



Evaluation of the Funky Chinese Moves Project

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The project was evaluated by

Dr. Arnfrid Beier, EAGLE-UK.com, P.O. Box 124, Leeds, LS8 4YF

Contents

Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	3
1.1. Background of the Funky Chinese Moves Project	
1.1.1. Young Disadvantaged and Disaffected Adults	
1.1.2. Adults with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities	
1.2. Aims of the Funky Chinese Moves Project	4
1.3. Aims of the Evaluation	
2. Young Adults	6
2.1. Training Centres	
2.2. Participants' Perspectives	
2.3. Class Observation	10
2.4. Tutors' Perspectives	12
2.5. Professionals' Perspectives	14
3. Adults with Learning Disabilities	15
3.1. Carers' Perspectives	
3.2. Class Observation	17
3.3. Tutors' Perspectives	18
4. Conclusion	20
4.1. Project achieved National Policy Guidelines	
4.1.1. National Policy Recommendations for Community-based Programmes	
4.1.2. National Policy Recommendations for People with Physical Disabilities	21
4.1.3. National Policy Recommendations for the Prevention of Social Exclusion	
4.2. Project achieved National Health Policy Guidelines	22
4.3. Lifelong Learning	
4.4. Good Practice	23
4.5. Project achieved Learning and Skills Council Objectives	24
4.6. Recommendations	25

Appendices

Appendix 1: Classes in West Yorkshire

Appendix 2: Questions for Participants

Executive Summary

The Project

The Funky Chinese Moves Project used an innovative and challenging programme of holistic exercise. It developed the learning potential, health, fitness and life skills of disadvantaged people through a balanced mix of fun and training, which incorporated movement, dance and gymnastic-based exercise.

The Project commenced in September 2002 and ended in July 2003. Well-qualified tutors of the College of Chinese Physical Culture (CPC) facilitated the Project in various community-based organisations in West Yorkshire.

The aim of the Project was to give disadvantaged and disaffected young adults as well as adults with learning difficulties, who have no or low levels of basic skills and qualifications, the opportunity to improve their life styles generally and to enhance their employability.

The Evaluation

This evaluation is a summative individual impact assessment. It assesses the impact of the Project on the individual from the perspectives of the individual, her/his carers or workers and the CPC tutors, who delivered the course. The assessment comprises data from the College of Chinese Physical Culture (CPC) as well as information gathered from semi-structured interviews, which the evaluator carried out with the participants, carers, workers and CPC tutors. The evaluation focuses on the impact of the Project on two main target groups: a) young adults aged 16 – 22 and b) adults with learning disabilities.

The Outcomes

The Project has had a real and holistic impact on the participants' physical, emotional and mental development, which has been observed by the participants themselves, the carers, workers and the CPC tutors.

- *Young Disadvantaged and Disaffected Adults aged 16 – 22*

The young adults who were participating in the Funky Chinese Moves Project have developed their skills to 'self-appraise'. They have made significant and positive changes in their attitude and behaviour towards themselves and others.

- *Adults with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities*

The participants with learning disabilities have made significant and positive changes in their physical, mental and emotional development.

- *Life Skills*

The Funky Chinese Moves Project had a powerful impact on the participants. It has developed and enhanced their life skills such as their confidence and self-esteem, their self-expression and creativity, their interpersonal social and communication skills, e.g. dependability and commitment.

- *Lifelong Learning*

Having become more self-reflective as well as more able to apply their new understanding in real life situations, the participants of the Project have learned how to process information. Knowing how to process information enables individuals to adapt to the rapid changes in their lifetime and in society as a whole¹. For example, one disaffected young man felt ready to tackle his first job interview. Others felt their enhanced levels of confidence made it possible for them to talk more easily to people in the wider world.

¹ www.sinclair.educ/information/Learning%20A.../processlearning.htmls, p. 1.

- *National Health and Social Policy Documents*

In addition to lifelong learning, the Funky Chinese Moves Project has also achieved many recommendations and good practice guidelines that are stated in Government health and social policies. For example, the Project has achieved some of the recommendations in the following Government policy documents, as it:

- > provided community-based programmes - Department for Education and Skills (1999) A Fresh Start
- > had an inclusive approach to learning - Department for Education and Employment (2000) Freedom to Learn
- > tackled the root causes of social exclusion - Social Exclusion Unit (2001) Preventing Social Exclusion
- > promoted mental health for all - Department of Health, NSF for Mental Health: Standard One.

The Project has had an impressive impact on the lives of those individuals who were participating. It has had significant beneficial effects on their health, fitness and well-being, their breathing, balance and co-ordination, as well as their ability to focus and concentrate.

The Project has achieved the aims and objectives set by the Learning and Skills Council. In brief, it has:

- > worked with disadvantaged and disaffected young adults who have not participated in learning for some time and who have no or low levels of qualifications
- > worked with adults who have learning disabilities and whose learning has been enhanced through their CPC involvement
- > used a unique approach to course delivery which was particularly effective at engaging people
- > targeted assistance to groups experiencing specific problems with engaging in learning
- > contributed to the social reintegration of those who have become excluded
- > delivered an accredited programme of learning
- > offered accreditation in CPC performing, confidence-building, speaking and listening
- > promoted wider access and participation in lifelong learning by taking learning opportunities into the community.

1. Introduction

This section gives the background of the Funky Chinese Moves Project and the evaluation process.

1.1. Background of the Funky Chinese Moves Project

The Funky Chinese Moves Project (FCM) used the fun and motivational learning activities of the College of Chinese Physical Culture (CPC) to enhance the life skills provision of disadvantaged and disaffected young people as well as adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.

CPC is an innovative and challenging programme of holistic exercise. It develops learning potential, health, fitness and life skills through a balanced mix of fun and training, which incorporates movement, dance and gymnastic-based exercise. This non-traditional programme benefits people in the following areas:

- confidence, communication and concentration
- social and group skills
- anger, depression and stress management
- relaxation skills and self expression
- improved health
- motivation, empowerment and fun
- accreditation in basic skills and CPC Performance¹.

1.1.1. Young Adults

The FCM classes for disadvantaged and disaffected young people ran from September 2002 to July 2003². The classes have been described by the Project Co-ordinator as a “roll on, roll off programme” of CPC and Lifelong Learning. Learners could attend for a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 9 weeks. During the first 4 weeks an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) was completed. If learners chose to continue, they needed to complete a minimum of 7 weeks in order to gain Open College accreditation in any or all of 3 units at Entry Level:

- CPC Performing
- Lifelong Learning
- Speaking and Listening
- Confidence Building

At the end of April 2003, 113 learners had completed their ILPs and 37 had achieved accreditation in all 3 units described above.

¹ This information was gathered from the marketing materials of the Funky Chinese Moves Project.

² For the sake of brevity, the expression ‘young adults’ will be used in this report rather than ‘disadvantaged and disaffected young people’.

1.1.2. Adults with Learning Disabilities

The FCM classes for adults with learning difficulties/disabilities ran for two semesters, from September 2002 to July 2003. They fell into 18-week courses, with one course being held in each of the 5 major districts of West Yorkshire³. The target number of students for all five courses was 81. At the end of the first semester 49 students had completed their Individual Learning Plans (ILP) and all 49 students had achieved accreditation in at least 2 units at Entry Level:

- CPC Performing
- Lifelong Learning
- Speaking and Listening
- Confidence Building.

1.2. Aims of the Funky Chinese Moves Project

The three main aims of the Funky Chinese Moves Project were to:

- enhance the life skills provision for disadvantaged and disaffected young people as well as adults with learning difficulties and disabilities in order to:
 - address and change any barriers to social integration and inclusion
 - develop social and group skills
 - stimulate learning, self-reflection and motivation
 - enhance the possibility of employment
- improve people's health and well-being by:
 - involving them in fun and health-related exercises and activities
- create the possibility for people to obtain certificates at Entry Level or Level One through the Open College in:
 - CPC Performing
 - Speaking and Listening
 - Confidence Building⁴.

³ See Appendix 1 for the providers that were involved in the Funky Chinese Moves Project.

⁴ This information was gathered from the marketing materials of the Funky Chinese Moves Project.

⁵ As a result of an administrative error by the College of Chinese Physical Culture, the first evaluation of the Funky Chinese Moves Project could not be continued. In order to produce a robust and congruous final report, this second evaluation now includes in its research process all six FCM classes for young adults and two classes for adults with learning disabilities.

1.3. Evaluation

The aim of this evaluation is a summative individual impact assessment, i.e. it assesses the impact of the Project on the individual from the perspective of the:

- a) participant
- b) carer, worker or professional
- c) CPC tutor delivering the course⁵.

The assessment is based on a substantial amount of qualitative data, including:

- **Individual Learning Plans, Learning Evidence Logs and Student Portfolios**, which were developed for the participants by the College of CPC to demonstrate change in soft outcomes
- **Class Observation** by the evaluator
- **Semi-structured Interviews** with participants, professionals, workers and CPC tutors⁶.

The evaluation focuses on the two main target groups: young adults, aged between 16 and 22 years, and adults with learning difficulties/disabilities⁷. Section 2 of this report shows the impact of the Funky Chinese Moves Project on the young adults. The impact on adults with learning difficulties/disabilities is shown in Section 3.

Please note that the evaluation does not set out to quantify or qualify the effectiveness of the Project in terms of the management or organisation of the College of CPC. In addition, it does not evaluate the sustainable development of the Project. As stated earlier, the evaluation focuses on the participants of the Funky Chinese Moves Project and the impact that it has on their physical, mental and emotional development.

⁶ See Appendix 2 for semi-structured questionnaire.

⁷ See Appendix 1 for the groups that have been interviewed.

2. Young Adults

The Funky Chinese Moves Project was aimed at disadvantaged and disaffected young adults aged 16 to 22 years, some of whom already had a criminal record and who had all suffered abuse and neglect through their social and family backgrounds.

The Project sought to engage these young adults in its high-energy Chinese exercises, acrobatics and games to raise their levels of self-motivation, promote the process of their social integration and increase their opportunities of lifelong learning.

2.1. Training Centres

It was originally intended to interview all six classes at their respective training centres in West Yorkshire. However, one class had already finished and the students had entered their work placements. The five remaining interviews were carried out between the 14th May and the 2nd July 2003¹.

Of the combined number of 51 participants in all five groups, 36 were men and 15 women. Four groups consisted of 8 to 14 members, with 2 to 4 people absent as a rule. One larger group had a total of 26 students on its register, but only 16 attended on the interview day.

As an “outreach college”², the College of Chinese Physical Culture holds its classes in community centres, e.g. the young adults met for their CPC exercises in a gym, a college or a leisure centre respectively.

As a “roll on, roll off programme”³, the Project enabled students to continue into the next course. They could attend for a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 9 weeks. In three classes, the students had been together for 8 - 9 weeks. In two classes, the majority of the group had worked together for only 3 - 5 weeks.

However, as all the participants were of the same age group, sharing similar social and cultural values and expectations, they will be treated as one homogeneous target group in this report.

2.2. Participants' Perspectives

This sub-section comprises the answers to the questions in the semi-structured questionnaire.

All 51 participants gave a **positive appraisal** of the Funky Chinese Moves Project. A large number of them pointed out that it had helped them to develop physically, emotionally and mentally⁴.

Some of the aspects **they liked most** about the Project were, to use their own words:

- *chill out exercises*
- *meeting new people*
- *proper breathing*
- *foot-flow and ward-offs*
- *acting*
- *chi expressions*
- *helping my pregnancy*
- *fun*
- *Kung Fu fighting*
- *power through relaxation*
- *learning new things*
- *relaxes your muscles*
- *wakes you up*
- *teamwork*
- *Tai Chi forms*

¹ See Appendix 1 for the groups that have been interviewed. The relatively long time interval between the first and the last series of interviews is the result of an administrative error by the College of Chinese Physical Culture, which delayed the evaluation process, cf. Introduction, p 4.

² This is one tutor's description of the community-based work carried out by the CCPC.

³ This is one tutor's description of the FCM course for young adults.

⁴ Not all students could express themselves freely and easily. Those who were less inhibited or more articulate, however, also reflected the views of their fellow students, who, when asked, nodded their heads in agreement.

There were **no significant negative comments** about the Funky Chinese Moves Project from any of the 51 participants. Only one person remarked that there was too much to remember, but that, nevertheless, the content of the course was good.

Most of the participants have noticed **changes in the way they see themselves and others**. Individuals stated that they felt:

- a) good about themselves, more confident, more relaxed, less shy, calmer, more energetic, more supple, fitter, more motivated, that they had a higher level of self-value and self-esteem, that the CPC exercises loosened up their body;
- b) more accepting of other people, more trusting towards other people, that they had a wider life experience, that they could express their feelings in the group and with friends.

The above changes have also had a **significant impact on the way in which the participants treat themselves and behave with other people**. Individuals stated that they:

- *could control their minds better*
- *felt more adventurous*
- *had learnt to take more risks*
- *found it easier to talk with other people and participate with them in group activities*
- *saw the CPC activities as something to get up for in the morning*
- *could communicate more freely with others*
- *were more assertive and less aggressive*
- *were capable of doing things they thought they couldn't do before*
- *were more prepared to learn new things*
- *felt they could achieve something*
- *felt more motivated to make their own decisions*
- *respected themselves and others more*
- *could control their anger more effectively through the CPC breathing techniques*
- *had learnt to be more responsive to others*

When asked **what they had learned about the mind and body and how this has helped them**, there was a broad positive consensus on the following three aspects of the CPC training:

- a) *the extent to which the mind can control the body*
- b) *the significance of the mind-and-body interaction*
- c) *the realisation of the body's untapped resources.*

Most of the students felt that, through the CPC exercises, they were being led to an appreciation of a more harmonious mind-body relationship. They could see this was having beneficial effects on their health and well-being, their breathing, balance and co-ordination, as well as on their ability to focus, concentrate and live in the present moment.

When the students were asked what **new things they had learned**, they gave the following examples:

- *Chinese moves*
- *self-discipline*
- *how to use your imagination*
- *how to move and fall safely*
- *how to tackle harder exercises*
- *how to work in a group*
- *animal forms and stances*
- *how to follow instructions*
- *how to control your adrenaline by using deeper breathing*
- *enjoyment*
- *how to relax*
- *how to use relaxation techniques to strengthen your muscle power*

When asked what **practical opportunities** they had become aware of since starting the Funky Chinese Moves course, only a few students had any clear ideas. These said they were now more motivated to become a/an:

- *athlete*
- *fitness instructor*
- *horse-rider*
- *swimmer*
- *mechanic*
- *kick-boxer.*

One student felt he had gained sufficient confidence to take up badminton. Another felt he was ready to tackle his first job interview. Some felt their enhanced levels of confidence made it possible for them to talk more easily to people in the wider world. Quite a few students simply saw a practical opportunity for themselves in their continued involvement with the CPC activities.

Finally, when asked what **three things they will remember from the Funky Chinese Moves course**, the students replied:

- *funky Chinese moves*
- *breathing techniques*
- *the instructors.*

All students were invited to assess **the levels of their personal growth and development** before and since participating in the Funky Chinese Moves Project by using a scale of 1 – 10. The students were asked to place a mark on the following tables⁵. The scoring comprises **1 = no confidence** to **10 = a lot of confidence**.

There are three sets of tables: **2.2.1.** is for the 3 groups of 23 students who have met 8 – 9 weeks; **2.2.2.** is for the 2 groups of 28 students who have met 3 – 5 weeks; **2.2.3.** shows the combined results of all 5 groups.

2.2.1. Groups 1 + 2 + 3

Table 1: **Before** starting the course

Soft Outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confidence		2	8	4	5	1	1	1	0	1
Self Esteem		2	6	6	4	4	1	0	0	0
Speaking and Listening		1	2	7	6	3	2	3	0	1
Communication		2	3	7	4	3	2	0	0	1
Participation with Others		2	3	9	2	5	1	2	0	0
Improved Health		4	3	2	5	2	2	2	0	3
Motivation		3	8	3	3	3	1	1	1	0
Total		16	33	38	29	21	10	9	1	6

Table 2: **Since** starting the course

Soft Outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confidence			0	2	0	5	4	4	0	8
Self Esteem			1	0	6	2	4	2	5	2
Speaking and Listening			0	1	2	4	3	8	1	7
Communication			0	3	3	3	3	2	4	5
Participation with Others			0	3	2	1	3	5	4	7
Improved Health			1	2	5	2	6	1	3	5
Motivation			0	1	2	3	6	5	2	4
Total			2	12	20	20	29	27	19	38

⁵ As will be seen from the tables, the participants were not consistent with their entries. A number of students chose not to mark some of the spaces on the grid. In spite of this, a movement from lower to higher figures becomes clearly visible on the corresponding scales.

2.2.2. Groups 4 + 5

Table 1: **Before** starting the course

Soft Outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confidence	0	2	6	3	4	3	4	1	0	0
Self Esteem	0	4	3	5	3	5	2	0	1	1
Speaking and Listening	0	0	2	10	4	3	1	1	1	0
Communication	0	0	4	6	5	4	1	1	1	0
Participation with Others	0	0	3	8	3	3	1	1	0	0
Improved Health	0	2	8	6	0	3	2	0	1	1
Motivation	1	0	7	6	1	4	3	0	0	0
Total	1	8	33	44	20	25	14	4	4	2

Table 2: **Since** starting the course

Soft Outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confidence			2	3	2	1	7	6	4	0
Self Esteem			3	3	2	3	4	5	3	1
Speaking and Listening			1	5	3	3	2	3	1	5
Communication			1	2	5	1	3	3	4	4
Participation with Others			5	2	4	0	3	7	2	4
Improved Health			0	3	4	3	3	3	3	7
Motivation			1	0	5	5	0	4	3	6
Total			13	18	25	16	22	31	20	27

2.2.3. All 5 Groups

Table 1: **Before** starting the course

Soft Outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confidence	0	4	14	7	9	4	5	2	0	1
Self Esteem	0	6	9	11	7	9	3	0	1	1
Speaking and Listening	0	1	4	17	10	6	3	4	1	1
Communication	0	2	7	13	9	7	3	1	1	1
Participation with Others	0	2	6	17	5	8	2	3	2	0
Improved Health	0	6	11	8	5	5	4	2	1	4
Motivation	1	3	15	9	4	7	4	1	1	0
Total	1	24	66	82	49	46	24	13	7	8

Table 2: **Since** starting the course

Soft Outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confidence			2	5	2	7	11	10	4	8
Self Esteem			4	3	8	5	8	7	8	3
Speaking and Listening			1	4	5	7	5	11	2	12
Communication			1	5	8	4	6	5	8	9
Participation with Others			5	5	6	1	6	12	6	11
Improved Health			1	5	9	5	9	4	6	12
Motivation			1	1	7	8	6	9	5	10
Total			15	28	45	37	51	58	39	65

It is clear from the participants' perspectives that they benefited from the Funky Chinese Moves Project. This viewpoint was supported by the class observation carried out by the evaluator prior to the interviews and by the CPC tutors (see below).

2.3. Class Observation

The evaluator had the opportunity to observe four of the five classes before the interviews were carried out. One of the five classes had already finished and the students only presented themselves for the interview.

The activities of all four classes followed a similar pattern. They all began with basic warm-up exercises, allowing the participants to relax and loosen up their arms, shoulders, necks and hips.

Even at this early stage, the instructors involved the participants by asking them if they could remember the movements. The groups arranged themselves in a circle so that all participants could see each other.

During the second phase, the exercises became more specific. The groups remained standing, sat down on the floor or arranged themselves according to the requirements of the various activities.

Now the movements were linked to special breathing techniques, involving different stretching and relaxing exercises, which required the full attention and concentration of the participants.

Before starting a new exercise, the instructors would suggest different forms, stances and steps, e.g. the chicken stance, the riding horse, the dragon, eagle or leopard shape, but challenge the participants by saying: "What have we got to do now? I have forgotten."

The animal imagery has its roots in ancient Chinese exercises designed to bring harmony and balance into the mind-body relationship. The participants found this aspect of the CPC exercises with their proximity to Tai Chi and Kung Fu movements particularly intriguing and fascinating.

The instructors interacted with the groups by asking for feedback, e.g. "how do you feel now after the exercises?" or by going over to individual participants to help and encourage them with their work. Even the more experienced groups that had been together for 8 - 9 weeks appreciated this approach.

A third phase introduced even more complex exercises, consisting of a combination of intricate, all-round physical movements, which encouraged the participants to observe, focus and concentrate, as well as communicate and relate to the other group members in non-verbal ways.

Some of the participants in the groups that had only been together 3 - 5 weeks found these activities more challenging and preferred to observe their group from the outside. Even the more experienced participants often had to struggle with their concentration and co-ordination, which caused a great deal of excitement and fun.

The next phase would allow individuals to work with a partner, mirroring each other's movements, working with balance, co-ordination and focus. Here, the participants had to concentrate on observing, relating and communicating. A moment's inattention could confuse the movements or even topple over the partner.

From observing the Funky Chinese Moves classes, it became clear that all the participants were wholeheartedly engaged in the exercises, showing their enthusiasm and commitment to the CPC work, the basis of which is **physical movement, with other essential learning processes closely linked to it.**

However, at the end of each class, students were not given the opportunity to reflect on their learning and to verbalise this within the group. When the FCM class ended, the students dispersed and continued with their own activities.

2.4. Tutors' Perspectives

This sub-section also comprises the answers to the questions in the semi-structured questionnaire⁶.

At the outset, the four tutors, who participated in the interview, described the students as having very few qualifications, a minimum of skills and difficulties with reading and writing. The tutors pointed out that this was not because of low levels of intelligence, but that it resulted from some of the following factors in the students' lives:

- *missing part of their formal education*
- *playing truant*
- *giving in to apathy*
- *having to deal with legal problems*
- *experiencing housing problems*
- *being homeless*
- *being involved with drug abuse*
- *experiencing abuse in the family*
- *harming themselves.*

When the tutors were questioned what the students **liked most** about the CPC course, they agreed that they liked the games most or, to put it in the tutors' own words, "once motivated, they liked to do an exercise with challenging moves. Only, however, if it was not too difficult or too challenging. They liked experiencing a sense of achievement and a 'good feeling'."

The tutors thought that the students did **not like** "starting an exercise", i.e. overcoming the initial inertia, and "writing", though, according to the tutors, some of the students felt that they did obtain benefits when completing their worksheets.

The tutors stated that the students **felt more positive and confident in themselves** and **more positive about each other**, e.g. they felt more self-assured and had greater respect for other people's achievements. The tutors also mentioned that most students had **greater self-esteem** as a result of their involvement with the CPC work. For example, they **felt more motivated to participate** in the exercises and even to continue with these after the course. The tutors had also noticed an **improvement in attendance and timekeeping**.

A significant change, which the tutors observed, was that the **students have learned to recognise good points about themselves** and that, as a result, they **have become more responsive to the tutors' instructions and more able to adapt**. The students have also learned to **respect themselves more** and they have **developed an awareness of healthier lifestyles**.

The tutors stressed that the students **showed more patience to each other** and that they were able to **help newcomers into the group**. Equally, the students have **developed the ability to work harder** at the exercises and to **get involved much more readily** than when they first started. They have become **more co-operative** and **able to focus and concentrate longer**. An important change noticed by the tutors was that the students have learned to **trust each other more**, which has helped the group to bond and avoid unhealthy competition.

The tutors stated that the students have **learned to relax**, to **focus the mind** and to **control the body**. The tutors also pointed out that the CPC work has **particularly helped the students with their breathing**, which in turn has **heightened their physical endurance** during the games and exercises. According to a further observation made by the tutors, the students have **learned that when body and mind work together effectively stress levels can be reduced, thus enabling them to confront situations in a more relaxed manner with less inner conflict**.

⁶ See Appendix 2 for semi-structured questionnaire.

The tutors felt that the students have learned how to:

- *focus the mind and to breathe effectively*
- *do new movements and forms*
- *carry out special stretching techniques*
- *participate in interactive exercises*
- *apply personal and soft skills such as multitasking*
- *solve problems*
- *work in teams*
- *build their motivation and confidence*
- *practise special relaxation techniques*
- *exercise social skills and points of etiquette*
- *improve their health and fitness.*

The tutors agreed that the students had started the CPC course with low levels of **confidence** and **self-esteem**, but that they have gradually learned to communicate confidently as individuals as well as in groups. The tutors said that, measured on a scale from 1 – 10, this would represent an increase from 1/3 to 3/6.

An improvement in **speaking and listening** as well as **communication skills** was seen as an important result of the CPC exercises. The students were **able to follow instructions, accept and give feedback** to improve performance. On a scale from 1 –10, this would represent an increase from 2/4 to 5/7.

According to the tutors, **participation with others** was low initially because of a lack of confidence as well as speaking and listening skills. The improvements that have been observed throughout the course correspond to an increase of 2/3 to 5/7, on a scale of 1 – 10.

The tutors pointed out that the students had little or no knowledge of **health** or lifestyle prior to their involvement with the CPC Project. Many of them were adopting new patterns, e.g. trying to stop smoking. To the tutors this represented an increase of 4 to 7/8, on a scale from 1 – 10.

Originally, the students had little or no **motivation to improve their basic skills**. The tutors noticed that, since their participation in the CPC course, some of them have been trying to access further education or training to attain more skills for employment. On a scale from 1 – 10, this would represent an increase of 2 to 6/7.

One tutor noted that many students cannot see a future or imagine themselves in a job, but some have become **motivated by the CPC exercises to become fitness instructors or sports teachers**.

The tutors thought that the **students will remember** the following **three things**, different physical activities, effective breathing and good fun.

2.5. Professionals' Perspectives

The professionals' perspectives closely overlap in all the main points with the tutors' perspectives and the evaluator's observations.

3. Adults with Learning Disabilities

The College of Chinese Physical Culture (CPC) ran 5 Funky Chinese Moves classes for adults with learning difficulties/disabilities¹. Interviews were held at two classes, with a total of 20 participants.

8 participants (6 men and 2 women) were present in one class and 12 participants (6 men and 6 women) in the other. Both classes had 12 students on their registers each.

After a time of observing the classes in action, the evaluator carried out an interview with one carer of each respective group, as well as with the tutors who facilitated the classes.

The carers stated that the participants had mild forms of Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Epilepsy and Down's Syndrome as well as other learning disabilities such as speech impediments. In each class, there was one individual with a more severe disability, e.g. an adult with cerebral palsy, who participated in a wheelchair.

The participants in both Funky Chinese Moves classes had the above learning difficulties/disabilities. As these two groups were homogeneous, they will be treated as one target group in this report.

The interviews of both the carers and the tutors were based on the questions in the semi-structured questionnaire.

3.1. Carers' Perspectives

According to the carers, the participants **liked the games most of all, the different forms, stances and steps**, which reminded them of different animals. They liked going out to different activities and enjoyed **the challenge** and **the fun** of being together in a group.

The carers were **not aware of any negative feelings** towards the CPC exercises, other than that the participants sometimes felt a little tired. One carer stated that the adults with learning difficulties/disabilities do not hold strong opinions about things and that they do not feel embarrassed by their actions. She also described them as immediate and explained that they do not have to overcome the defences and resistances of mainstream students.

The changes observed by the carers were that the participants had developed **greater trust in themselves and others, especially in the tutors**. They had a better self-image and wanted to show what they had learnt, demonstrating to the world around them that they could do as well as everybody else, e.g. their improved timekeeping.

The carers also noticed that, although the participants were all at different levels, they **valued and supported each other more**. They also tried to do things for themselves a little more, e.g. cutting up their food, thus slowly becoming freer of old family-background stereotypes like "you can't do this" [by implication, "because you are disabled"]. Whereas, according to the carers, the CPC work encourages the participants to do things for themselves, even if it goes wrong.

One carer remarked that the CPC work has helped the **participants to realise that there are other options and opportunities** in their lives than their usual day-to-day routines, which has led them towards **making choices for themselves**. This in turn has heightened their motivation, raised their levels of confidence and self-esteem, which again has helped them to **respect themselves and others more**.

¹ See Appendix 1 for the training centres and the groups that have been interviewed.

The carers further stated that, although “it [the learning] works without knowing how”, the participants had become slightly more aware of their **greater self-discipline** as well as of their **better co-ordination in their dance sequences and movements**.

As an example, one carer referred to the **“knock-on effect” experienced by one particular participant**, who was always coming late to the exercises, because he wanted to be late. One day, he suddenly realised that if he came late on Thursdays, he would miss the CPC work. From then on, he started to come when he was supposed to come.

According to the carers, the participants have **learned a number of new things, e.g. breathing, stances, dance movements and animal pictures**. They have learned, for example, what an eagle is, how it moves and what it looks like. They have learned to **co-ordinate their movements** better, to **communicate more effectively** with each other, and to be **a little more cheeky**.

The carers observed that the participants’ levels of **confidence and self-esteem have increased** considerably. On a scale from 1 – 10, this would correspond to 1/3 to 3/6.

The improvement in **speaking and listening** as well as **communication skills** was rated similarly highly by the carers, although one of them pointed out that the word ‘listening’ should be substituted for ‘seeing’ with most of the participants. For example, they rather followed the physical movements, gestures and signs from the instructors than their verbal instructions.

Though, with regard to **participation with others**, there was a general improvement from 1/3 to 4/6, the participants have always been very spontaneous and open. In the words of one of the carers, “they are very touchy-feely persons and [can be] close to other people quite quickly”.

The carers stated that, although the participants have certain disabilities, **they are not unhealthy**, but by doing the CPC exercises they **have become stronger and fitter**.

The carers suggested that rather than seeing their possible further improvement in terms of gaining a stronger **motivation to improve basic skills**, the participants have become more hopeful and more cheerful individuals, coping more effectively and even more humorously with their disabilities.

The carers reported that the participants were eager to do **another CPC course, with its unique, away-from-the-centre activities, as they felt this to be a safe environment for them**.

The **three things they would remember** from the course were the **moves, the games and the tutors**.

3.2. Class Observation

It became clear from observing the Funky Chinese Moves classes that the CPC exercises use a holistic approach to develop effective skills and to promote personal growth.

Not only is the approach layered in a way that engages the individual's physical, emotional and mental/intellectual centres in the learning process, but it is also adapted to the diverse needs and capabilities of the participants in each group.

The exercises in both classes passed through a number of clearly recognisable stages. At first, the participants were asked to stand in a circle and to relax. They began with basic warm-up exercises, swinging their arms and rotating their shoulders.

Gradually, all the limbs of the body were brought into play, calling upon everybody's undivided attention and concentration. Where any of the participants experienced difficulties, help was quickly at hand from one or both of the instructors.

Progressively, special breathing techniques were linked to the exercises. One system, known as Kai men or Chinese yoga, with its very slow, subtle movements and breathing was used to improve the participants' concentration.

It was evident from observing the groups in action that the CPC exercises were having a beneficial effect on the overall conditioning of the participants. Not only did their confidence improve visibly, but in time also their posture appeared more balanced and their movements more fluid.

Posture and movement are at the centre of the CPC exercises. For example, the stances of animals and birds are imitated by copying their posture and movements. As part of a large group exercise, a ball was passed around, using the stances of the bear and the riding horse.

From the large-group exercises, the work finally moved on to more complex one-to-one exercises. In one of these, the partners had to contact each other's wrists lightly and then make circular movements with their arms. At the same time, they had to move backwards and forwards through stances, whilst keeping their feet firmly on the ground.

The idea behind this exercise is to unbalance each other, but by remaining completely relaxed and without using the slightest physical strength. In this way, the participants learn how to release their physical tension, how to move together in harmony with their partner and how to co-ordinate their centres, mental, emotional and physical.

One of the two classes visited by the evaluator gave an end-of-term demonstration performance in front of a large audience of other adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. At the end of their performance anybody from the audience was invited to join in with the CPC exercises.

During the demonstration performance, the original 12 participants took the audience through a series of CPC exercises. They used visual aids, drawings and pictures of animals and birds, which they had created themselves, to show to the lively and enthusiastic audience after each exercise.

The senior instructor explained the benefits of particular CPC exercises, e.g.:

- improves breathing, co-ordination and balance – Four Directional breathing exercise
- raises levels of attention and concentration – Stances: Eagle, Bear, Riding Horse, Dragon, Duck, Snake
- develops flexibility and mobility – 'Over and Under' game, using Bear and Riding Horse
- helps participants to move harmoniously together – Adhering Hands.

It was clear to see that these CPC exercises stimulated the participants mentally, emotionally and physically. As time went on, they became more alive and self-expressive. Their eyes were shining brightly, and their faces radiated with a warmly glowing enthusiasm.

3.3. Tutors' Perspectives

The tutors' perspectives closely overlap with the carers' perspectives and also broadly reflect the evaluator's own observations. However, some of the tutors' comments, which do not coincide with the carers' and the evaluator's observations, are set out in this section.

The tutors pointed out that, in all CPC programmes, the participants get **more involved and achieve better results** when their learning happens on an unconscious level. Conscious connections are usually made at a later stage and unexpectedly.

The unconscious learning process takes place through non-verbal methods of communication, by using pictures and stances of animals, gestures, touch and visual demonstration.

For example, moving their arms and making vertical circles may demonstrate the action of window cleaning. The participants' mental visualisation takes over and the process of cognition sets in.

The participants are learning to learn in a different way from formal learning methods, which has many other outcomes. For example, they are taken out of themselves, recognising that they are complete human beings with abilities.

One tutor pointed out that this could clearly be seen, when the students became actively and creatively involved in developing the programme for the end-of-term demonstration performance.

All tutors agreed that the students responded positively to being stimulated in their learning by constant encouragement and praise, not by pressure and the threat of failure. As the tutors said: "That is why playing and having fun are at the centre of the CPC exercises."

4. Conclusion

The Funky Chinese Moves Project has achieved its outputs and outcomes for the Learning and Skills Council as well as its aims and objectives.

The Project has demonstrated that a significant number of participants have gained valuable life skills. They have become healthier and happier and they have transformed into more self-confident and self-reflective individuals.

Significantly, the Project has met a wide range of the Government's national health and social care policies.

4.1. Project achieved National Policy Guidelines

There are national policy guidelines that refer to the two main target groups of

a) disadvantaged and disaffected young adults aged 16 – 22 and b) adults with physical disabilities, which are discussed in Sections 2 and 3.

4.1.1. National Policy Recommendations for Community-based Programmes

In 1999, the Department for Education and Skills produced the document that highlights the need for community-based programmes¹.

The Working Group recommends that:

“it is wrong to regard a large number of adults with poor basic skills as permanently hard to reach. Arrangements need to be made to package provision in a way that is attractive to all. The best examples of community-based provision have motivated some of those not otherwise attracted by the simple device of linking provision to common concerns. Only by harnessing the energy and outreach of community organisations will the message of basic skills get across to large numbers in the target group. Community organisations are often close to those who are not participants in formal education or in civic life. Their contribution within the National Strategy is vital.”

As has been seen in Sections 1, 2 and 3 of this report, the College of Chinese Physical Culture (CPC) is an outreach college.

The Funky Chinese Moves Project was facilitated on-site, which ensured that the learners had easy access and were in an appropriate environment.

The comments of the learners, carers, workers and tutors show that the Project has met the Working Group's recommendations.

¹ Moser, C. (1999) A Fresh Start: improving literacy and numeracy, DfES publications, p. 51.

4.1.2. National Policy Recommendations for People with Physical Disabilities

In September 1999, the Department of Education and Employment established a working group to look into the basic skill needs of adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities².

As regards persons with physical disabilities, the working group recommended that:

“good practice which is promoted should centre around the inclusive approach to learning. This means making programmes of study directly relevant to the individuals’ needs and priorities, [...], creating programmes and curricula which are flexible, providing the necessary access to resources, ensuring the pace of programmes meets the needs of those with physical disabilities, placing a high priority on the development of practical skills, and teaching basic skills in real life situations” (ibid).

The comments from the carers and the CPC tutors (see section 3) show that the Funky Chinese Moves Project for Adults with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities has met the above recommendations.

In brief, the Project:

- was inclusive
- was facilitated on-site, which ensured the learners had easy access and were in an appropriate environment
- had flexible, client-centred programmes
- developed practical skills such as physical exercises for easier movements and counting skills
- was offered as a group-based exercise, which ensured the participants interacted with others.

4.1.3. National Policy Recommendations for the Prevention of Social Exclusion

In March 2001, the Government published a document that highlighted the need to tackle social exclusion. In this document, social exclusion is defined as:

“...a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown”³.

The following three goals for tackling social exclusion are given:

- > “preventing social exclusion happening in the first place – by reducing risk factors and acting with those who are already at risk;
- > reintegrating those who become excluded back into society; and
- > delivering basic minimum standards to everyone – in health, education, in-work income, employment and tackling crime – using ambitious targets and extra resources”⁴.

The document also explains that a special Government Department, the **Social Exclusion Unit**,

“...was set up to co-ordinate policy-making on specified cross-cutting topics such as school exclusion and truancy, rough sleeping, teenage pregnancy, youth at risk and deprived neighbourhoods”⁵.

As has been seen in Section 2 of this report, the College of Chinese Physical Culture, through its confidence-building activities and exercises, has enabled disadvantaged and disaffected young adults to work positively with some of the above issues and thus helped them to “reintegrate back into society” (ibid., p.1).

Moreover, “by [...] acting with those who are already at risk”, the College of Chinese Physical Culture has **prevented** some aspects of “social exclusion happening in the first place” (ibid.). It has also prevented already existing unfavourable conditions from deteriorating even further.

2 DfEE (2000) Freedom to Learn, DfEE publications, p. 1.

3 http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/publications/reports/html/pse/pse_html/01.htm, p. 1.

4 http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/publications/reports/html/pse/pse_html/04.htm, p. 1.

5 http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/publications/reports/html/pse/pse_html/summary.h..., p. 2.

4.2. Project achieved National Health Policy Guidelines

The Funky Chinese Moves Project used movement, dance, gymnastic exercise and special breathing techniques to improve health and well-being. Consequently, it met Standard One in the National Service Framework for Mental Health: "Health and social services should a) promote mental health for all, working with individuals and communities and b) combat discrimination against individuals and groups with mental health problems, and promote their social inclusion"

The comments that were made by the participants, carers, workers and tutors in Sections 2 and 3 of this report demonstrate that the Project had a positive impact on their mental attitude.

4.3. Lifelong Learning

The participants of the Funky Chinese Moves Project have learned how to be more reflective and how to process information gained through their raised awareness. Processing information, understanding it, interpreting it, applying it and using one's knowledge is crucial for any individual to cope with the amount and flow of information in the twenty first century⁶.

Knowing how to process information will enable individuals to adapt to the rapid changes in their lifetime and in society as a whole (ibid.). Learning about a particular field of study can help people to access employment (ibid.).

The College of Chinese Physical Culture (CPC) uses a non-traditional programme that enables individuals 'to process information for themselves - by themselves'. The method used by the College also teaches individuals how to:

- participate in group activities
- take risks
- interact with others
- reflect on their learning
- observe their peers' learning
- make connections
- respect diversity
- identify areas for self-improvement and self-development (ibid., p. 2).

The Project had a positive impact on people's lives. It offered a holistic programme that enhanced the physical, mental and emotional development of individuals in a fun 'learning' environment.

The participants said that they felt healthier and happier physically and a great deal better mentally and emotionally. The CPC tutors and the carers also observed these changes.

⁶ www.sinclair.educ/information/Learning%20A.../processlearning.htmls, p. 1.

4.4. Good Practice

This section has been sub-divided into two parts; it identifies good practice and guidelines when working with:

- disadvantaged and disaffected young adults, and
- adults with learning disabilities.

4.4.1. Disadvantaged and Disaffected Young Adults

In December 2001, a Press Release issued by the Policy Studies Institute highlighted the problems of disadvantaged and disaffected young adults, stating:

“Many unemployed young people lead lives beset by problems that go beyond not having a job. Combinations of family disruption, disability, homelessness, drug and alcohol problems, criminal records, poor mental health, and race discrimination can make progress in employment seem almost impossible. However, a new report from the Policy Studies Institute and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows how, with the right support, young people can overcome these obstacles and start to realise their ambitions in life”⁷.

Three key findings of the study are that:

- 1) *“lack of confidence led some young people to give up easily. Further pressure could be unhelpful for such young people, who needed understanding, encouragement and a chance to succeed in some way.*
- 2) *Getting work was not the end of the story. The first few weeks of a new job were seen as a danger period when many disadvantaged young people needed support. Many gave up in the face of problems that they felt unable to resolve.*
- 3) *Those who try to support young unemployed people need to focus on helping them to realise their potential,[...]” (ibid., p. 1.).*

As has been seen in Section 2 of this report, raised levels of confidence and self-esteem are major soft outcomes of the CPC work. Similarly, the CPC approach to learning is based on understanding and encouragement, on fun and enjoyment, not on pressure and the threat of failure. Furthermore, the ancient Chinese exercises, which are at the core of the CPC work, generate the necessary motivation in the students to “realise their potential” (ibid., p. 2).

From this it can be seen that, in its work with disadvantaged and disaffected young adults, the College of Chinese Physical Culture used the good practice that has been advocated in the report by the Policy Studies Institute and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

4.4.2. Adults with Learning Disabilities

In May 2003, the Magazine of International Health Exchange published an article about disabled people and how they can “participate directly in the baseline surveys and management of new projects”⁸.

“Disability: towards a new management. Different angles of intervention are necessary to address the various issues related to disability – and the implications of this global approach on project management are significant. Disabled people should be recognised not only as the primary beneficiaries but also the key drivers behind disability-intervention measures. It is fundamental that disabled people participate directly in the baseline surveys and management of new projects” (ibid.).

⁷ http://www.psi.org.uk/news/pressrelease.asp?news_item_id=6, p. 1.

⁸ Blanchet, K and Acworth, C (2003) The dynamics of disability, The Health Exchange, May, p. 26

Although the article discusses large and complex projects, the philosophy underlying the discussion equally applies to smaller, less complex projects, since it is concerned with “capacity building activities” as well as “understanding the delicate balance of relationships within communities” (ibid., p. 27).

As has been seen in Section 3 of this report, it is one of the aims of the College of CPC to encourage greater independence and self-reliance in the adults with learning disabilities. For example, they were encouraged to “participate directly” in developing the programme for the end-of-term demonstration performance.

From this it can be seen that, in its work with adults who have learning disabilities, the College of Chinese Physical Culture uses the good practice that has been advocated in the above article.

4.5. Project achieved Learning and Skills Council Objectives

The Funky Chinese Moves Project has achieved the objectives as stated in the contract with the Learning and Skills Council.

In brief, the Project:

- offered a community-based course integrating basic and employability skills within the fun and health related activity of the College of Chinese Physical Culture
- worked with disadvantaged and disaffected young adults without basic or key skills, who had no or low levels of qualifications
- worked with adults who have a variety of learning disabilities and whose learning has been enhanced through their CPC involvement
- used a unique approach to course delivery which is particularly effective at engaging people
- offered accreditation in CPC performing, confidence building, speaking and listening
- promoted wider access and participation in lifelong learning by taking learning opportunities into the community
- targeted assistance to groups experiencing specific problems with engaging in learning
- delivered an accredited programme of learning by which participants could gain a minimum of two qualifications at NVQ Entry Level or Level One leading to progression into further learning or employment.

This evaluation has measured the impressive distance travelled by the participants in terms of increased levels of **basic skills** such as:

- confidence
- self-esteem
- communication
- speaking and listening skills
- participation with others
- improved health
- raised motivation to want to improve basic skills⁹.

4.6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the College of CPC end each class with a brief session of self-reflection and a short group discussion. This will encourage the participants to reflect on their learning. They will become more verbally empowered, which will enable them to make conscious connections with their CPC activities.

It is also recommended that this report be shared with key agencies that have a statutory responsibility to improve the lives of disadvantaged and disaffected young people and adults with learning disabilities, e.g. Primary Care Trusts.

⁹ See Tables, 1, 2 and 3 in Section 2.

Appendix 1: Classes in West Yorkshire

Young Adults

	<u>Interviews</u>
Wakefield Action (Wakefield)	19th May 2003
CMS Huddersfield (Batley)	17th June 2003
Calderdale Training (Halifax)	23rd June 2003
Rathbone Training (Bradford)	24th June 2003
General Physics (Halifax)	02nd July 2003
Initial Training (Bradford)	(not interviewed)

All six classes had been scheduled for interviews, but at the time when the interviews were held, the last class (Initial Training in Bradford) had already finished and the students were on their work placements.

Adults with Learning Disabilities

	<u>Interviews</u>
Halifax (Calderdale College)	4th May 2003
Wakefield (Wakefield Training Centre)	26th June 2003
Bradford (Bradford College)	(not interviewed)
Dewsbury (Dewsbury College)	(not interviewed)
Leeds (Blenheim Training Centre)	(not interviewed)

Interviews for Adults with Learning Disabilities had been scheduled for two classes only.

The venues given above are those of the second semester. During the first semester, students in Leeds gathered at the College of Technology, the Wakefield class convened at Wakefield College and the Bradford class was hosted and organised by Work Able.

Appendix 2: Questions for Participants

1. What do you like the most about the CPC course?
2. What don't you like?
3. What changes have you noticed in the way you see
 - a) yourself
 - b) other people?
4. How do these changes affect the way you
 - a) treat yourself
 - b) behave with other people?
5. What have you learned about the mind and body?
6. Has this helped you? Give an example.
7. What new things have you learned?
8. What was your level of the following factors before the course and what is it now:
 - a) confidence
 - b) self esteem
 - c) speaking and listening skills
 - d) communication
 - e) participation with others
 - f) improved health
 - g) motivation to improve basic skills?
9. What opportunities have you become aware of since being on the Funky Chinese Moves course?
10. What three things will you remember from this course?

¹ The Questions for Carers and Tutors are identical in content, but have been re-formulated to suit the different audiences.