickly began to use this quite sophisticated form of comment and embellishment type of communication themselves, responding to and developing from Ninian's comments on the Double Bass.

This process in music where communication occurs through the exchange of sounds by imitation first of all (repetition), response – creating a musical answer to first utterance, structure – by returning to previous ideas and indeed previous sequences of ideas, conforming to norms - such as pulse and thematic rhythmic units, is something that individuals still developing confident verbal language and indeed norms of social interaction can experience as a surrogate of these processes through music. It may be in fact that this is a more attractive and less impenetrable means of communication than verbal language.

Clearly and self-evidently this is one of the known successful strategies of Paragon Play On, through which the programme helps participants enhance their communication skills and social awareness, possibly also giving a 'taste' of successful communication which could for the most taciturn individuals give them reason to use words. This is an essential prerequisite to take participants along a path of being able to present themselves as more

believably competent individuals in relation to finding employment and training opportunities. Or simply being given a chance by members of the able bodied population to show who they really are and what they are capable of.

The interactions between tutors and participants at this stage in the session tended to be between participants and specific tutors only. There wasn't a general easy social mixing going on. This did not so readily demonstrate the inclusion and equality precept of paragon as was seen at the dance workshop. However from an observer's point of view this slight stiltedness seemed more a function of age group and the current developing nature of the social skills of the participants.

About to Start

Music relies heavily on recognition and awareness of the underlying pulse or beat of the music. Various methods have been created to enhance this important ability ranging from the Frosseth Method to full blown Dalcroze Eurhythmics.

The warm up relied on the recognition of this value. Ninian led a session where participants using their big muscles, arms, legs thighs, head, body and trunk created a sense of pulse in the room. The tutors added sounds from pitched instruments as well as participants using percussion instruments. Clapping and vocalising were used as well as increasing sounds and decreasing sounds thinning out sounds and making sounds busier and more complex. Throughout this a powerful eye contact technique was used by Ninian to reward participants' efforts as well as to pick out as it were 'soloists'. From the big muscles Ninian moved to the fingers loosening them up in an exercise and importantly began to ask participants to feel the sensation they felt – the group

assented to Ninian's description of 'tingling'. Important here was the crescendo of unified effort and increased sensory awareness that this session created. The young girl who required repeated instruction began to get involved towards the end of this process – an impressive result given her normal inaccessibility in terms of response and participation.

The result was that all participants gradually conformed to the beat at least, and most to the rhythmic patterns Ninian 'played' with. Participants who had been observed earlier to have convulsive movements in their limbs were clearly able to control these unwanted movements once the pulse had been established.

This type of rhythm preparation is carried out in many schools as an important preparation for music class work. The integration of body rhythms into music making is critical to good performance. It applies to all levels of musicianship and in this instance appears to be a significant tool in helping individuals achieve control over their own physique. It also has a strong experiential value.

Lessons and Rehearsals in the side rooms

Ninian and A.

A. the young participant with poor focus and concentration began work, with her carer present, with Ninian. Ninian made sounds with his double bass and awaited responses from A. The responses were rewarded by more sounds from Ninian until the pace of the interaction – or perhaps conversation – with A. became much less stilted, then gradually smooth and quick and finally showing A.'s ability to copy and develop ideas put out by Ninian. A. used her fingers, held and used a beater, began using her singing

voice to add to the sonorities and achieved a speed of response that allowed a pulse to emerge in the sounds being created.

For an individual who showed such poor focus and concentration earlier in the programme to have been able to capture this level of participation in itself was a powerful indicator of the effectiveness of this particular use of musical experience as a significant intervention for participants with additional support needs, even to the extent of A.'s additional needs. What seemed evident was that A. experienced a genuinely different and more coherent form of communication than was her norm. Observing her earlier, speech didn't seem to be much in evidence and the delays in her responding to urgings from her carer seemed to separate her as a participant from the place and the people around her.

By the end of the lesson with Ninian this isolation and non-interaction had been transformed hugely.

The Floor Percussion Workshop

This workshop was used by the youngest of the participants. The instruments were used by the tutor to story tell – a horror story with ghosts – it seemed, creating strong reactions from the young participants. Extended participation and focus were evident from the participants but was difficult to make before and after comparisons as these participants had been late to arrive and were not therefore seen before the warm up and perhaps were still settling in during the warm up. What was important was their young age and the undoubted early exposure to the range of experiences of music as a means of communication and interaction.

Table percussion.

The use of colour notation was observed in this workshop. An individual lesson took place, clearly the last in a series of lessons, where the tutor guided the participant through an arrangement of a melody using two part harmony. The notation used was colour blocks to match the colours of the bells. The participant was clearly fully committed to using this notation system and was intent on a correct performance. This was one of the programme items in the sharing at the end of the session.

This activity was nothing more unusual than a one to one music lesson. It had all the value that any music lesson has to a motivated student working with an intuitive and skilled teacher. This ordinariness was what made this special. It may be that this participant had taken some time to reach this level of skill but the expectation of the Paragon Play On process would appear not to measure ability by the speed of learning, or indeed predetermine the outcome based on standard expectations. As there was no evidence to suggest that this was the perceived limit of this participant as seen by either the participant or the tutor, it suggested that time taken and capacity achievable had been de-linked.

In working with the participants in Paragon this presumption of patience seems to be at the core of discovering abilities somewhat beyond what the impression created by the presentation of the participant as defined by their disability might have suggested.

Later in the Table Percussion

A teenager with a tendency to be over physical was working at creating an accompaniment to a jazz class sung by Ella Fitzgerald. Apart from having to have good reflexes to duck as necessary as this individual's body

movements overreacted, the tutor supported by his carer, was able to gradually divert this physical energy into purposeful use of the beaters on the xylophone.

This participant was not in constraints despite his tendency to flail his limbs, something that three decades ago might well have been the case, but instead was gradually finding constraint through direction of his energy. The use of musical sound created by himself linked to other sounds, revisited and remembered and practiced all seemed to gradually lead to the achievement of more physical self-control.

Spanish guitar with foot stool

Perhaps the most interesting lessons in terms of the notion of 'an ordinary music lesson' were the two students who were given individual lessons in guitar. Both students were expected by the tutor to hold the instrument in the traditional way, to observe all the good practice aspects that a good tutor will impart to their students, and both students were committed to achieving this correct approach. It seemed that this very attention to correctness acted as a kind of validation to the students in that allowances relative to their support needs were made only in terms of the time allowed for the learning to occur – not in the eventual style and standard of their playing.

A point proved by one of these students who participated in a duet with his teacher in the 'Sharing' part of the session.

Back to Ninian, now with C.

C. uses a complex array of electronic systems to carry out his intentions. For speech he uses a voice synthesiser and word and phrase selection programme. For music he uses a display of the notes of C major over two octaves.

Ninian's purpose was to allow C. to create a musical theme for the other participants to play during the 'Sharing'. This had to be done without reference to the amount of time it took. C.'s musical communication tool is not one that is as quick as his thinking and it takes some time for each note in his idea to be identified.

Ninian worked with C. through a process that allowed C. to create an enticing theme which Ninian then wrote out for the other musicians to play. What was revealing was the balanced musical judgement shown by C. In melody writing most young composers go for extreme melodic movements creating melodies with many leaps leading to ungainly ideas that are constantly trying to create excitement and originality.

C. created a smooth stepwise melody with one extreme leap. Both the observer and Ninian knew this was an inspired idea that lifted an otherwise ordinary musical theme into something special and original - exactly how brilliant music is often created. Ninian challenged C. on this 'out of place' note repeatedly. C. stuck to his concept. Perhaps this was slightly done for the observer but it made the point that for this participant despite his evidently considerable additional support needs he had a sturdy and intelligent musical brain that was developing a viable level of creativity.

Drum kit

In the lecture theatre the percussion tutor at his kit and the participant at theirs powered their way through question and answer patterns as a process that was gradually building drum kit duets.

The Sharing

All participants and carers assembled for 'the Sharing'. The first programme item was in one of the sub-rooms to avoid moving equipment and possibly to avoid disturbing the concentration of the performer. This was the duet with Ella.

Participants, carers and tutors then reassembled in the large main room and there was a series of performances where participants demonstrated their work in progress.

The effort and focus displayed by students was impressive and the lack of self-conscious displays of shyness, equally impressive. A kind of professionalism pervaded the atmosphere as well as a sense of celebration at the creditable and musical achievements of each performance.

What was most noteworthy to the observer was that the participants in virtually every case play in either duets or ensemble with their tutors. This is important. It has always been known that in Band or Orchestral work with music students that a developing player who plays in the same desk as an expert player, perhaps their tutor, the developing player will achieve a level of performance significantly above their acknowledged current standard of playing.

This is often used as a way of lifting a pupil up from development plateau into once more an upward path. How this process works is of interest but does not need to be understood to appreciate its value. In this instance what seemed most important was the transfer of playing and performer mannerisms that was evident between student and tutor as they performed. The power of the experience this will have created for the student and the

elevated quality of the performance outcome are clearly a conscious strategy of Paragon Play On to maximise the opportunity they are creating for the participants. Any young musician who experiences a greater fluency as they perform with their tutor can know that they can do even better. The taste of what they can achieve has been created.

Thoughts arising from the observation

Many of the comments made in the observation of M3 could be restated and reshaped to fit this workshop. The main difference is that this particular group of participants were much younger and at an earlier stage in their artistic and individual development. Many of the processes of change are as yet embryonic but this seems to allow an insight into the distance travelled by the participants in the dance workshop and the distance that can be travelled – given the opportunity – by the participants in Play On.

Excellence of Tutor Input

Without the very high standards of musicianship of the tutors the chameleon like flexibility of the tutor approaches would not have been possible. To undertake this kind of work conservatoire level skills are needed to be able to interact opportunistically with the starting point of each participant. Essential to any process of this kind is the old social work saw 'start where the client is at..... but don't leave him there'.

To do this in this context requires a full field knowledge of music to be able to identify the point of contact with the participant and start the process of change.

Equally without excellence in the tutors the 'shared desk' pay off mentioned above could not happen.

Communication

It is worth highlighting the peculiar value of music as a surrogate language both giving alternative routes to verbal language and the language of social interaction. Again it is not necessary to understand fully why this happens but it is self-evident that participants were clearly communicating more effectively through their music making than through their speech and social behaviour. What is important is that in due course – and observable during the period of the session – speech and social behaviour were seen to improve.

Referring back to the M3 observation it is reasonable to assume that an ultimate objective for Paragon is enabling participants with additional support needs to be seen as likely candidates for equality and inclusion.....for the uninitiated general public. So in this context Paragon again are guiding participants on a pathway towards this broad goal and its more practical aspects such as access to training, employment, and being a respected contributor to the community.

Timing.... Not an Accident a Rare Skill

It is important in viewing this project not to underestimate the nature of the intervention being undertaken. Observed repeatedly throughout the session were expertly timed opportunistic interventions to catch the moment for participants where cognitive skill, creative skills, communication skills, self-presentation skills could be taken a step forward through tutor manipulating the experience they were creating along with the participant.

If the costs of this type of project could be more readily met and its promulgation was not subject to economising on the expertise of tutors and carer tutor ratios, many more individuals, who would otherwise become a significant cost to the community, through never having had the opportunity to develop their slowly emerging abilities, can become contributors of new types of energy and input to the common good.

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Appendix B: Observation of M3 workshop

Narrative

On arrival was welcomed by a participant J. The doors were locked. We chatted meantime. J. exhibited proprietorial levels of confidence with regard to the location, commented that she felt I had looked lost and therefore felt she should help me out.

I explained why I was there. She knew of the process. She told me she was there because of her links with YDance. J. uses an electric chair with back and front steering, swivel chair and joy stick control. She neither looks for nor needs any assistance.

J. told me she had arrived at 9.00 off an Edinburgh train and had found a good hotel and was looking forward to the intensive rehearsals over the next three days leading to various performances.

Charlotte development officer arrived and arranged for keys. Once the room was opened musicians, dancers, participants and carers began arriving.

Ninian was available for a brief conversation before seeing to technical matters. He emphasised the importance of quality and inclusion for paragon's work.

Room layout.

Musicians were set up on a shallow stage area. All musicians during the morning session were professional musicians. They provided improvised music to the activities of the dance workshop and were occasionally asked

to adjust their contribution by the Caroline Bowditch who leads the rehearsal. There was no interaction between the musicians and the dancers.

During the arrival period participants, who were all seated in wheelchairs and able bodied dancers, blethered and caught up. Confidence levels in the participants appeared high. There demeanour suggested equal rights as all others present. There was no 'supplicant' behaviour evident or indeed any compensating behaviour suggesting self-consciousness of feeling 'different' as a seated participant. Interactions were all apparently balanced and well judged.

Caroline Bowditch arrived. There was an opportunity for a brief conversation with her but not any time to discuss the forthcoming workshop/rehearsal.

Also had a brief conversation with one of the standing dancers. He told me that as a development instead of doing single workshops the present group had been meeting monthly culminating in this workshop/rehearsal programme for the next three days.

The Workshop

The workshop was begun when the majority of expected dancers and participants had arrived.

Participants at this point were, B. with carer, K., J., and J. All participants were seated dancers. K. used a manual chair. The standing dancers included

the rep from YDance, two male dancers and 4 female. One of the female standing dancers was attending for the first time.

The workshop/rehearsal began with forming a circle and a warm up requiring participants to move around exchanging names and details of their previous evening's activities. During this part of the workshop S. arrived with her carer. S.'s demeanour showed an eagerness to get into the circle. This was delayed by her carer having decided that she needed to take off her puffer jacket. S. was very active in helping this to be done quickly. S.'s focus was clear and she was efficient at finding a space in the circle. Nothing beyond normal body language courtesies were evident suggesting no sense of differentiation being indeed a norm of the group.

Caroline then rearranged the circle giving everyone a task to introduce their partner to the group and in particular what they had been doing the previous evening. At no point was it expected that the seated dancers would be static in this process and they moved to different positions in the circle without any evidence of a different type of participant behaviour compared to the standing dancers. The standing dancers were not seen to be doubling as surrogate carers. Equally there appeared to be complete mutual confidence between standing and seated dancers that toes and feet would not be injured.

Stretching exercises then followed. After these Caroline introduced a theme around a helium balloon. Through the first part of the workshop this was developed in a number of different ways to impel different segments of dance involving both sitting and standing dancers.

Caroline did not suggest specific dance movements but set her stimulus focussing on the behaviour of the imagined helium, the part of the body it was contained in or whether that part of the body was anchored in any way. Caroline did give direction to the overall movement of the dance group by introducing the notion of a wind blowing in one direction. This notion was added to by the dancers created puffs of wind themselves to influence their partner's movement.

The initial process the dancers worked as individuals within the group. Then Caroline created pairs or triples giving rise to dialogue and experimentation.

A difference did emerge between the standing dancers and the sitting dancers during this process. It seemed that the standing dancers tended to use an existing repertoire of movements which they drew on to interpret the stimulus. The sitting dancers seemed to be creating novel movements arising from their processing of the stimulus within the combination of their physique, the chair and their own particular type and range of movement. One of the sitting dancers did seem to have a particular movement that was used repeatedly. It had characteristics that suggest that this 'move' might have been given to her in discussion with a standing dancer as opposed to created by her. This seemed in contradiction to the range and spontaneity of her social interaction and self-presentation.

The second part of the workshop was the rehearsal of 'duets'. A new duet group was created with J. and the first time standing dancer. The duo's rehearsed simultaneously with two of the sitting dancers moving onto the floor to achieve a wide range of movement in conjunction with their standing partner.

Interactions appeared to be equal and balanced with little sign of one partner being senior to the other. There was clear evidence of substantial preparation and rehearsal having already been committed to the creation of the duet's suggesting in turn that attendance at session is regular.

Early in this stage of the workshop R. the final sitting dancer arrived. He was expected to arrive late and was teased about this. However his duet with one of the male standing dancers showed considerable structure and development.

Caroline commented on each duet after it was performed to the workshop. The comments were specific to the impact of the duets and in no way were characterised by a low expectation of quality and creative power.

Comments and Thoughts arising for the Observation

The Sitting Participants

Compared to other disabled individuals seen in other settings alone or in groups, where behaviour can be heavily influenced by self-perceptions of their own limitations, limiting perceptions imposed by the expectations of others, supplicant behaviours responsive to controlling carer processes and supplicant or submissive behaviours created by institutional contexts, no such behaviours were evident.

The precept of equality and inclusion would appear to have become entirely real and at the core of the functioning of this group.

Think and be true to the wind

The approach taken by the workshop director was to engage imaginative, problem solving, creative and interpretative cognition from

participants. So instead of training participants as dancers the workshop was used to engage participants in complex thinking out processes of how they might use their bodies to exemplify and create from the stimulus given.

In addition Caroline at the conclusion of each dance episode asked participants to review what they had done and how they had they had done it. This may well have triggered thinking processes akin to meta-cognition. This detailed self-knowledge of 'how did I do that' is a very important foundation process that can allow an individual to benefit more effectively from educational or training opportunities as well as improving important generic skills concerned with motivation and problem solving.

The other clearly observable aspect to this approach is that the creative product of the sitting dancers had genuine novelty and was further enhanced by intensity arising from struggle.

To some extent this 'thinking' activity was perhaps side stepped by the standing dancers who had a repertoire of classic dance movements gained no doubt through rigorous theoretical and practical training. The standing dancers' contribution was of a very high standard but only began to show the problem solving aspects when working in the duets with the sitting dancers.

Links to education and other big ideas

The approach was also characterised by notions in tune with the best of the 'Experience and Outcomes' elements that underpin the current developments in school curriculum. While this approach has been partly discredited by the tussle between reactionary teachers, politicians and defensive

administrators within the main educational bodies, it is still fundamentally sound. Many processes in education that could have been described as 'exam led' or perhaps more accurately 'cart before the horse' can now be reset to more effectively engage learners in natural processes of learning with real product that the learners can own.

Another latent benefit of the changes of education is that in essence a year has been added to what will become the normal educational experience; that is for individuals able to follow this process without disruption. The third year of secondary should now, at its best, be the year in which learners can be encouraged to develop realistic and focussed ambitions as to what they might do or be in the future. It would be worth looking out the research that demonstrates that this process of forming an 'ambition' is critical to effective completion of education and training and subsequent career success; interestingly not necessarily absolutely on target in relation to the first expression of that ambition.

There would seem to be evidence that an outcome of the workshop experiences for participants of paragon is the formation of a sense of life purpose and ambition. If this is indeed the case it will further add support to the feeling that Paragon participants do better in training and have improved chances of gaining employment.

World view and brain power

Somewhere in the UN declaration on disabled people is a statement to the effect that the greatest force to reducing disability is the intelligence of the disabled individual. It seems to be the case that in the dance workshop

observed, the core skills that were being developed were thinking and brain skills. Sitting participants were constantly being asked to find a solution to being the equal participants in the dance by making full use of individual personas and physique combined with whatever support equipment or support individual was available to them. That 'solve it yourself by using your brain' skill is surely what is being referred to in the UN declaration. After all brains are more likely to be under functioning because of factors like, lack of use, lack of self-belief, or others saying you're 'no very bright' than because of intrinsic or physical issues. The presumption of the Paragon workshop is you definitely have a brain, so use it. And all this without even mentioning the theory the approach being so thoroughly embedded.

This last point may sound grandiose but there may be a truth in there that would further validate, and perhaps help explain and track the mechanism that Paragon has developed that has undoubtedly transformed the life opportunities of their programme participants.

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