




STAR A SHORT HISTORY



**Child Health
and Wellbeing
Network**





“I have been delighted to watch how this project has developed from its first inception into an innovative programme targeting those with the least opportunity to engage in the arts. If we are serious about giving every child the best start in life we need to sustain and spread this sort of approach, so that we can generate robust evidence of benefit. In the long-term STEM needs to become STEAM with art and creativity as an equal partner”

Professor Chris Drinkwater

ABOUT STAR

STAR (South Tees Arts Project) was originally conceived in 2019 as a locality-based dance and health programme which aimed to increase access to the arts for children living in deprived areas of South Tees to improve their health and wellbeing.

The STAR initiative adopted a school and family-based approach, maximising positive outcomes for children, schools and families. STAR was initiated by the North East and North Cumbria Child Health and Wellbeing Network, delivered by TIN Arts and developed in collaboration with multiple key regional partners, including local primary schools, academic researchers, Children North East, Northern Ballet and the South Tees public health team.

“Our STAR Journey was bound by a shared commitment. From our first workshop in Sept 2019 (with partners across health, voluntary sector, local authority, research, commissioning and culture represented) our shared vision and the energy generated by this partnership fuelled our work forward. We brought together very different experiences, but we were aligned in our focus – to use dance as part of the school day to improve the mental wellbeing of children in our most underserved communities.and STAR was created.”

Heather Corlett

NENC Child Health and Wellbeing Network

ABOUT STAR

STAR ran from 2020 – 2024 through three phrases.

This overview shares the story of the development of the STAR model and the related benefits and outcomes.

Each iteration of STAR took place in areas of highest deprivation within schools which had the greatest distance to travel in terms of education recovery as a result of the pandemic.

“The STAR project aimed to improve educational outcomes, pupil wellbeing and long-term prospects by building on NENC’s strong primary school performance.”

S Dixon & L Thompson – North East and North Cumbria Child Health and Wellbeing Network – evaluation of the arts and creativity journey




DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

STAR ran for three iterations. The first pilot took place across the period of 2020–2022 in South Tees in two schools and a limited number of pupils. Then from 2022–23 STAR 2 ran in three South Tees primary schools and engaged all pupils from EYFS to KS6. In 2023 STAR 3 relocated to the west end in Newcastle and was delivered in four primary schools (EYFS – KS^).

For STAR 2 and STAR 3, the model was reviewed and refined based on learning and reflections from the previous iteration. By the completion of STAR 3, the model had been refined to generate maximum engagement across a school ensuring all pupils from Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6 were able to participate and benefit from STAR activities.

Each class took part in a block of 8 sessions (one per week). Over the course of the 8 sessions pupils worked with a professional dance artist in creative movement sessions inspired by a short ballet produced by Northern Ballet. At the conclusion of the sessions, pupils presented back to families and their peers a short sharing of the work they had created.

Works by Northern Ballet were chosen that could offer ways for the pupils to explore self-awareness, identity, and areas of social and emotional learning. Underpinning the model was ongoing outreach work outside of school to ensure the 'family unit' was both aware of and was supportive of the programme as well as offering additional family support to the families across a range of needs. The additional family support was undertaken by Children North East Family Support Workers and families needs were identified by both the families themselves and the school.



“STAR has been nationally recognised as a best practice exemplar within an All Party Parliament Group Policy Paper: “Nurturing Minds, Building Futures: Social and Emotional Learning in North East Schools”

Insights North East policy briefing, September 2024, as an example of innovative practice.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



Increase access to the arts for children living in deprived areas



Utilise the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of taking part in dance activities to support participants to express themselves and develop self-awareness, identity, and social and emotional learning skills.



Engage families alongside their child to ensure pupils felt supported and the family unit was engaged as a whole into the dance programme as well as having access to tailored support and signposting to support the family in any general needs



Ensure participants were able to experience professional dance as audience members alongside participatory activity



Celebrate their achievements through performance of work created as part of the programme

STAR IN NUMBERS

(2020 - 2024)



9

Total number of schools involved



2549

Total numbers of pupils engaged



153

Total numbers of teachers involved



936

Total numbers of workshops delivered:

OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS

(As reported in 'Evaluating The South Tees Arts Project (STAR)' A pilot study to explore the development and implementation of a school-based dance programme with primary school children, their parents, teachers, and artists to inform suitable wellbeing measures' – the full report can be read [HERE](#)

"Teachers noticed an increase in children's attention and better literacy skills in class. This was combined with more confidence to express themselves effectively which enhanced their engagement and learning in the classroom"

ENHANCED WELL-BEING:



Pupils reported feeling more confident, creative, and physically fit. In STAR 1, 74% of pupils felt creative, and 73% felt fit after participation



Children thoroughly enjoyed the programme, describing it as "amazing" and "cool," with 70.9% of STAR 3 participants expressing a desire to take part again. ((Internal evaluation report)

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH:



Pupils displayed improved interpersonal skills, teamwork, and emotional resilience.



Activities supported pupils' ability to express themselves creatively, fostering greater self-awareness and identity.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH:



Teachers observed improved behaviour, listening skills, and engagement in class, as well as better creativity and literacy

OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES



INCREASED ENGAGEMENT:



Families were actively involved through take-home activities, performances, and tailored interventions.



New experiences, such as theatre visits, created a sense of pride and wonder among parents.

IMPROVED HOME DYNAMICS:



Family support programmes enhanced routines, strengthened social networks, and improved children's emotional well-being. For example, STAR 1's Outcome Star data showed up to an 18.3% improvement in family behaviour management.

OUTCOMES FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

POSITIVE IMPACT ON TEACHING:

- ★ Teachers noted increased student engagement and valued STAR's ability to bridge curriculum gaps, particularly in mental health and literacy.
- ★ The partnership with professional dance artists inspired one PE teacher to take ballet lessons to continue fostering the positive effects of dance.

STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY TIES:

- ★ Link workers built trust within the community, enabling schools to provide holistic support to families.



LEARNING FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

The following 'learnings' are considered key ingredients in any future iteration of STAR.

COLLABORATION



Strong partnerships between arts organisations, schools, and community stakeholders ensure the successful delivery of projects .

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION



Aligning arts activities with school priorities (e.g literacy and mental health) increases relevance and impact .

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT



Engaging families as active participants enhances outcomes, making the programme more impactful for children and their support networks .

EVALUATION



Flexible, qualitative evaluation methods allow for capturing the diverse impacts of creative interventions



This pioneering project, initiated by the network, has showcased the powerful impact and potential of whole-school social and emotional learning through sustained creative activity.



FUNDING

Funders included NHS Tees Valley CCG, NHS England, North East and North Cumbria Child Health and Wellbeing Network, NHS Charities Together, Arts Council England, North of Tyne Combined Authorities, Public Health South Tees.

Over the course of 2020–2024, the partners sought to develop a sustainable, affordable model. The reduction in cost from the pilot through to STAR 3 per pupil reflects how, as the programme evolved and was informed by the research phase, we were able to refine the delivery model and apply this knowledge to deliver the same level of quality and impact but with more efficient use of resources and capacity.



STAR 1 cost £660 per pupil engaging in the programme (pilot year with extensive research undertaken).



STAR 2 cost £65 per pupil engaging in the programme.



STAR 3 cost £44 per pupil engaging in the programme.



BEYOND STAR: NEW LEARNING AND ADOPTED PRACTICES

At the completion of Phase 3 of STAR, the Child Health and Wellbeing Network handed oversight of STAR to TIN Arts and the partner organisations remaining supportive in the promotion of the activity and the replication of the programme.

Future iterations of STAR will reference it's history 'An NENC Child Health and Wellbeing Network initiated programme' recognising the networks involvement in bringing partners together. The partner organisations (TIN Arts, Children North East, Northern Ballet) continue to explore ways to take learning gained from STAR and embed this in their working practices across a range of programme delivery.

