

# CHIN UP!

## Evaluation

by Sophie McCormack



Community  
Covenant



The art of British popular entertainment

doorstep aRts  
promoting creative arts to all communities





# INTRODUCTION:

## PROJECT AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS

The Chin Up project brought together young people and veterans to explore the rich history of wartime entertainment, through a partnership between Doorstep Arts, Promenade Promotions and Torbay Town Council; funded by the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Over two years of project activity, Chin Up engaged with communities in Torbay to create an intergenerational vision of the wartime concert party, to develop the performance skills of young people, and bring the formerly hidden narratives and stories of local veterans to the attention of the wider community. The project itself was split into three distinct phases, each involving a combination of practical workshops, the collection of oral histories, and the devising of public events to celebrate the project's discoveries and creative responses. High quality live performances and a detailed exhibition were created and toured Torbay.

This Evaluation Report outlines the journey of the Chin Up project, with attention to the process and outcomes of each phase, presentation of qualitative and quantitative findings, the analysis of these findings, and how the project reached or fell short of its intended goals.

The Evaluation methods used were as follows:

**Team and participant interviews/reflection sessions** The evaluator met with the Chin Up core team at the end of each phase to gather their feedback on how the project was progressing, what had worked well, what challenges

had been encountered, and how the project would move forward at each juncture. The young people engaging with the project were also spoken to at the end of each phase, with a view to gain in depth reactions and reflections to their experience of Chin Up. The veterans engaging with the project were also spoken to where possible in order to record their experiences.

**Participant Surveys** Two of the key groups of young people who formed the Chin Up company were given surveys for written qualitative feedback, to measure their experience of the project and their level of engagement with the Armed Forces community.

**Audience Surveys** Feedback surveys were provided and collected at three different public events engaging with the Armed Forces community and other members of the public. These measured the public's response to the performance aspects of the events, and the touring exhibition featuring the historical context and imagery of wartime entertainment.

**Team Surveys** Surveys were filled out by the project delivery team to measure their experience of the Chin Up project and the extent to which they engaged with the veteran community.

**Monitoring of Engagement Levels** Participant and audience numbers were monitored throughout the project to measure the overall success of Chin Up's reach and engagement.



# KEY QUESTIONS AND AIMS OF EVALUATION

As outlined in the project's funding application, the key areas the evaluation needed to explore were:

- Its intergenerational nature
- How culturally led projects can assist the Armed Forces Community's integration
- How telling their entertainment stories help veterans to open up and tell their own stories



The project also intended to explore how culture and shared experiences of entertainment could provide a shared entry point for AF Communities, young people and the local community.

Additional intended benefits included: a rich educational experience for the young participants which would support their journeys into the world of work; a positive cultural experience for the wider local community through the public performances and exhibition.

The evaluation has particularly focused on these aims and questions, and how the project approached and realised them.

# PHASE ONE PROCESS

**Phase One** (June 2014-December 2014) was launched in June 2014 at Torbay Armed Forces Day, with members of the core team engaging with members of the public, sharing printed flyers (pictured), promoting Chin Up, and meeting members of the veteran community.

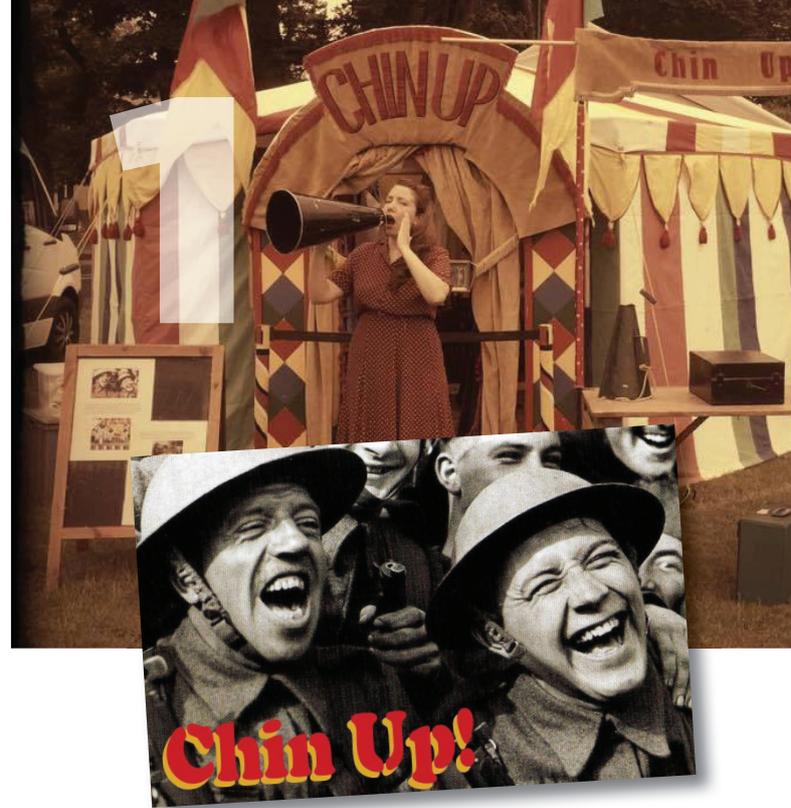
This led to a set of consultations with military groups – namely the British Legion – and contact was made by the project’s Artistic Director Tony Lidington. From these meetings, veteran participants were recruited and a filmmaker (Steve Sowden) joined the team to document the project.

Simultaneously, a residency at South Devon College led by Tony Lidington and Jon Croose, each of whom worked with a different performing arts group, ran from September to December 2014.

## PHASE ONE OUTCOMES

37 young people were engaged with during the residency – the 8 workshops received excellent feedback from the students.

Approximately 25 veterans were consulted with and attracted to the project through Chin Up’s presence at the British Legion meetings, most of whom went on to provide oral histories for Chin Up.



Direct engagement & consultation with 22 members of the Armed Forces community at Armed Forces Day 2014. From interview with the Chin Up team, it was felt that more could have been done to build on the workshops with South Devon College.

# PHASE TWO PROCESS

**Phase Two** ran from January to June 2015. It took the form of a secondary school outreach/recruitment drive; 5 school workshops and two open auditions led by Erin Walcon of Doorstep Arts, followed by the creation of a company, led by Artistic Director Tony Lidington and supported by a Doorstep Associate Artist.

The created company met weekly between March and June 2015 in Newton Abbot, with workshops and rehearsals working towards a final live performance. The company consisted of 4 young people recruited from the schools outreach and 2 performance students who supported the workshop process.

The company developed a piece of popular entertainment – the Chin Uppers Concert Party - utilising song, dance, comedy, poetry and historical exhibition which was performed & displayed at Babbacombe Armed Forces Day 2015.

During Armed Forces day two film makers collected video testimony from veterans, with the footage to be used in the final phase exhibition.

## PHASE TWO OUTCOMES

Schools outreach/auditions engaged with 457 students.



Final performance at the Exeter Northcott Theatre.  
4 of these secondary students formed the 'Chin Up Company'.  
Audience of 1000 (est.) for show and exhibition at Armed Forces Day June 2015  
8 veterans directly engaged with by the film makers.

While the schools outreach process resulted in excellent levels of engagement, this did not translate into a successful recruitment to the Chin Up Company, with only 4 students taking up the offer. From evaluation interview with the Chin Up team, it was discussed that the Chin Up offer was not fully articulated during the outreach workshops,

with the opportunity to join the 'Chin Up Company' mainly promoted through the event at the Northcott. However this was learnt from and project activity adjusted accordingly for Phase Three.

The evaluator observed one of the Chin-Up Company workshop sessions and interviewed the 4 young people taking part. The session was extremely collaborative, with much of the young people's suggestions and input being incorporated into the performance. The group was clearly very close and confident in working together.

At the core of the workshops were the archival materials of wartime entertainment – including pieces of music, poetry and imagery – that the young people were able to respond to creatively. Attention to how the final live performance reflected the veterans' experiences and also how it would be experienced by the wider community was emphasised by the artistic director.

A performance student from the University of Exeter supported the workshop process; she played a key role, facilitating the young people's vision and enabling the intergenerational nature of the workshop sessions to flow easily. Chin Up also provided her with skills and career development – as she went on to be formerly employed by project partner Promenade Promotions. **This process and team structure is an excellent example of the success of the project's intergenerational aims.** The 4 young members of the Company filled in feedback forms following the final performance at the Armed Forces Day – **all indicated that they had developed new skills and confidence through their participation with the project.**

The veterans filmed at the Armed Forces Day found the **Chin Up cultural offer worked well as a jumping off point to share their stories and contribute to the project.**





# PHASE THREE PROCESS

**Phase Three** ran from September 2015-June 2016.

Following the lessons learned from the recruitment of young participants in Phase Two, the Chin Up team adopted The Edge – a community space in Brixham – as the project's 'home' for the final project phase. This led to work with a group of young volunteers aged from 15-22 around research and oral history techniques, culminating in a trip to The Imperial War Museum in London in February 2016.

Sound Communities – a Torbay based community radio station and Community Interest Company – joined the project at the beginning of this phase, to bring new energy and skills to the Chin Up activities. They lead on a series of workshops with the young volunteers, providing them with oral history and editing training, facilitating interviews with 10-15 veterans, carrying out interviews with the armed forces community at public events, and recording and broadcasting the Chin Up Company Radio Play.

A Tea Dance held in October 2015 at The Edge enabled the team to trial their ideas for an interactive wartime concert party and collect further oral histories with Sound Communities.

A further group of 7 young people from Torbay (aged 10-15) were recruited through a Juicy Theatre workshop at Brixham College and developed a performance piece including songs and a Radio Play with artistic director Tony Lidington and Jade Campbell over the course of several weeks in Spring 2016.





Working with designers (Sarah Strachan and Sarah Bell) and a technician (Josh Lucas), a 1940s themed interactive Tea Dance was created, with memorabilia, clothes, music and other items for people to get the feel and atmosphere of the era.

The Chin Up tent housed these pieces, along with a listening station for members of the public to hear the recorded oral histories of the veterans.

A local catering company served tea and cake. A stage was also set up for the young company's performance and for live music from two local musicians playing 1940s era sets.

## PHASE THREE OUTCOMES

Core group of young adults trained in oral history record-

ing and editing methods, plus an educational and horizon expanding trip to London to visit the Imperial War Museum. **All engaged directly and positively with local veterans and exchanged knowledge.**

A company of 7 young people developed performance skills and learnt about wartime entertainment.

Four well attended public events, audiences ranging from 30 at more intimate events, to several hundred at the Air Show. **Wide community reach achieved.**

**Meaningful and in depth engagement with 10-15 veterans** in formal interview, many more through tea dances.

In a post project interview with Kate Rudman from Sound Communities, she reported excellent development of their intergenerational working skills, particularly through the interviews with local veterans and oral history training with the young people. The process proved a very successful method for engaging with older veterans – Sound Communities reported that **the wartime entertainment theme worked as a good entry point for the older people to open up about their own stories.**





**confidence had improved to some extent.** Two of these in particular (Jay Kelly and Millie Cole) were highlighted as having had a very positive experience through the project, developing their confidence and skills considerably. As a result of this, both went on to be involved in the Chin Up legacy project in Sept 2016 – working with Designer Sarah Bell and the archive materials gathered for the project, in order to produce a touring exhibition. **This is a clear positive outcome in terms of the project’s aims to develop a rich educational experience for young people.**

*“Just thank you so much for everybody that has helped me, supported me and just made me feel so comfortable with everything and I know I’d talk for... all the young members when I say its been amazing too work with you ... helped us with so much more then the play, costumes and tech, you’ve physically helped us as human beings, helped us fit in, feel needed and just been so amazing, I can’t put it in too words... thank you so much all of you and I can say I love you all for everything you have done,”*  
– Young Participant

The local musicians featured at the final 3 events went on to gain further bookings.

The veterans and older people interviewed at the Chin Up Tea Dances gave very positive feedback, with some visibly moved by the detail and feel of the installation. **Many were inspired by the event to speak about their own experiences and share stories** with the Chin Up team, young people and project evaluator.

However Sound Communities reported some difficulty keeping young people engaged throughout the editing phase (where the audio interviews collected were turned into usable documents for the final interactive installation) with interest dropping off. **This suggests that the intergenerational nature of the project did encounter challenges around the subject matter at times;** it was felt that the topic and themes may have been difficult for younger people to remain passionate about over a long period of time. Despite this 3 of the young people trained are potentially continuing their journey by working on future heritage projects with Sound Communities.

The young people who performed in the final public events filled in feedback forms at the end of the project – **all indicated high levels of enjoyment and all stated their**



# FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC / LOCAL COMMUNITY AT EVENTS

*“What a wonderful experience, you should be proud of the young people performing and the music with Becky Brine is fantastic, I loved reminiscing!”*

– **Veteran at Tea Dance**

Over the course of the project five interactive public events took place. 46 feedback questionnaires were collected from three of these (some respondents left sections blank accounting for some discrepancies in totals in following breakdowns).

## Age breakdown:

Under 16 -	0	17-25 -	4
26-39 -	6	40-49 -	14
50-64 -	4	65+ -	14

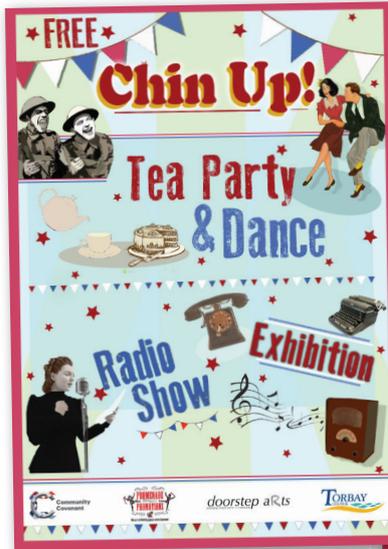
The breakdown of ages illustrates the good spread of age groups attending the events – while no under 16s filled in any feedback forms, many were in attendance at each event. **This is a positive outcome with regards to the intergenerational goals of the project.**

## Marketing: How did you find out about today’s Chin Up Presentations?

Flyer -	9
Social Media -	2
Website -	0
Word of mouth -	24
Local media -	6

Other (ie. Already in attendance at Armed Forces Day or other event nearby) - 4

This shows **the success and importance of word of mouth and community buy in** within this project; by far the main way people became interested in attending the events was through a personal connection to the project and/or from a recommendation from a trusted source. It also shows the good impact of print media, with almost a quarter of those surveyed attending because of the flyers circulated.



The Plymouth Herald was also mentioned – coverage of the events can be found here - <http://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/rock-1940s-style-vintage-devon-shows/story-29253282-detail/story.html>



## Rock that 1940s style in Devon vintage shows

By [WMN\\_MartinF](#) | Posted: May 10, 2016



Online marketing was relatively less successful among those providing feedback, with no one indicating engagement with the project website and only a small number having seen the project on social media.

The events were also covered on the local radio station Breeze FM.

We could conclude that the nature of the project – with an emphasis on community engagement, working with intergenerational participants and themed around history – made **more traditional forms of marketing more impactful and pertinent** ie. Newspaper, word of mouth, print.

### Enjoyment of Events

#### Extent of enjoyment of performance:

Very much -	40
To some extent -	4
Not particularly -	0
Not at all -	0

#### Extent of enjoyment of exhibition:

Very much -	30
To some extent -	10
Not particularly -	0
Not at all -	0

This breakdown shows an overwhelmingly positive response to the public events – with enjoyment of both main elements, particularly the live performances by the young people – **indicating that a very positive cultural offer was experienced by the local community.**

The Word Cloud below gives a snapshot of the words used by the public to describe Chin Up, giving us a quick overview of the public response.





## OVERALL REACH OF PROJECT

**515 young people** were meaningfully engaged with over the course of the project through workshops, training, rehearsals, and performance opportunities. Many more were engaged with to a lesser extent through the Chin Up Tea Dances.

**70 local veterans** or members of the Armed Forces community were directly engaged with through the duration of the project via oral history interviews, consultations, and open discussions. Many more interacted with the 1940s style Tea Dances and shared stories more informally with members of the Chin Up team.

Facebook group has 100 likes and active online community (lots of posts, photos shared etc).

The radio show recorded at The Edge in Brixham by the young people has been listened to over 150 times online - <http://www.soundcommunities.co.uk/chin-up/4592824512>

Overall Event Attendance – From interview, the Chin Up team indicated that the level of attendance across the 5 public events exceeded their expectations.

At Babbacombe Armed Forces Day June 2015, **an estimated audience of 1000 visitors** engaged with the Chin Up performances and exhibition, with a diverse range of ages observed.



An audience of approx. 30 people was observed at the Tea Dance at The Edge in both October 2015 and May 2016.

An audience estimated at around 50 attended the Tea Dance at Torre Abbey in June 2016

The presence of Chin Up at the Torbay Air Show significantly extended the reach of the project. Official Torbay council figures estimate around 100,000 visitors over the Air Show weekend; the Chin Up team confirmed that a huge number of visitors came into contact with the project installation in some way over the three days. The Chin Up tent was the only arts and heritage space at the Air Show, and stood out significantly in its style and offer.

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Contact:  
[mccormack.sophie8@gmail.com](mailto:mccormack.sophie8@gmail.com)



## PROJECT TEAM FEEDBACK

*“Completely pooped, and back to day job tomorrow, but immensely proud to have worked with a fantastic variety of young people, the team behind them, all beautiful, unique and brave to stand in front of strangers and tell stories of history that they have given their time to learn. Thanks for letting me be part of it.”* **Team Member**

A diverse range of local designers, film makers, artists, producers, and technicians were employed by the Chin Up project. With them not only came a range of skills, but a range of ages; **the team age range was 19-55, bringing a mix of experience and influence into the project.**

Evaluation questionnaires were filled in by some of the project team – all indicated a positive overall experience, with all enabled to develop key skills. **Most reported that they had connected strongly with the local veteran community,** with only one exception.

**Some enlightening feedback specifically relating to the goals of the project is below:**

*“Seeing the young people engage with the material and be inspired by the older generation, reducing the gap between the two generations. To me this is incredibly important to connect two communities that can often be quite distant.”*

*“It was a struggle to get the veteran community to come along to the events. This could be because of transport issues, or because they did not hear about them. I would suggest that we could have taken the installation to the community. Perhaps set up in a care facility for a day?”*

*“We really enjoyed listening to all of the stories/memories and watching the intergenerational contact between the young reporters and the older interviewees.”*

*“I talked a lot with my own Grandma whilst researching what I would buy, and learnt some lovely family history including little incidental things that once we got talking in detail slipped into the conversation.”*

*“We learnt about wartime entertainment and refined our oral history recording skills. We also learnt about how to be flexible when teaching editing especially with less able participants.”*

Key words used by the team to describe the Chin Up project include **“nostalgic”, “heartwarming” and “inspiring”.**