



Evaluation of The Coming Back Out Ball in Scotland

**Final Report
November 2021**

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Introduction

Background

The Coming Back Out Ball was a Creative Engagement Project spanning two years created for the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland. The project involved face-to-face social dance clubs, online dance clubs, pop up events and culminated in an online Ball. It was delivered by the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) and All the Queens Men in partnership with Luminate and Eden Court, supported by Glasgow City Council.

An independent evaluation of The Coming Back Out Ball project was commissioned by the National Theatre of Scotland on behalf of the delivery partners, the findings from which are presented here.

Research Aims

The evaluation sought to explore:

- 1 - Reach and inclusivity of the project (i.e. who took part, where from, diversity of experiences, etc.)
- 2 - Impacts/Benefits to participants (social benefits, health and wellbeing benefits, engaging with the arts, other benefits)
- 3 - Lessons learned by the partners in delivering the project (strengths, weaknesses, transferable learning, suitability of the model in Scotland, etc.)

Methodology

Data to inform the evaluation were collected via three main strands:

- Online participant survey: All those who had taken part in any of the project elements were invited to take part in an online survey to provide feedback on their experience. The survey was designed to take around 10 minutes to complete, so as to minimise burdens on respondents, and included a mix of both open and closed questions (see Appendix A). The survey was made available for an initial period of two weeks, and the deadline was extended by a further three days to boost responses at the end. Printed copies of the survey were also made available for those who wished to provide feedback that way. The online survey invitation was issued directly by National of Theatre Scotland staff and was sent to a total of 90 individuals.
- Partner Interviews: Each of the main partners involved in the planning, set up and delivery of the project were invited to take part in a short telephone or online interview. Interviews focused on lessons learned as well as perceived impacts of the project for all those involved. Notes from interviews were written

up and key themes extracted to be integrated alongside participant survey findings.

- Case Study Interviews: All who took part in the online survey were asked if they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview to explore their experience of The Coming Back Out Ball in more detail. A total of 15 respondents indicated a willingness to take part and three were selected as case studies. The sample was based on where respondents lived, which project elements they had taken part in and demographic data, to ensure that a mix of views was achieved. All interviews were digitally voice recorded to allow case study summaries to be produced, incorporating direct anonymised quotes from participants to highlight the key sentiments raised.

Data collection took place in a phased way over a two-month period between mid-September and November 2021, with findings from all research strands combined and presented below.

Report Presentation and Caveats

The survey and case study interviews were anonymous and, in order to protect anonymity, all survey responses were combined with no analysis or reporting of responses at the individual level.

Despite a reasonable response rate overall (36%) some survey questions were answered by only a small proportion of the overall sample (for example, only those who had taken part in a face-to-face social dance club were asked to provide feedback on that project element.) This means that, where percentages are used in the report, these should be interpreted with caution as they relate to small numbers of individuals.

It is also important to stress at the outset that the online participant survey was advertised and promoted using mainly electronic means. This will mean that there is an inherent bias in the survey findings (i.e. the views of those who are less comfortable engaging online are less likely to be represented). While this was mitigated to some extent by offering paper copies of the survey for completion, take up of this option was very low.

Finally, as participation in the survey and case studies was voluntary, the sample was self-selecting. The findings therefore reflect only the views of those who chose to take part, and should not be considered as representative of the total population at whom the project was targeted or who took part in the project overall (for example, 214 people took part in the final online Ball and only a small number of these engaged with the feedback survey.)

With these caveats in mind, the remainder of this report sets out the findings from the research.

Reach, Participation and Inclusivity

A total of 32 responses were received to the participant survey (30 online and 2 paper copies). All but two said that they considered themselves to be a part of the LGBTI+ community (with the remaining two indicating that they were 'unsure').

Demographics

Data collected independently by the National Theatre of Scotland showed that most participants in the project were male (54%), compared to 37% female and 1% non-binary (with the remainder preferring not to indicate gender). Only a small proportion (<1%) identified as Trans¹. A quarter (23%) identified as being gay man, 16% gay woman/lesbian and 9% bisexual (with the remainder preferring not to disclose, except one who described themselves as pansexual.)

There was a broad age range of participants across the project, with most (72%) aged between 50 and 74. A fifth (21%) were under 50. Only one identified as being over 75 years of age and the remainder did not disclose their age.

Geography

While most participants who took part in the survey were based in Scotland, there was also one respondent each who had taken part from England, Wales and Australia. Among Scottish based participants, there was wide geographical spread around the country with 12/32 local authority areas represented²:

Local Authority	Number of Respondents	Local Authority	Number of Respondents
Aberdeenshire	1	Lanarkshire	1
Dunbartonshire	1	Midlothian	1
Edinburgh	1	Moray	2
Fife	1	North Ayrshire	1
Glasgow	9	North Lanarkshire	4
Highland	5	South Lanarkshire	1

While the majority of respondents described themselves as living in large urban areas (52%), around a third said that they lived in accessible small towns (32%), or accessible rural locations (10%) with the remainder living in remote rural locations (6%).

¹ For the purpose of the NTS survey, Trans was defined as people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

² One other respondent indicated that they were based in the Forth Valley region, covering Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk council areas.

Sources of Awareness

The main ways in which participants had come to learn of the project were either via NTS (staff, website, Facebook or Twitter) or via word of mouth.

Source	Number of Responses	% of Responses
National Theatre of Scotland (staff, website, Facebook or Twitter)	13	29%
Word of Mouth	12	27%
Other	7	15%
Poster or leaflet	5	11%
Eden Court (staff website, Facebook or Twitter)	5	11%
Luminate (staff, website, Facebook or Twitter)	3	7%
Total	45	100%

The 'other' sources cited by respondents included LGBT Age, LGBT health and wellbeing organisations/groups, LGBT social media, newsletters, and information picked up when attending other events/meetings.

Attendance Statistics

Monitoring data collected by NTS show strong attendance at the various project elements for the period that they ran.

There were nearly 400 attendances at face-to-face dance clubs, the majority attending the main Glasgow and Inverness venues³. The average attendance at the Glasgow face-to-face dance clubs was 14.5 compared to 11.6 for the Inverness sessions. The average in person attendance combined was 11.7.

	Number of Dance Clubs	Attendances (total for all sessions)
Glasgow	13	188
Inverness	13	151
Lyth	2	11
Ayr	2	11
Edinburgh	2	22
Perth	1	15
Total In Person	34	398

The overall number of attendances for online events was 622 (414 in 2020 and 208 in 2021) split across 17 sessions. The average online attendance was 36.6.

³ An event was also held in Stornoway but was not attended.

Engagement with Different Project Elements

Among the survey respondents, just under a third (31%) had taken part in The Coming Back Out online Ball, and a quarter (24%) had engaged with the regular online dance clubs. Fewer had engaged in the pop-up or face-to-face events⁴.

Project Elements	Number of Responses	% of Responses
The Coming Back Out Online Ball	22	31%
Regular online dance clubs	17	24%
Regular face-to-face social dance clubs (Glasgow)	13	19%
Pop-up social dance clubs	11	16%
Regular face-to-face social dance clubs (Inverness)	4	6%
None of the above	3	4%
Total	70	100%

Among the three respondents who said that they had heard of The Coming Back Out Ball project but decided not to take part, one said this was due to family/time pressure and another said it was “*just laziness*”. The third gave no reason for their decision not to take part.

Face-to-face sessions

Among those who said that they had taken part in the face-to-face social dance clubs in either Glasgow or Edinburgh, all but one had participated on multiple occasions, with most (70%) saying that they had taken part more than five times. The one person who said that they had taken part only once indicated that they had felt too shy to attend again alone.

The things that people had enjoyed most about the face-to-face social dance clubs included:

- meeting new people and meeting like-minded people;
- the social elements (chatting, social interaction and having fun);
- being able to dance and learn new dances, including dancing with other people/couples dancing; and
- the enthusiasm and friendliness of NTS staff and instructors.

“The joy, camaraderie, kindness of the Eden Court dance leaders!”

Several participants also commented positively on the locations, venues and atmosphere of the clubs noting that the spaces had felt “safe” and “relaxed”:

⁴ This may be a reflection of the fact that the survey was online, and those who had taken part in online elements of the project may therefore also be more likely to take part in an online survey. Those who attended face-to-face events may be less comfortable engaging with online events and surveys.

“Meeting other folks from our LGBT+ elder community. Was/is inclusive and equal, safe, relaxed atmosphere, range of activities including dance to participate in.”

One respondent indicated that the clubs had helped them in their business ventures (introducing them to new potential clients). Another commented that they had particularly liked the *“exquisite snacks!”*

There were very few things that people had not enjoyed about the sessions, with just a handful of comments made that more ‘freedom’ in the sessions may have been good (e.g. *“I would have liked more time to dance-however-you-like”*) and that some of the formal dancing was perhaps beyond participants’ capabilities. Accessibility was commented on by just one respondent who noted that transport was restricted on Sundays (when the groups ran) which meant that they had to leave sessions earlier than they would have liked.

One respondent also noted that it may have been preferable to have had some more segregated or tailored sessions for different sub-sections of the LGBTI+ elder community:

“All sessions were mixed (male, female and other genders). Although all of the L, G, B, T, Q, I and + cohorts have issues/oppressions in common, we have also fought for our own spaces over the decades - I felt that was not recognised.”

Indeed, if the face-to-face social dance club sessions were to run again in the future, this same respondent suggested that it may be appropriate to have separate sessions for each cohort with fully mixed cohorts on a rotational basis.

One other respondent suggested a more proactive lead from organisers in introducing participants to one another:

“Perhaps designate a staff member or a volunteer to make contact with people and actively introduce Individuals to each other if the participants agree to this level of social interaction. Then strangers would be introduced to other strangers and could take it from there....”

Other suggestions for improvements if the sessions were to be run again in the future included moving the day/time to Saturdays, running sessions more regularly and trying to incorporate some way of digitally connecting with the other locations around Scotland e.g. linking the Glasgow and Inverness sessions. One other respondent suggested more advertising to reach out to communities, specifically in the Highlands, to encourage more local participation.

Overall, however, feedback on the face-to-face dance clubs was positive and the model was seen as a success:

“I can't think of any potential improvements. We had a great time each month.”

Pop-Up Clubs

Among the 11 survey respondents who had attended pop-up clubs, just under half had attended only once (46%) and the remainder had attended 2-5 times (54%). Where people had attended only once, this was because they had been busy when other sessions had been scheduled, that COVID-19 had presented barriers to attendance or that sessions were too far away from where people lived.

Similar to the face-to-face sessions, the things that people had enjoyed most included the chance to meet new people (especially from different areas), to catch up with people that they already knew, to be with like-minded people and the chance to share experiences/stories. Respondents also welcomed a chance to travel to attend sessions, i.e. *“an adventure”* and the fact that sessions made social opportunities more accessible for people living in isolated communities.

Again, one respondent suggested that more regular meetings would have been good and another noted that the venue they attended had not been accessible by public transport. If continued in the future, more accessible venues could be considered, it was suggested (including venues that have disabled access).

If run again, other suggestions included the possibilities of overnight stays to allow people more time to socialise together, offering events at more sites around the country and establishing something more permanent/full time.

Only one person questioned the choice of music and its suitability for the generation represented at pop-up events, and another suggested a need for better advertising. COVID-19 had also made participation more challenging than it might otherwise have been for some. Overall, however, pop-up sessions again received positive feedback.

Regular Online Events

Among the 17 respondents who had taken part in the regular online dance clubs, all but two had attended on multiple occasions and most (67%) had attended more than 5 times. Of the two who took part only once, one indicated that they had been unable to join in more as they had been busy, and the other said that they did not feel comfortable in online rooms.

Feedback was again very positive with the social elements of the sessions being seen as rewarding (especially meeting new people and reconnecting with old friends), but the creativity and connectivity of the online sessions also featured strongly in comments:

“The creative zaniness and the feeling that I was connected to a community in a dark time.”

“The variety of things that happened, broader than the face-to-face clubs.”

“It was great fun, something to look forward to and a chance to get to know the other members from down south.”

Positive comments were also made that the sessions had been well organised, that they had been successful in reaching more isolated communities and those who were isolated due to COVID-19, and that there had been a good sense of community created. The diversity of participants was also noted:

“Loads of fun - something to feel part of in the middle of a pandemic. Kept me sane. Something to look forward to. Good to see folks from all over and younger ones.”

Feedback on these sessions also highlighted a sense of belonging to the LGBTI+ community perhaps more so than feedback on other project strands:

“...friendship and fun with the Rainbow Family.”

“Keeping in touch with my tribe.”

In addition to staying connected, positive feedback was also given that online sessions had been interactive, fun, led by good presenters/guests and had been accessible.

The main areas for improvement for the online sessions were less to do with organisation or content, and more linked to information technology problems that people had faced i.e. not being digital savvy. Some also indicated that they got bored with Zoom (which one participant described as *“Zoom fatigue”*) and there was also an indication that sessions had not allowed everyone a chance to ‘chat’ (although separate Zoom calls had been set up by participants independently of the formal sessions).

A small number of respondents who had taken part in both face-to-face and online sessions noted that the online sessions were “*just not the same*” and that they missed the benefits associated with in-person contact:

“No partner dancing, missing the instruction that came with it, no food, and little opportunity to socialise in small groups (until we introduced the after-club chats, which helped a bit).”

One participant also suggested that some of the language used in the online sessions had not been appropriate:

“Could be very ableist in language, not always that considerate towards those with physical disabilities.”

If the online sessions were to be run again, suggestions for improvements included:

- starting sessions earlier;
- allowing more break out sessions/times;
- providing more IT support to help people take part; and
- the possibility of issuing props or other items to be delivered to homes via post (e.g. cakes), similar to the gift boxes provided as part of the final online Ball.

Overall, however, feedback was very positive: “*Don't change what isn't broken. Keep it as it is.*”

The Online Ball

Feedback on the final online Ball was also overwhelmingly positive. In particular, several comments were made in relation to:

- the excellent quality of the ‘Ball in a Box’ gift boxes which were sent to participants to open at home; and
- the elders’ stories/videos/interviews which were shared at the Ball.

Some commented on the ‘different’ themes being of particular interest, while another commented that they had welcomed the continuity in themes which ran across presentation of the Ball:

“The continuing graphic theme running from the contents of the box through the printed silk of the piper’s gown through the extraordinary paper lily scenery.”

Respondents described the Ball as “*spectacular*”, “*beautiful*” and “*gorgeous*”. Respondents also indicated that they had been made to feel “*welcome and accepted*”, that the event had been “*representative*”, “*accessible*” and “*inclusive*”. Several also commented that it had been great fun and one commented again that it had helped to combat social isolation.

Others commented that they liked “*the whole set up*” and that people had appreciated the organisation that went into the event. One also mentioned that it was good value for money (although another felt it had been too expensive and felt that the gift box was an unnecessary expense).

Overall, there were very few things about the Ball that people had not liked, except the following (mentioned by just one respondent each):

- conversations in the break out rooms feeling a bit ‘forced’ (i.e. “*The previous year you weren’t allocated a table albeit via zoom but for shy people, this made it more awkward than previous year.*”)
- being allocated to specific tables (i.e. “*I would have preferred to be able to drop in and out of tables and chat to friends I knew who were also attending online.*”)
- not being able to chat more freely during the main sessions (i.e. “*limited opportunity to chat with others outwith the structured breakout rooms, including no contact with anyone during the main sessions.*”)
- presenters dominating conversations;
- not enough dancing and too many performances; and
- a number of Deaf participants being put together in one group instead of being dispersed among different groups (“*...just because we are deaf doesn't mean we all need to be in the same space.*”).

One respondent also suggested that it may not have been age appropriate for all:

“Maybe, for me, it was too raucous but it's probably due to my age -75!”

Other more general comments were made that it would perhaps have been better if delivered face-to-face or that people may have enjoyed it more if delivered in person.

Indeed, when asked how the online Ball could be improved if it was to run again in the future, most focused on the preference for in-person delivery as well as greater flexibility in the event to allow for more open conversations/more natural socialising, letting the community join in more and a chance to regroup after the event to chat:

“Flexibility of being able to say hello to other tables like you would do in real life.”

“Would have loved to go back into breakout rooms at the end to chat about the evening.”

One participant suggested future events could/should be shared more widely via the media, e.g. TV broadcasting. While some also noted that digital literacy (or lack of) had made it slightly inaccessible (and had resulted in some missing parts of the Ball), others countered that the event was well run given COVID-19 restrictions and the need for it to be delivered online and suggested no more could have been done given the social climate.

Overall, feedback focussed on the inclusivity of the Ball and the standard of production that had been achieved:

“It was special, exclusive and tailored to us. Also, [the] opportunity for some of us to be involved e.g. Little Bird routine. The ‘Ball in the Box’ was eagerly anticipated and was exquisitely presented and touched my heart. Something to keep with warm cosy memories.”

CASE STUDY 1

The participant was a single male elder living in an urban environment who had taken part in the regular face-to-face and online sessions, as well as a pop-up session and the final Ball. He became aware of the project via another LGBTI+ elder group that he was already attending on a regular basis, and decided to go along, primarily to meet new people. The project had exceeded his expectations on every level:

“The people who took the sessions were absolutely fabulous and it’s all been great fun! I think I was expecting an old-fashioned tea dance, but it was so much better than that!”

The participant explained that, until he got to meet and know a few of the other attendees, he had felt anxious about attending week-to-week, but soon started to feel *“very safe and comfortable and very welcome.”* With the move online, he explained that he had got to know the other participants even better and his engagement had continued beyond the formal project end.

The project had been particularly welcomed during the pandemic when the risk of loneliness and isolation were at their peak:

“Especially single elders, I don’t think it’s just elder people, I think there was a lot of anxiety during lockdown, and there still is, so having something to look forward to and having all the people there was always a joy and something to look forward to.”

A number of other benefits were also cited:

“I’ve certainly made some new friends which was always the hope, but it’s been good for my mental health too during lockdown. And getting word of some of the National Theatre’s other productions has also been a benefit.”

The participant had followed NTS closely since the Ball and had taken part in other social and cultural events organised by them. He explained that he and others planned to keep new networks alive:

“I think some of us are a little bit worried that it will all just come to an end, but I think too a few of us are also keen to try and keep it going if we can, and to stay friends.”

Overall, the participant gave positive feedback on all aspects of the project:

“I don’t think they could have done any better - I think it was all absolutely marvellous! I think the hard work and the thought that went into the project has been overwhelming at times and I’m just so grateful for the project and the huge success that it was!”

Benefits, Visibility and Meeting Needs

Benefits of taking part

As part of the survey, participants from across the different project strands were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree', to what extent they felt the project had benefited them in a number of different ways.

Table 1: Perceived benefits of participation (Base = 29)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Meet new people	4%	4%	6%	32%	54%
Try something new/learn new skills	-	3%	28%	31%	38%
Increase your social confidence	-	7%	24%	38%	31%
Increase your digital skills	7%	10%	41%	31%	11%
Feel less isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic	7%	3%	14%	28%	48%
Feel a part of the LGBTI+ community in Scotland	-	-	6%	28%	66%
Feel better connected to the LGBTI+ community in Scotland	-	4%	10%	24%	62%
Share your experiences of being part of the LGBTI+ community	-	-	31%	14%	55%
Feel more confident talking about your life with others	-	7%	31%	34%	28%
Learn about other social opportunities that might be available to you	-	3%	24%	52%	21%
Feel less anxious about taking part in LGBTI+ cultural and creative activities in the future	-	-	32%	34%	34%

The main ways in which participants they felt they had benfitted were feeling part of the LGBTI+ community in Scotland, sharing their experiences of being part of the LGBTI+ community and meeting new people. Indeed, more than half of reson dents indicated that they had benfited from all areas included in the survey, the only exception being increased digital skills, where more than half gave a negtaive or neutral response.

When asked to describe in their own words what they felt the main benefits of taking part in The Coming Back Out Ball project had been, participants offered a wide range of responses. Common themes included:

- feeling less isolated, achieving a sense of belonging, inclusiveness and meeting others;
- having an opportunity to dance, gain more exercise and to have fun; and
- improved mental wellbeing.

Several also focussed on the benefits in terms of feeling free to be open about their identity, feeling more a part of the LGBTI+ elder community (locally and internationally) and being able to 'come out' or to 'come back out':

"Feeling less of a need to hide who I really am."

"The main benefits for me was meeting other people like myself and helped me to come out."

"As a younger elder, to appreciate the lives of those who fought for our rights, and the challenges they faced then and now. Being part of a community."

Interests and Needs

Respondents were also asked the extent to which they agreed that The Coming Back Out Ball project as a whole had met their various accessibility and inclusion interests and needs.

Feedback on all measures was again overwhelmingly positive, especially around meetings being held in safe spaces, being relaxed and comfortable, being inclusive and appropriate for the LGBTI+ elder community.

Table 2: Meeting interests and needs (Base = 29)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The meetings/events I attended were held in a safe space	-	-	4%	26%	70%
The meetings/events I attended were relaxed and comfortable	4%	4%	-	24%	68%
The meetings/events I attended were inclusive	4%	-	-	32%	64%
The meetings/events I attended were accessible	4%	4%	6%	36%	50%
The meetings/events I attended were appropriate to my age	4%	4%	10%	36%	46%
The meetings/events I attended were appropriate to my interests	4%	-	4%	36%	56%
The meetings/events I attended were appropriate for the LGBTI+ elder community	3%	-	3%	28%	66%

Visibility and Public Awareness

Respondents were also asked, on the same scale, to what extent they thought the project had helped the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland to be more visible. Almost all either agreed (36%) or strongly agreed (46%) that this was the case. The reasons given to support this included that:

- the elder community were placed front and centre of everything;
- mainstream media/radio had shown attention and reported on the project;
- high profile individuals had helped to promote the project and increase awareness (e.g. Karen Dunbar);
- advertising and coverage of the events had been included in various LGBTI+ newsletters/publications;
- social media had been used to advertise the events and raise the profile of the community at the same time;

- the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) exhibition had been successful and attracted a lot of attention; and
- the project engaged with various organisations/was a collaborative effort (including interactions with LGBT Youth):

“I feel this is something that society are unaware is happening and through media platforms it was highlighted, shared and celebrated.”

The fact that the project was ‘different’ and was attended by a diverse audience was also seen as helping to raise visibility:

“Fact it was fun and not about being in a pub getting pissed. Also, visibility of age and representation across the age groups.”

One respondent had also received increased personal visibility via the GoMA exhibition which had been particularly rewarding as it had resulted in personal contact from people in their wider social networks who got in touch to comment on the project and the respondent’s work.

Similarly, a large proportion of respondents either agreed (38%) or strongly agreed (31%) that the project had helped raise public awareness of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland. Again, the reasons given to support these ratings focussed on the effective use of national, local and social media, the visibility of public events (including the gallery exhibition) and links that the project had with various organisations (include the National Theatre of Scotland) and with local politicians:

“I think the project link to our Elders' films on the website of the National Theatre of Scotland and our Elders' Exhibition in Glasgow's GoMA must surely have helped raise awareness of the LGBTI+ Elder community in Scotland. I do hope so! I was so honoured to be asked to take part. Also, the fact that the Inverness Dance Club was televised on The Nine Show BBC Scotland and on the radio must have raised awareness.”

Comments were also made that word of mouth had helped to raise public awareness, that there was evidence of international reach as some participants had been contacted by LGBTI+ elder communities (and others) from overseas and that the project as a whole had helped to showcase the creativity and dynamics of the LGBTI+ elder community. Getting younger people involved was also seen as positive in increasing awareness across generations:

“Good to have some young people involved in the Ball - they need to know they didn't invent being queer and that we can be allies.”

“We were able to tell our stories and demonstrate how things have greatly improved over the past 50+ years but also demonstrate with positivity, fun and hope for the future. I hope we have been able to help and inspire the younger generation to keep fighting the good fight and not take anything for granted.”

A small number expressed that they were unsure of the extended impact, but nonetheless felt that the individuals and groups involved would undoubtedly have gained more awareness:

“It certainly made the elder community more visible within the elder community, for those that attended the events at least, and maybe for those who paid interest to the promotion.”

Three respondents who provided less positive ratings suggested that more still needed to be done to increase visibility of the elder community (including creating more stories and documentaries), especially for those living with disabilities and/or living in rural or remote areas:

“It has certainly helped, but ageism remains a serious problem in society, in both queer and straight society. We need more than a dance to challenge this ageism. Also, those of us who are disabled or have medical conditions that affect our mobility are still hidden.”

Future Engagement

Participants were asked, for future National Theatre of Scotland creative events, what was the best way to reach/invite members of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland to take part. Suggestions included:

- more flyers, newsletters and connections with community groups;
- email and online advertising;
- contact with members of existing dance clubs;
- social media; and
- in-person awareness raising.

Respondents also encouraged some way of advertising events to people that don't always have access to internet/social media, for example, advertising via libraries, local housing associations and other council buildings. One respondent suggested using existing organisational networks to try and reach more hidden groups:

“On top of what has already been done, might be a good idea to use organisations that work with all elderly people, regardless of sexuality or gender

identity, organisations such as Age UK. Also, worth contacting those that provide services for elderly people. This would help reach people who are not out.”

Indeed, while ongoing joint promotion of events through LGBTI+ organisations and elder organisations such as Age Scotland, Luminate, was welcomed, it was also stressed that the focus should also not be exclusively on LGBTI+ affiliated groups or outlets, but should be wider to help achieve diversity and mix in delegates taking part:

“Keep us up to date with newsletters or continue to involve us in other projects e.g., not necessarily LGBT or elder exclusive. We all have an element of intersectionality that can contribute as part of a large diverse group of amazing humans.”

Respondents were also asked, for future National Theatre of Scotland creative events, what they thought were the main barriers that may exist in reaching/inviting members of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland to take part. The main perceived barriers were:

- IT barriers, including digital poverty and lack of familiarity/use/comfort with social media;
- anxiety, shyness and lack of confidence to attend social events;
- identifying LGBTI+ elders in the first instance (as not all will be ‘out’ or will be participating/visible in the wider community);
- transport/travel and associated costs;
- accessibility, especially for those who do not drive, have disabilities or face mobility challenges;
- choice of venue/locations in meeting the needs of a geographically widespread community; and
- how to reach people in care homes, people living in rural and remote areas and those who are socially isolated.

One respondent also highlighted the need to take care when advertising events for the ‘elder’ community so that barriers linked to stereotypes are not generated:

“Some of the adverts show elders of a particular age. Feel some younger ‘elders’ may feel they are intruding. So, by having younger ‘elders’ in the adverts etc. would encourage people to feel that they too are welcome.”

More open and honest discussions about LGBTI+ elder community issues in the wider public domain was also seen as necessary *per se*.

CASE STUDY 2

The respondent was a female elder living in a rural community who had taken part in both the online and face-to-face dance groups as well as the final online Ball. She had learned of the project via partners and via the Lead Artist:

"I thought, well, not many people my age will have confidence to get on the dance floor and 'shake a leg' but I decided to go along anyway. And, it was a lovely, lovely, warm, caring, friendly and relaxed gathering. And, there were loads of people on the floor! Maybe because they had these wonderful visitors from Australia, who were so talented - it was like watching something from Strictly Come Dancing!"

The participant explained that, while some of the 'older' members of the face-to-face sessions didn't get actively involved in dancing, she perceived that they still benefitted massively from the social gathering:

"I think they enjoyed the camaraderie and just the friendliness of it. I think that people just appreciated getting together with other LGBT people...And I think the good thing about the project is that there was a focal point - in as much as the dancing - a shared activity. Not just sitting around in a busy pub where it's artificial shouting at people across tables. This was real communication. And the presenters always invited people to speak, to make a toast or share their news - it was just such a great ambience to bring people together and make them feel comfortable and relaxed."

The respondent reflected on similar projects that had been attempted over the years and how, historically, gay, lesbian and transgender community members had perhaps felt intimidated to attend social gatherings in public venues due to fear of being assaulted, insulted or shunned. She commented positively on how The Coming Back Out Ball project was a reflection of positive social change:

"People could take along friends and relatives who weren't LGBTI+ [to the dance clubs] and so that was good too - that would never have been possible in the past. It's like a new world!"

The participant had attended various shows and other productions since the Ball along with other participants, and felt that the project had encouraged elders from the local area to "try something new." She was hopeful that the exhibition produced as part of the project and shown at the GoMA would tour other parts of the country to make the project even more visible to even more people. Overall, the project was described as "life affirming" and the participant felt honoured to have been involved:

"All of the people who were supporting us were absolutely wonderful and I cannot thank them enough."

Feedback from Partners

Overall feedback

The project was described by partners as being inspiring and hugely successful overall. In particular, the project was seen as key in promoting the importance of creative ageing projects in Scotland and helped partners to build and enhance networks both within their own country and further afield.

The model had worked well in a different context, it was felt, with particularly good buy-in to the practice of social engagement and the importance of community led practice:

“It was great to see the consortium partners always asking themselves “Are we communicating the offer in the best way for elders to feel like they can really be loved and celebrated and feel that it is for them?” That was great to witness.”

Partners expressed that they had felt comfortable veering away from the original Australian model where they felt it was appropriate to do so in order to meet the needs of the local elder community, and welcomed that the project allowed this flexibility:

“That’s what made it work for the participants here.”

It was stressed that stepping outside of a creative context and going out into communities to develop relational practice was key to the success of the project - it was always recognised that the planned project would require a lot of time to be spent in the community to grow and succeed. Even though numbers of participants may have been small for some classes or sessions, there was still a perception that the quality of the experience was *“refined and detailed”*.

NTS as a national organisation pushing and endorsing the project was also seen to be a real strength, especially in terms of increasing visibility of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland, including among political circles. The reach of NTS meant that many more people were made aware of the project than might usually be achieved for a community led project of this kind. They also provided the community with opportunities to meet with and discuss elder community experiences and priorities with wider stakeholders:

“There were some beautiful models that were merged in Scotland...LGBTI+ elders leading the process to engage with local government politicians and extend the social mission.”

The scale of the project gave some of the smaller partners an excellent opportunity to engage with wider audiences and to learn about how they might scale up future projects within their own organisations:

“Working on that kind of scale we hadn’t done before, and so we learned massively and we achieved a lot. And the reach was something we would never have achieved alone.”

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a key disruption to the project in terms of shifting original delivery expectations, however, it too brought with it some unanticipated benefits. Specifically, the project being extended online for 12 months meant that there was longer term engagement and development within a community arts and cultural development context:

“Having that additional time to expand on what actually the work is about - that relational practice within a community, to support their [elder’s] interests and needs was an unexpected [positive] outcome.”

“In some ways it absolutely exceeded our expectations, especially the online work which enabled the participants to connect on a national level instead of being localised.”

The online groups also provided artists with opportunities to explore a different modality of working to the benefit of participants:

“Being able to work in different forms - the modality of the online space - and being able to connect in that way also widened the reach of the project to tackle social isolation, which is at the heart of the project.”

One partner expressed that the online social dance clubs had been a real high point of the project and that the model that the artists had created for those events was almost an example of ‘absolute best practice’ of how to engage in an online space:

“They felt incredibly live and active and I think that the people who were involved really felt like participants rather than audience members watching.”

A number of powerful moments occurred throughout the project but for partners, as well as participants, one of the main highlights was the final online Ball:

“The Ball itself was an absolute high point. It was an utterly, utterly joyful occasion, both inspiring and celebratory.”

“One over-arching high was the way that the final event was so fully utopian because the intersectionality of voices that would otherwise be marginal were

put into the centre of discourse, which felt so carefully managed and held as an event, that it felt really, really special.”

The success of the Ball was attributed to the fact that it combined performance with engagement and opportunities for participants to share experiences and chat in a relaxed way with a diverse range of other attendees.

Although there was disappointment that more face-to-face engagement had not been possible and plans for the project shifted considerably during delivery, it nonetheless still provided *“a great first go to share a project on the other side of the world.”*

Perceived Benefits for the LGBTI+ Elder Community

All partners agreed that there had been a greater than expected impact on participants:

“Initially, I thought principally about the impact being from the final event, but what happened by elongating the project is that people developed a deeper and more meaningful engagement than we originally imagined.”

Prior to the shift online, the events in Glasgow and Inverness had been very separate but the modal shift facilitated a closeness of the whole elder community, it was felt:

“There’s something about the face-to-face connection that’s really important, but I think the shift online for this project actually had some really positive benefits. There was strengthening of connections between participants and strengthening of connections across the whole country.”

Again, the fact that the project lasted longer than originally planned was also seen as an advantage. The additional time really helped to achieve a stronger sense of community ownership over the project and also strengthened bonds between those who took part, it was felt.

The project also created opportunities for non-regular art event attenders to get involved in the arts, it was suggested, as well as to better understand the work of partners:

“I’m absolutely certain that, in terms of the creative opportunities that some of the people took part in, like the social dance clubs and all of the other events and the Ball - there were people who engaged in the project who were not regular art attenders and so it did introduce creative events to older people in a great way.”

“A lot of our elders maybe didn’t know of the National Theatre of Scotland, and they certainly didn’t know of the National Theatre of Scotland working in a

community engagement kind of way. I think they knew them as a producer of shows.”

Partners commented on the gains that had been achieved from new collaborate relationships both among the partners and with the community:

“We now feel like we have new members of the extended family in the community [with our organisation] and members who feel that hat they have a sense of belonging...Having that sense of belonging from the participants, and the reciprocal benefits for us is fantastic.”

The cross-country delivery was seen as particularly beneficial for the elders who took part in expending their networks, with reciprocal benefits for those based in both Scotland and Australia:

“The project was about people feeling not isolated and alone, so to go from a local to a national to an international connection is something that is quite transformative for people.”

Indeed, the building of the community across borders was seen as a real highlight of the project as well as the longevity of relationships that had been achieved, with many elders in both countries continuing to stay in touch through both formal and informal events (e.g. cookery classes, sharing of photographs, developing their own creative practices.)

Early on in the project, before the pandemic hit, face-to-face dance club local facilitators were starting to make friendships within the elder community, providing evidence of values-led practice playing out in a different culture on the other side of the world. Local facilitators had a real commitment to the LGBTI+ community, it was felt.

Importantly, there were visible signs that participants had started to develop their own sense of agency and social isolation had also been significantly reduced for those taking part:

“It was wonderful seeing the [LGBTI+ elder] community connected through the process...and I think being able to have the ability for elders in Australia to meet with Scottish elders... their community, and friendships and families were expanding not just throughout Scotland but across Australia.”

Lessons Learned

Partners perceived that the project provided key learning, especially at the process level, for how the community driven, artist-led model of engagement might work in different countries:

“Re-affirmation that having a really clear social, political goal with our work is what makes it feel really relevant to people. So, always thinking about communities that are not represented and are not visible and how we invite them in and how we co-create with them.”

A key learning point was that there could have been greater clarity about everyone’s exact roles and responsibilities from the outset to head off any tensions that ultimately arose. In particular, asking and addressing challenging questions and decisions around the extent of autonomy that would be allowed may have helped:

“Partnership working is an artform with nuance, and I’m not sure that we got the nuance right on this occasion.”

Partners also suggested that having a consortium of creative leads - artists sharing methodologies and having shared ways of working - could also have been replicated better:

“The ability for people’s different strengths and weaknesses to really be at the fore of a consortium I think could really be an interesting model to test going forward.”

The model changed as the project progressed and some difficult questions were raised around ownership and the way that the project should evolve:

“...the online social dance clubs became very performative and...there was something about how that developed that wasn’t really understanding what the participants wanted from the project.”

At times, roles maybe also felt a little bit unclear and, in particular, the balance of time/resource and attention being given to projects in Glasgow and Inverness. In particular, the Lead Artist perhaps supported the Glasgow based communities better than those in Inverness and some of the decisions around content and delivery were perhaps influenced more by the needs of the Glasgow based participants.

The Lead Artist had huge ambitions for the hybrid approach and online working and there was perhaps a clash between the resource available and those ambitions, it was suggested. Again, clarifying the meeting point between ambitions and resource could have been helpful to tackle early on.

More careful consideration to the selection of artists who were involved could also have been given, it seems, with engagement of artists of the same or similar age to the elder community for who the project was designed:

“...the young artists, who were absolutely fantastic, had a personal engagement with the project... and it became a bit too much about them [the artists] and what they wanted to get out of it, rather than thinking about what the elder community needed.”

Specifically, it was suggested that there was not enough opportunity for participants to connect in the Zoom spaces during social dance clubs:

“While people were dancing in their rooms and loving it, there was insufficient time for participants to chat and socialise and make connections with one another, which was much needed, especially during the pandemic.”

While this was perhaps a limitation of the project, it also led to elders starting to arrange meetings independently of the formal project sessions, with the community forum becoming stronger and having greater agency.

There was also perhaps a shift towards creative making as the project went on with a move away from participatory practice. Any future replication of the project could augment the importance of the process of engaging with communities as being at the heart of success. The social aims of a project of this kind must always be at the fore and COVID-19 perhaps hindered opportunities for more time investigating journeys into communities in the second year of the project.

Although positive in many ways, there may also have been a group of elders who were missed because of the move to online delivery:

“I do think that there are some people who are ‘missed’ just because of the nature of the times that we’re in.”

There were also mixed views among partners as to whether the social dance clubs had been impactful, with some ‘landing’ better than others among participants. There was also no measurable sense of how many ‘new’ members of the LGBTI+ elder community engaged with the project, with some suspicions that it attracted mainly those who were already quite active and visible in their own communities. Overall, it seems that the project achieved the reach and inclusivity that partners wanted early on with the face-to-face groups but that some of this was lost with the move online as it became harder to reach ‘new’ participants online. Continuing face-to-face may have helped increase the reach, but instead the quality of experience was enhanced by a smaller number engaging on a more regular and in-depth way online (i.e. regular attenders were retained).

There was more of a time commitment from partners than perhaps was originally envisioned, and some of this was because of the shift online which required a heavier time investment. This did, however, lead to really successful engagement of project participants:

“A confirmation and affirmation of the fact that taking time to build relationships with people really works.”

Partners expressed views regarding the importance of putting the time and care into a project of this kind - human capacity for empathy and care is important to recognise as key to the success of community engagement projects going forwards.

Overall, while reach and numbers had been achieved, there were some questions about whether the project had helped all elders engage in a meaningful way, and some of this was due to the way that the project content changed over time.

Partnership Working

All partners had a good presence in Scotland during the first year of the project, and established good connectivity with each other and the participants. The pandemic meant that this was interrupted for the latter stages of the project and may also have reduced opportunities for partners to meet as regularly as they would otherwise have done, and to keep up momentum for the project.

Most partners were fairly clear going into the project what it would involve and who was responsible for what. There were, nonetheless, challenges with the partnership approach given the scale and complexity of the project and the fact that it was being run across different continents.

While the balance of skills was present across the partnership, it was suggested that a greater lead in time for the project may have allowed better sharing of relevant learning and experience between partners before the project began:

“I think there were some things that happened in the early stages and then which carried on through that were challenging which could have been, if not completely eradicated, then certainly eased by longer time of planning and partners really getting to know each other and really understanding what roles were within the project.”

Specifically, some partners were perhaps much better informed and equipped to work with the LGBTI+ elder community than others:

“A new, big, complicated project where there is a lot of sensitivity around some of the challenges that elders have faced in their lives and are still facing - I think it

needed a lot of trust between partners and...we could have taken more time to have built that up."

The desire to launch the project and eagerness to get started perhaps occurred at the expense of sufficient planning time being allowed.

Some partners also reported that there were times that they felt they were not doing enough or not contributing their skills and expertise in the best way. In retrospect, where problems occurred, some of these could have been avoided if a different mix of partners had been involved in the decision-making processes. Opportunities for partners to collaborate internationally perhaps also didn't bring as many benefits as anticipated.

Although a great deal was achieved from combining the skills and experiences of all the different organisations involved, there was also perhaps scope for more cohesive working throughout and clearer leadership to ensure that all partners remained energised. In the spirit of all partners wanting to feel that they were equally collaborating, people were perhaps unsure about when it might be appropriate to take more of a leadership role and offer a stronger steer or direction. As a key learning point, more access points may have been needed among the partnership for decisions to be made. Partners could also have perhaps achieved a better depth of understanding of each other's roles and ways of working had more opportunities to meet and reflect been available both at the start and as the project progressed.

Greater attention to mapping out of roles, responsibilities and delivery plans at the beginning of the project (even if they were subsequently reviewed and changed) may also have helped the partners to stay focussed on keeping the community at the heart of the process. Again, having a document (that was different from the contracts) that clearly explained the roles and responsibilities of all of the different partners would have been welcomed.

There may also have been potential for:

- more cross-pollination between artists across continents and across cultures;
- making more of the existing links and networks of professional artists that had already been established by All the Queens Men over a number of years; and
- maximising learning from the considerable experience that All the Queens Men had from running the project successfully in Australia for a number of years.

Time differences between countries also created some challenges for partnership working, as well as 'Zoom fatigue'. Overall, however, the project had provided partners with a reflective experience to learn about how they want to operate moving forward:

“The one thing that was good was that it felt that there was huge positivity from the cultural leadership within Scotland. The Ball was really well received as an event, and the intention, which was to create a space of care, generosity and celebration of the LGBTI+ elder community. The message around the value of the event and what we were trying to achieve was really well received.”

Visibility, Sustainability and Scalability

In terms of visibility, COVID-19 created a huge social and media distraction which meant that the project perhaps did not attract as high a profile than might otherwise have been achieved, although the media attention that was achieved was still welcomed and overall, the project was seen as successful in creating a space to celebrate the elder community:

“I absolutely think that having an event that is designed to celebrate that [elder] community was key. There was an ambition and a quality of joy and a sense of the Ball being a part of the main programme of the National Theatre of Scotland which meant that the community was given status, which I think was really important.”

It was suggested that some invited organisations perhaps did not understand the potential impact that the Ball could have, seeing it as “just” a party. The fact that it took place during an incredibly difficult time meant that they perhaps did not appreciate that a high profile, celebratory, festive occasion could have a huge impact on changing perceptions, etc. The fact that many third sector organisations were also facing increased work demands as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic also meant that some perhaps did not engage as much with the project as they might have done in different times.

Some of the charities and third sector organisations who were invited to take part in the Ball and the other project elements also did not engage as well as anticipated and some of this may have been due to the semantics and way in which the project was packaged and presented:

“For some of the ageing charities and third sector organisations who should be thinking about some of these issues [that affect the LGBTI+ elder community], the word ‘Ball’, which feels very comfortable to people in arts sector, I don’t think some of those organisations felt comfortable with it.”

Going forward, partners shared a desire to get back to engaging with elders face-to-face. However, most of the partners do not exist to provide ongoing projects and so a sustainable future for this type of community arts programme may require elders to

take ownership of the project with support from partners, rather than being led by them, it was suggested:

“It could be that some of the elders take this on and that we support them to run these activities themselves.”

“There is a productive tension, not a destructive tension, that the legacy should be self-sustaining. We should be handing over the projects to the participants because we have a responsibility to innumerable communities across Scotland...There is a productive tension between having a fantastic impact through the work that we do and making sure that agency is handed over the participants to carry on that sense of community that we have created.”

Sustainability may also not necessarily be around artists holding a space, but rather partners and organisations committing to the vision of social engagement and moving out into communities. This may require some ongoing connection between partners:

“I hope that the partnership approach continues and has ‘touch points’ to continue to develop to learn from each other rather than it being an isolated project.”

Partners were confident that the project had created ‘ripples’ and different access points for the elder community to continue to engage in community arts projects in the future, as well as in more traditional arts engagement:

“There are so many different ways that that group [elder community] will now feel welcomed because there’s been a social push around their rights.”

Partners had been energised and inspired to continue to think about offering similar projects going forward:

“The organisation now has an understanding of a particular community of elders and I hope that there’s been a sense of the creation of a community for those elders and I would hope that the legacy is a self-continuing sense of community and shared understanding of the issues that they face.”

Partners also seemed committed to the principle that that projects that are co-created or community driven projects should be given the same status, attention and resource as projects that might be traditionally ‘main stage’:

“The impulse to carry on making work that is very ambitious that is also driven by the principles of co-creation and community...Making sure that co-created work

is given the status that it deserves and that it, in turn, becomes an important part of Scottish theatre making culture.”

Partners were also left with a sense of the importance of creating spaces for different sections of the community, driven by a close understanding of their need:

“Having someone else take the lead on making a space for their community was new, instead of the elder community having to take responsibility for their own community. Having someone else and take a lead, so that they could just show up and take part was great.”

Existing legacy included continued working and collaboration between the partners and partners exploring new ways of working, especially in an online space:

“This project created confidence for us to work online in a way that maybe wouldn’t have happened otherwise, and confidence in terms of the range of things that can be done in an online space.”

Legacy hopes among partners included that intergenerational friendships would emerge from the project which would develop and allow understanding and celebration of LGBTI+ histories as well as sharing of hopes for the future.

CASE STUDY 3

The respondent was a female elder living alone in an urban area of Scotland. She explained that she had not previously engaged in any LGBTI+ elder specific organised events or activities and was attracted to The Coming Back Out Ball project by the idea of 'dance' - something that she loved to do:

"Well, I saw some leaflets at my local library and thought that it looked interesting. And, I thought, "This looks incredibly scary, but let's try!""

She explained that, on her first attendance, she felt very anxious but that, over time, she had become increasingly confident attending not only the groups but also other wider social events and activities. She had attended not only the Scottish online events but also the Australian ones and explained that these had perhaps felt more relaxed with greater freedom in comparison to the in-person groups:

"I think in the face-to-face sessions...as part of the 'free dance' people didn't really get up and just start shaking their hips as much as they could. I would have liked feeling that the classes were a bit freer and that other people felt freer to just get up and boogie a bit."

She welcomed the chance to shine a light on the elder community that the project had brought because of the negative social stereotypes that exist:

"I think older people are maybe not thought of as being as competent as the rest of us and, although I'm a 'younger older' person, I think a lot needs to be done and continue to be done for older people... if we are fully out or even not quite fully out, that we have a chance and a space to just be ourselves."

The fact that some younger people who might not typically be seen as 'elders' had joined some of the online sessions was seen as a particularly positive part of the project, helping to build even wider connections. The diversity in age of performers at the Ball was also welcomed:

"Seeing a lot of different performers, and of a lot of different ages, was just bloody wonderful! You know, feeling that we weren't just a segregated group of oldies. You don't really feel that old except when your bones creek!"

The participant explained that, on the back of the project, she was keen to continue to engage in the arts, including community arts projects:

"It really sparks a part of me that I want to explore more because it feels so special and good... The dancing and community - it's still going on and is so important in my life...And I have so much respect for the creative people that made this happen. And I would really want to thank them all for doing it."

Summary

The evaluation data suggests that the project was received positively by all who engaged with very few suggestions for how it could have been improved, especially when run under COVID-19 restrictions.

Evaluation Questions	Findings
Reach and inclusivity of the project (i.e. who took part, where from, diversity of experiences, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reached participants from wide geographical area both across Scotland and further afield ○ Both older and younger ‘elder’ community members took part ○ Respondents noted that they felt included, welcomed and safe ○ Partners developed new ways of working which were inclusive and allowed them to learn new skills ○ Online format attracted higher attendance than was achieved from face-to-face events and means that more people were reached overall ○ Learning suggests that cross-generational projects may be well received within the LGBTI+ community
Impacts/Benefits to participants (social benefits, health and wellbeing benefits, engaging with the arts, other benefits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased opportunities to socialise, meet new people and reconnect with old acquaintances ○ Reduced social isolation, especially during COVID-19 ○ Gave people a chance to try something new/learn new skills ○ Helped with both physical and mental wellbeing ○ Provided some with increased personal visibility as well as making the LGBTI+ elder community more visible as a group ○ Strengthened bonds between organisations working with older people and LGBTI+ community ○ Added value was achieved by participants setting up their own chats/meetings independently from the formal sessions ○ Participants felt valued and welcomed that someone had created a safe space on their behalf
Lessons learned by the partners in delivering the project (strengths, weaknesses, transferable learning, suitability of the model in Scotland, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear delineation of roles, responsibilities and expectations needed at the start ○ Existing networks/groups can be used to maximise reach ○ Using a mix of delivery formats reaches a wider audience and the hybrid delivery (online and on in person) was unanticipated bonus ○ Reaching beyond Scotland was also seen as a key success of the project ○ There may be a need for more tailored cohort events to meet the needs of some ○ The project may have been too performative and dominated by facilitators and greater freedom for participants to lead and shape different project elements may have been welcomed

Gaps in the Data

The main gaps in the evaluation were:

- Lack of engagement with the artists involved in delivery - this would be useful to explore how the project impacted on their own practice and to identify any transferable learning for future projects, i.e. what 'what works' in meeting the needs of LGBTI+ elder communities and how artists working in the theatre and arts sector respond;
- No feedback from non-engagers - the survey did not hear from those who were aware of the project but opted not to take part. This is key in understanding barriers to participation and would be hugely beneficial for planning future projects to maximise reach, especially identifying how to engage more hidden or isolated LGBTI+ elders; and
- Lack of objective awareness and visibility data - there was no readily available data which could be included in the evaluation regarding awareness of the project both within the elder community, the wider LGBTI+ community or the general public. The extent to which the project was successful in achieving awareness and visibility of the community is therefore largely unknown and feedback included above is largely anecdotal.

Further separate research to address these gaps may provide a more robust evaluation of the project overall.

Conclusions

The project was delivered against a backdrop of considerable adversity presented by the pandemic and was seen by all who engaged as being immensely successful given the constraints. Many valuable lessons were learned in terms of process and delivery, especially around how to engage with people using online modes. While the project looked very different in its final form to what had been envisaged, it nonetheless appears to have been successful in encouraging partners to adopt more community driven approaches going forrad and has helped to create and solidify a bond between a large number of LGBTI+ elders, both within Scotland and further afield, who continue to benefit from having been involved. Feedback from partners and participants suggests a real willingness to continue to build on the success of the project.

Appendix A - Survey Questionnaire



Evaluation of The Coming Back Out Ball in Scotland

The Coming Back Out Ball was a Creative Engagement Project spanning two years created for the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland. The project involved face-to-face social dance clubs, online dance clubs, pop up events and culminated in an online Ball. It was delivered by the National Theatre of Scotland and All the Queens Men in partnership with Luminare and Eden Court, supported by Glasgow City Council.

As part of an independent evaluation of The Coming Back Out Ball project, being carried out by KSO Research on behalf of the National Theatre of Scotland, we would like to invite you to complete this survey. The findings from this survey will help us to learn what worked well about the project and what could have been done differently, as well as to understand what impact the project has had on you and others.

The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. You can save the survey at any point, and return to complete it at a later time.

The survey is anonymous, although you are invited to share your contact details if you would like to take part in further research. Please also be reassured that your responses will be combined with those of others and there will be no analysis or reporting of responses at the individual level.

All data is being collected and held in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The survey is available online until midnight on 24 September 2021. If you would prefer a printed copy of the survey, or should you prefer to take part by telephone, please contact the National Theatre of Scotland:

thecomingbackoutball@nationaltheatrescotland.com

Thank you in advance

Awareness

1. How did you first hear about The Coming Back Out Ball project? (please tick all that apply)

- National Theatre of Scotland (staff, website, Facebook or Twitter)
- Luminate (staff, website, Facebook or Twitter)
- Eden Court (staff website, Facebook or Twitter)
- Poster or leaflet
- Word of Mouth
- Other (please specify)

Participation

2a. Which parts of the project did you take part in? (please tick all that apply)

- Regular face-to-face social dance clubs (Glasgow)
- Regular face-to-face social dance clubs (Inverness)
- Pop-up social dance clubs
- Regular online dance clubs
- The Coming Back Out Online Ball
- None of the above

2b. If you heard of The Coming Back Out Ball project but decided not to take part, please tell us why you decided not to get involved:

Face-to-Face Social Dance Clubs

3a. You said that you took part in the regular face-to-face social dance clubs in either Glasgow or Inverness. Please can you tell us how many times you attended a face-to-face social dance club?

- Only once
- 2 to 5 times
- More than 5 times

3b. What, if anything, did you **like most** about the face-to-face social dance clubs?

3c. What, if anything, did you **not like** about the face-to-face social dance clubs?

3d. If the social dance clubs were to run again in the future, do you have any suggestions for **how they could be improved**? If so, please explain below:

3e. If you attended only once, please can you tell us why you decided not to go back?

Pop-Up Social Dance Clubs

4a. You said that you took part in a pop-up social dance club. Please can you tell us how many times you took part in a pop-up club?

Only once

2 to 5 times

More than 5 times

4b. What, if anything, did you **like most** about the pop-up social dance clubs?

4c. What, if anything, did you **not like** about the pop-up social dance clubs?

4d. If the pop-up social dance clubs were to run again in the future, do you have any suggestions for **how they could be improved**? If so, please explain below:

4e. If you only took part in one pop-up session, please can you tell us why you decided not to get involved in more sessions?

Online Social Dance Clubs

5a. You said that you took part in the regular online dance clubs. Please can you tell us how many times you took part in an online club?

Only once

2 to 5 times

More than 5 times

5b. What, if anything, did you **like most** about the online dance clubs?

5c. What, if anything, did you **not like** about the online dance clubs?

5d. If the online dance clubs were to run again in the future, do you have any suggestions for **how they could be improved**? If so, please explain below:

5e. If you only took part in one online session, please can you tell us why you decided not to get involved in more sessions?

The Coming Back Out Online Ball

6a. What, if anything, did you **like most** about the online Ball?

6b. What, if anything, did you **not like** about the online Ball?

6c. If the online Ball was to run again in the future, do you have any suggestions for how it could be improved? If so, please explain below:

Impacts and Benefits of Taking Part

7. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 5 is 'strongly agree', to what extent do you feel the project allowed you to:

	1	2	3	4	5
Meet new people					
Try something new/learn new skills					
Increase your social confidence					
Increase your digital skills					
Feel less isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic					
Feel a part of the LGBTI+ community in Scotland					
Feel better connected to the LGBTI+ community in Scotland					
Share your experiences of being part of the LGBTI+ community					
Feel more confident talking about your life with others					
Learn about other social opportunities that might be available to you					
Feel less anxious about taking part in LGBTI+ cultural and creative activities in the future					

8. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 5 is 'strongly agree', to what extent do you think the project helped the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland to be **more visible**?

1	2	3	4	5
'Strongly Disagree'				'Strongly Agree'

Please give reasons for your rating above:

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 5 is 'strongly agree', to what extent do you think the project helped **raise public awareness** of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland?

1	2	3	4	5
'Strongly Disagree'				'Strongly Agree'

Please give reasons for your rating above:

10. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The meetings/events I attended were held in a safe space					
The meetings/events I attended were relaxed and comfortable					
The meetings/events I attended were inclusive					
The meetings/events I attended were accessible					
The meetings/events I attended were appropriate to my age					
The meetings/events I attended were appropriate to my interests					
The meetings/events I attended were appropriate for the LGBTI+ elder community					

11. In your own words, what would you say were the **main benefits** to you of taking part in The Coming Back Out Ball project?

National Theatre of Scotland Future Engagement

12. For future National Theatre of Scotland creative events, what would you suggest is the best way for us to reach/invite members of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland to take part?

13. For future National Theatre of Scotland creative events, what do you think are the main barriers that may exist in reaching/inviting members of the LGBTI+ elder community in Scotland to take part?

About you

To help us better understand the results from this survey, we would like to know a bit more about you. The following questions are optional - you do not have to answer any that you do not wish to.

14. Do you consider yourself to be a part of the LGBTI+ community?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure Prefer not to say

15. Where do you live?

- | | | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Scotland | <input type="checkbox"/> | England | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wales | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Northern Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> | Republic of Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> | Outside of the UK | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If outside of the UK, please tell us which country you live in:

16. Please can you tell us which council/local authority area you live in?

17. Which of the following best describes the area that you live in?

- Remote rural
- Accessible rural
- Accessible small town
- Large urban area
- Other urban area

Future Research

We would greatly appreciate if you could take time to speak with a member of the independent research team to provide more detailed feedback on your experience of The Coming Back Out Ball project.

If you would be willing to take part in a short telephone interview, please provide your name and contact details below. Please note, these will be shared with the independent researchers to allow them to contact you directly with more information about the research. This information will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will be used for this research only.

Yes, I would be willing to take part in a telephone interview

No thanks, I don't want to take part in an interview

Name	
Telephone	
Email	

You have now completed the survey. Thank you again for your time.