DANCE AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES

KEY LEARNINGS FROM **DANCE WORK IN LIBRARIES** 2025-26

From 2025-26 Made by Katie Green (MBKG) toured well-established dance for library performance work The Story Detectives and newly developed work SEED to a total of 44 libraries and 3 schools across England. Our tour was supported with funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England and investment from our library partners.

Building new audiences

Working with dance in libraries engages **new attendees for libraries** (15% brand new visitors for 2025-26) and **a new audience for dance**, with the new/rare dance attendee percentage holding steady for 2025-26 at 78% (79% for 2022-23).

Feedback evidences that our work is **a good introduction to dance, bringing something surprising and different for regular library/ dance attendees and building participants' appetite for further engagement.**

Developing audience engagement

Our projects in libraries:

- **develop audience's imaginative engagement with the world of work,**
- are highly effective in **capturing and sustaining young people's interest for a longer than expected time period**
- provide opportunities for participants to continue their engagement **beyond the performance** itself.

'In reach' performances at the heart of communities

The primary audience for our work in libraries continues to be hyper-local, with **71% travelling within 5 miles of the libraries** and the majority of those travelling considerably less **(62% less than 3 miles)**.

Working with dance in libraries therefore has **excellent environmental sustainability credentials** and unique potential **for developing connected, loyal audiences**, especially when linked with other kinds of activities to create a more holistic, social experience.

A 'gateway experience' to the arts

Audience data reinforced the importance of activities for under 5s and families in libraries in starting to build relationships and making families aware of a range of cultural opportunities and experiences, with potential to develop loyal audiences.

"At the age of ten months he was amazingly engaged at such a young age, both with the performance, with other children and the whole experience of coming to the library."

Parent feedback



For all the family

Although the largest proportion of our young audiences were from the 2-7 age range, consistent with our marketing targets, 38% of families attended with children in more than one age group. This showed **the importance of developing opportunities for the whole family to participate together**, with options for young people of different ages to engage with the activities on their own terms.

Inclusion is essential

There were some children **in every one of our audiences** who needed some additional support to access the performance, including those whose needs were diagnosed and undiagnosed, visible and invisible. Accommodating additional needs is not something we only need to be planning for given 'special' circumstances, but **all of the time**.

"I thought the inclusivity was exceptional, from the video provided in advance, to the quiet area, ear defenders, and it being made clear you can dip in and out where needed"

Parent feedback

Building courage and nurturing belonging

We build experiences through which we can support children to feel comfortable and safe, even if it's the first time they're doing something like this. Parents regularly observe their children seeming to grow in confidence during the show, or "coming out of their shell", even if they seemed nervous to begin with.

"He is often a little nervous of 'new' things but he was thrilled and captivated from the start!"

Parent feedback

Developing library partnerships

100% of library staff completing our partner survey saying they would programme dance again as a result of hosting Made By Katie Green, commenting on our organisation and professionalism, the measures put in place in advance of the performances to make sure things ran smoothly, and the positive impact the project had on the library/library service in terms of audience impact and staff development for example.

Building trust

More extensive and consistent touring has enabled us to hone our project management and delivery model, making it easier to initiate relationships with new partners, minimising workload for those partners, and refining our approach to adapting our pieces to each new environment, so we can do this quickly and with minimal disruption. Practical refinements such as these make touring more sustainable for us, enabling us to deliver a high quality encounter for every community, and to earn our partners' trust. We are proud that our library partners are willing to vouch for what we do and its professionalism, with their recommendations enabling us to access a greater range of partner venues, including many who have never done something like this before.

Taking care

Libraries are essential community hubs, run by extraordinary people who want to make things better for others.

"I had tears in my eyes when the event started. Was thinking how great our libraries are at working in partnership with such a great team as yours, and delivering free beautiful events for our community."

Library partner feedback

We take every care to support our partners wherever we can - e.g. with fundraising, marketing, risk assessment and evaluation. This doesn't only impact positively on the success of our collaboration, but, we hope, will pave the way for professional development amongst our and the library teams, building a strong foundation for more opportunities in the future.

Our tour from 2025-26 was supported financially using public funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England, Delight, and our partners Surrey Libraries, Telford and Wrekin Libraries, Northamptonshire Libraries, Hillingdon Libraries, Dorset Council Libraries, Applause Rural Touring and Medway Libraries, Barnet Libraries, Nottingham Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries, Trafford Libraries, Bexley Libraries, Creative Burntwood and Brent Libraries.

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Made By Katie Green

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