

# **Urban Beatz 2007 at Beaconsfield School**

## **Social Return on Investment Report**

by  
Tania Wickham  
Thames Valley Partnership Associate  
June 2008



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at Beaconsfield School

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# 1. Introduction

In May 2007 The Thames Valley Partnership was invited to take part in a pilot project commissioned by The Vodafone UK Foundation to explore the practical application of an evaluative approach known as Social Return on Investment (SROI).

The Corporate Citizenship Company worked with a small group of charities to explore the potential for measuring the social impact of their activities in this way and to create a series of toolkits to enable other organisations to decide whether SROI would be an appropriate approach for them and, if so, how to conduct a SROI analysis.

After some deliberation, The Thames Valley Partnership made the decision to test out the feasibility of conducting a retrospective SROI analysis on a small-scale arts project, the Urban Beatz project at Beaconsfield School.

This report will:

- set the project in its context,
- describe the SROI process,
- summarise the findings of the pilot,
- make recommendations based on the findings.

## **2. The context**

### **Thames Valley Partnership**

Thames Valley Partnership is a small organisation which aims to tackle social exclusion and bring people and organisations together to create safer and stronger communities and longer term and sustainable solutions to the problems of crime and social exclusion.

Using art is a core element of the Partnership's approach as a powerful way of motivating, building bridges and communicating ideas. Thames Valley Partnership employs a Creative Arts Officer, who developed and coordinated the Urban Beatz project.

### **Beaconsfield School**

Beaconsfield School is a co-educational secondary modern school in Buckinghamshire and has approximately 800 pupils. It has been a specialist school for the arts since September 2006, and has the only Arts Learning Centre in the authority. The centre's remit is to develop creativity across the curriculum and help modify the behaviour of specific groups of students through the arts. The school employs a full-time Arts Inclusion Teacher.

### **Urban Beatz at Beaconsfield School**

Urban Beatz at Beaconsfield School was part of a partnership hip-hop/street dance project funded by the Thames Valley Partnership to encourage young people who might not ordinarily have the opportunity to participate in dance activity to get involved in dance. Workshops, led by two street dance artists and supported by mentees, took place in the school during the summer term 2007, involving twenty Year 9 pupils, and the group worked towards their contribution to a major performance at The Wycombe Swan Theatre on Sunday May 20th 2007.

The Year 9 pupils selected included a high proportion of pupils who had been exhibiting disruptive behaviour in their mainstream classes and/or who had a history of truanting from school. Up to four of the pupils were at risk of exclusion from the school when the project took place.

### **SROI**

The SROI approach attempts to assign monetary values to the social and economic benefits of specific projects and express these in relation to project costs. To calculate the SROI the monetarized value is divided by the value of the resources invested in the project. In other words, the SROI approach quantifies the positive social impacts generated as a result of the financial investment. SROI can thus demonstrate the wider benefits that accrue to society as a result of an organisation's work.

## **SROI and Urban Beatz**

The SROI analysis conducted on Urban Beatz at Beaconsfield School aimed to estimate the social added value of the project, in other words the benefit the project provided in terms of its social impact, and to evaluate the level of return on investment this represented.

Prior to the start of Urban Beatz, the underlying assumptions were that participation in the dance project would not only give pupils the opportunity to participate in dance, perhaps for the first time, but could also result in:

- better attendance at school,
- improved classroom behaviour and
- an increased likelihood of participation in extra-curricular activities.

Reduced truancy rates combined with improved behaviour decrease the likelihood of exclusion from school and its potential consequences. The SROI analysis thus focused on these outcomes to calculate the return on investment to society of the Urban Beatz project.

### 3. The SROI Process

This section will describe the stages of the SROI process and explain how the SROI was calculated as well as describe the experience from the participants' point of view. It will therefore include the 'soft' as well as monetized outcomes achieved.

In order to assess the monetary benefit to society of the social added value of the Urban Beatz project at Beaconsfield School, data on Inputs (the cost of the Project), Outputs (the number of pupils completing the Project) and Outcomes (what changed as a result of the Project) were collected. Next, decisions were made as to what extent the positive outcomes could be attributed to the Project, and to what extent they would have happened anyway. Finally, relevant economic data was used to calculate the monetary impact of the Project.

Each of the processes will be described below, ensuring clarity as to how the final SROI figure was reached.

#### Inputs

Data was collected on the costs incurred during the project, both by Thames Valley Partnership and Beaconsfield School, including costs of overheads in each place of work.

The total cost of the Urban Beatz Project at Beaconsfield School was £5,747.

This included:

Thames Valley Partnership co-coordinator's time and overheads (including cost of heating, lighting etc)	£1,650.00
Cost of artists	£2,298.00
Cost of mentees	£1,020.00
Marketing costs	£239.00
Beaconsfield School Arts Inclusion Teacher time	£330.00
Beaconsfield School administrator time	£30.00
Use of Beaconsfield School hall and related overheads	£180.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,747.00</b>

## Outputs

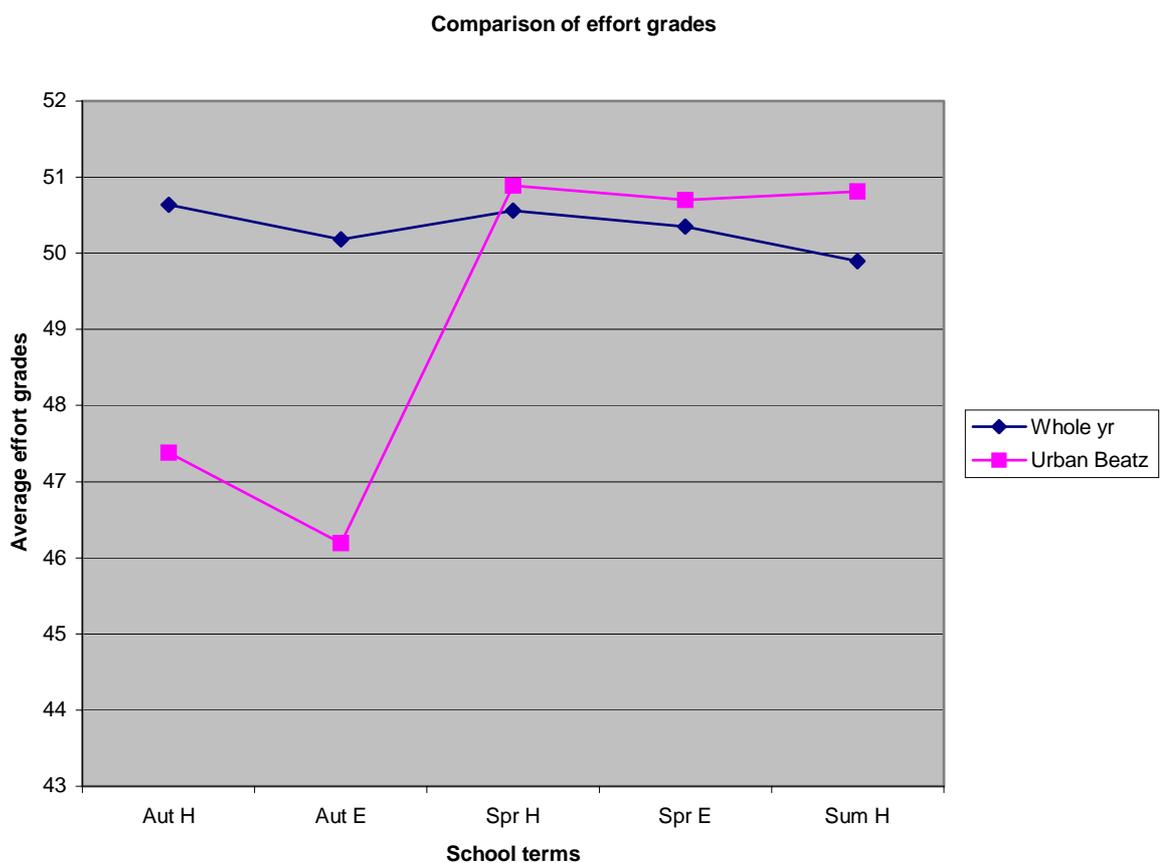
Twenty Year 9 pupils from Beaconsfield School were selected to attend the Urban Beatz project, and all 20 participated in the rehearsals throughout the summer term of 2007 and in the final performance at the Wycombe Swan Theatre on 20 May 2007. There was no drop-out rate.

## Outcomes

### Effort grades

Each pupil at Beaconsfield School is awarded effort grades on a termly basis by their teachers at half term and the end of term in the autumn and spring (Aut H, Aut E, Spr H, Spr E), and at half term in the summer (Sum H).

The graph below shows the average increase in effort grades achieved by the Urban Beatz pupils compared to the average effort grades of the other Year 9 pupils over a period of the academic year 2006 – 2007.



The significant increase in effort grade during the period of the Urban Beatz project suggests a direct attribution to the Project. The fact that the Urban Beatz pupils sustained high effort grades for the remainder of the school year and, on average, attained higher grades than the other Year 9 pupils at the end of the year, suggests that the impact of Urban Beatz was sustained, particularly when the average effort grade was significantly lower than the other Year 9 pupils at the end of the autumn term, prior to the project.

It was clear from the interviews conducted that the pupils enjoyed the challenge of Urban Beatz and it is possible that they were transferring some of the skills and energy used at Urban Beatz into the mainstream classroom.

"I enjoyed the ways of teaching."

"I enjoyed having to work as a group, and bringing it all together."

"I enjoyed the end performance because it was nice to show everyone what we had learned."

"I enjoyed the group working together and putting in ideas."

"I enjoyed talking to people I hadn't before and having a good laugh."

"I enjoyed getting along with everyone in the group because you've got something in common."

"The performance was an achievement."

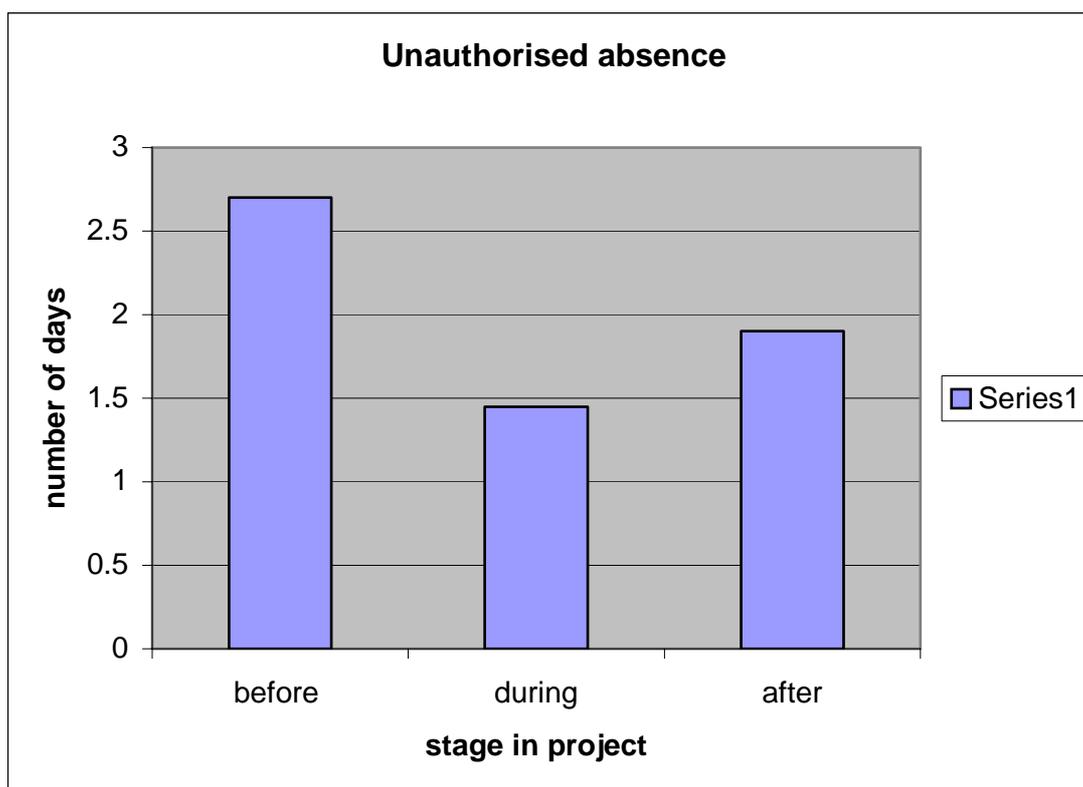
"I enjoyed the energy we had to give."

"The rehearsals were really cool."

## Absences

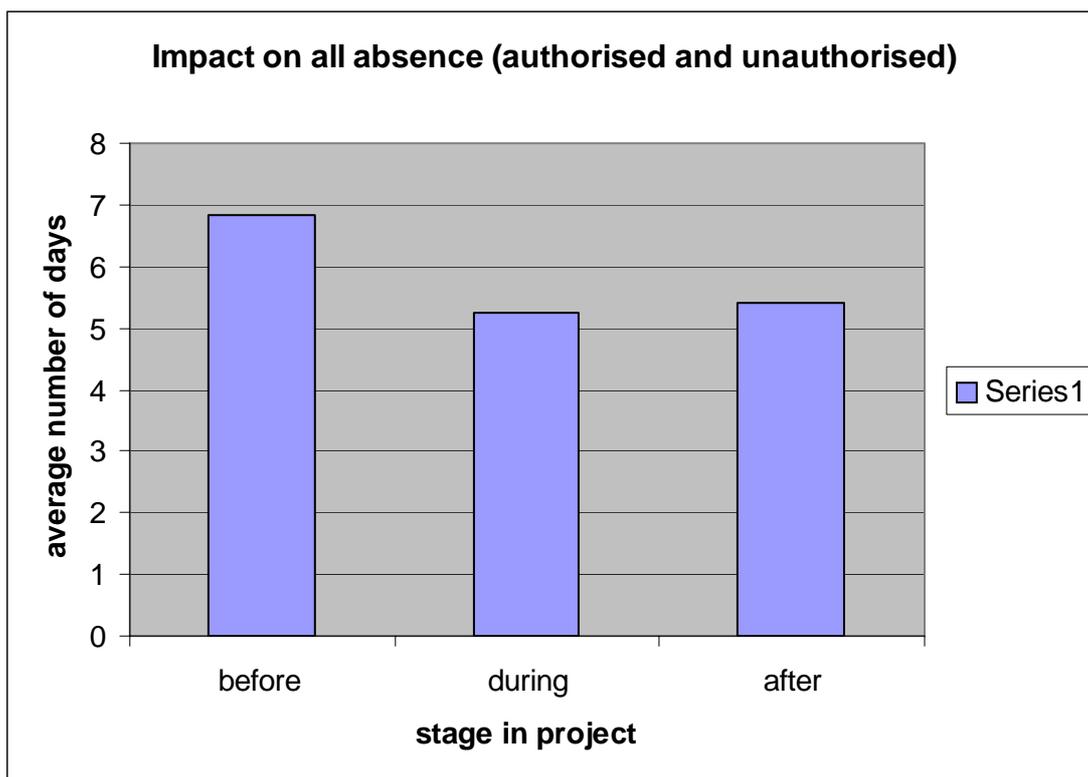
The pupils interviewed were asked whether they attended school more or less regularly or the same amount since having taken part in Urban Beatz. Of the 11 pupils interviewed, 3 said they had attended school more regularly than before, and the other 8 that they had continued to attend the same amount.

The graph below shows the level of unauthorised absences eight weeks before the project, during the project and eight weeks after the project.



Unauthorised absences dropped significantly during the Project, and rose slightly after the Project, but not to the level indicated prior to the Project.

All absences, both authorised and unauthorised, decreased during the Project and rose slightly in the eight weeks after the Project, but not to the previous level, as can be seen in the graph below.



GCSE Dance

Prior to Urban Beatz at Beaconsfield School, there was no opportunity to study for a GCSE in Dance. As a direct result of Urban Beatz, the school now offers GCSE Dance, and, of the 11 pupils interviewed, 7 of these had enrolled for GCSE dance in September 2007. The opportunity to gain another GCSE is potentially significant in terms of outcomes in later life.

Additionally, two of the pupils interviewed, who had not participated in any out of school or after school activities before Urban Beatz, had started both GCSE dance and a street dance group on a Saturday as a result of their participation.

Funding for "Urban Beatz 2"

As a result of Urban Beatz, two of the pupil participants took it upon themselves to apply for a grant for funding of a dance teacher for "Urban Beatz 2". So important did they find the dance input that they were determined to ensure a way of extending the opportunity to others. The bid to the New Opportunities Fund was successful and has funded a dance teacher for a fixed period, who has been working with 90 Year 7, 8, and 9 pupils. A number of the Year 10 pupils who took part in Urban Beatz are acting as mentors. This is a significant achievement, which has provided dance opportunities for a wider range of pupils throughout the school.

## Exclusion

None of the pupils who were at risk of exclusion during the Urban Beatz Project have to date been excluded from the school.

## Survey outcomes

Eleven of the twenty pupils who participated in Urban Beatz, 55%, completed a survey, ten during a face-to-face interview, and one at a later stage in a written format. The main aim of the survey was to gain direct information about the impact of the Urban Beatz project on the pupils' life at school, specifically enjoyment, confidence, attendance, friendships, behaviour and attitude to school, as well as to ascertain whether their extra-curricular activities had increased as a result of Urban Beatz.

Of the 11 respondents, 8 told me Urban Beatz had made some positive difference to their life at school, and 2 a lot of positive difference. All but 1 of the respondents said that they were, in differing degrees, more confident than before Urban Beatz, and 7 said they felt better about themselves. Three pupils said that they had attended school more frequently since Urban Beatz, and 5 said that they got into trouble less. Seven pupils told me they had more friends since Urban Beatz. None of the pupils reported negative outcomes in any respect.

In terms of after school and out of school activities, the most significant change since Urban Beatz was that 7 of the pupils had chosen to take up GCSE Dance and 2 had got involved in a dance group outside school.

All interviewed said that they would take part in Urban Beatz again if they had the chance, and would recommend it to others. Reasons included:

- It was fun,
- It was something new and different,
- It makes you feel good, fitter and more active,
- It led to meeting new people,
- Working in a group was good,
- It stopped me being 'naughty'.

The survey results indicate that, as well as the positive impact on behaviour and attendance the project achieved, it was important for the some of the pupils interviewed in terms of increased confidence, self-esteem and friendship networks, all of which can be significant in terms of outcomes in later life.

### Teacher survey

The only mainstream teacher to respond to the teacher questionnaire wrote:

“One of the biggest positives was the motivation of the students whilst working on the project. This has led to a more positive learning ethos in the classroom for many. They are simply trying harder.”

### Outcome summary

The quantitative outcomes of the increase in effort grades and reduced absences during and after the Urban Beatz project combined with the qualitative outcomes collected through the questionnaire indicate that Urban Beatz had a significant impact on participation and behaviour at school for the remainder of the school year. Additionally, it afforded the opportunity for pupils to take up and develop a new interest and resulted in a significant proportion of the pupils taking up a new GCSE subject.

## **Attribution**

As stated above, both during and after the Urban Beatz Project, attendance rates and effort grades improved for the Urban Beatz participants. In order to calculate the SROI, it is necessary to decide, on the basis of the evidence, to what extent the improvement in both attendance and effort grades can be attributed to Urban Beatz.

For the purpose of this SROI calculation I am considering the timescale of 1 year in terms of any attribution to Urban Beatz. A short scale project is more likely to have an impact within a short time scale, and it is therefore realistic to attribute positive outcomes for Urban Beatz for one academic year.

### Attendance

It is likely that the reason for authorised absences will have remained constant throughout the period leading up to, during and after the Urban Beatz Project. Authorised absences are likely to be due to sickness, medical and dental appointments and other arranged appointments. However, authorised absences reduced both during and after Urban Beatz. It is possible that pupils chose to come to school rather than to 'take a sickie' during this period as their motivation to do so had risen.

Unauthorised absences are likely to include truanting. The fact that unauthorised absences reduced significantly during the period of Urban Beatz can be attributed largely to Urban Beatz as it is likely that other factors remained constant for the majority of the pupils involved.

The statistical evidence combined with the responses to the pupil questionnaires (and taking into account the fact that 45% of the pupils did not complete the survey) have led me to attribute 85% of the improved attendance figures to the impact of the Urban Beatz Project.

### Effort grades

Effort grades of those participating in the Urban Beatz Project improved dramatically during the period of the Project and were sustained until the end of the academic year, whereas the other Year 9 pupils' effort grades went down during the final term of the year. Written evidence from the single teacher respondent indicates a direct correlation between Urban Beatz and increase in effort.

It is likely that, for the majority of pupils, other factors that might influence effort grades would have remained constant during the year. There could have been a minority whose grades might have been affected, for example, by a traumatic event or series of events or a different friendship group.

Taking these factors into consideration, I have attributed 90% of the improved effort grades to the impact of Urban Beatz.

### GCSE dance

The GCSE dance class would not have been offered at Beaconsfield School from September 2007 had the Urban Beatz Project not taken place. Thus it is possible to attribute the participation in GCSE dance 100% to the Urban Beatz Project.

### **Deadweight - What would have happened anyway?**

An SROI analysis has to take into account what would have been the outcomes if the Urban Beatz Project had not taken place, as well as the potential negative impact Urban Beatz might have had on those who did not benefit from the intervention.

Of the Urban Beatz participants, there were a minority who were chosen to take part in the Project to be role models for the other participants, and it is likely that their attendance and effort grades would have been consistently high. Of those who were not chosen for the project, but wanted to participate, it is possible that a minority could have reacted negatively in terms of both attendance and effort. I have as a result taken this into account in my calculations below.

### **SROI analysis**

The SROI analysis uses social cost data to calculate the monetary benefit to society of the impact of a project.

In the case of the Urban Beatz project, the significant social cost data were the costs of truancy per child per year and the costs of exclusion per child per year to the education authority.

### Attendance and truancy costs

Improved attendance levels both reduce the potential for truancy and enable the pupil to engage more consistently in the curriculum and in opportunities within school.

The cost of truancy per pupil per annum to the educational welfare services is £706 (New Philanthropy Capital, June 2007).

I have attributed 85% of the improved attendance levels to Urban Beatz for 60% of the pupils involved, on the assumption that 40% of the pupils would have already achieved good attendance levels. If the Urban Beatz project was influential in preventing the costs of truancy for 10.2 pupils, this would

amount to a saving of £7201 per year in the costs involved in dealing with truancy

The calculation is therefore as follows: 85% of 12 = 10.2 x £706 = £7201.

No achieving outcome	Deadweight	Attribution	Impact	Cost of truancy per year per person	Monetarised impact
20	40%	85%	10.2	£706	£7201

#### Attendance, effort grades and the costs of exclusion

The combination of improved attendance and effort grades can reduce the likelihood of exclusion. If those previously exhibiting disruptive behaviour in the classroom are gaining higher grades for effort, this would suggest fewer incidents of disruptive behaviour and thus less likelihood of exclusion.

Fixed term exclusions at Beaconsfield School are 2% of the annual pupil roll (Beaconsfield School Self-evaluation and OFSTED commentary, Academic year 2006-07), amounting to approximately 16 pupils. The average age for exclusions is 12.5 years, according to the report, "Misspent youth" (New Philanthropy Capital, June 2007), and Year 9 pupils are aged between 13 and 14.

Taking these factors into consideration, I have attributed 85% of the improvements in effort grades and attendance to Urban Beatz, but have assumed that 90% of the participants would not have been excluded with or without Urban Beatz.

The average weighted costs of alternative educational provision for excluded pupils per pupil per annum is £7181 (New Philanthropy Capital, June 2007).

The calculation is therefore 85% of 2 = 1.7 x £7181 = £12208.

No achieving outcome	Deadweight	Attribution	Impact	Weighted cost of exclusion per year per person	Monetarised impact
20	90%	85%	1.7	£7181	£12208

This represents a saving of £12208 in the costs of alternative educational provision to the education authority.

### Effort grades, absence, and GCSE dance

The Urban Beatz participants sustained an improvement in effort grades until the end of the academic year 2006-07, and in September 2007 started their GCSE courses. Some of the pupils interviewed told me that they anticipated sustaining their efforts in class as they had now started their GCSEs and knew it was time to be serious about their academic work.

There is a direct correlation between the number of GCSE passes at grades A – C and starting salaries for employment, according to the Learning and Skills Council (News release, 24.08.07). The average gross weekly income of those with a degree was double the weekly income of those with no qualifications in 2003. Twenty-five per cent of persistent truants gained no qualifications compared with 2% of non-truants. Those who miss school are more likely to be out of employment at the age of 18 than those who attend regularly (A Summary of Focus on Social Inequalities, 2005).

The current per capita cost of loss of contributions for 16 - 18 year olds not in employment per annum is estimated at £572 per year (Estimating the Cost of Being Not in Education, Employment or Training at Age 16 – 18, 2002). The cost of Job Seekers' Allowance per year for 16 – 18 year olds is £2493.

Taking up GCSE dance can improve the likelihood of pupils attaining more GCSE qualifications, and thus of obtaining employment or better employment. I have assumed, however, given that the Urban Beatz pupils still had nearly two years before they would take their GCSEs and there will be significant other factors affecting their progress during that time, that, of the 7 Urban Beatz pupils who told me they had taken up GCSE dance, for 6 of the pupils this will have had no impact on their future employment prospects.

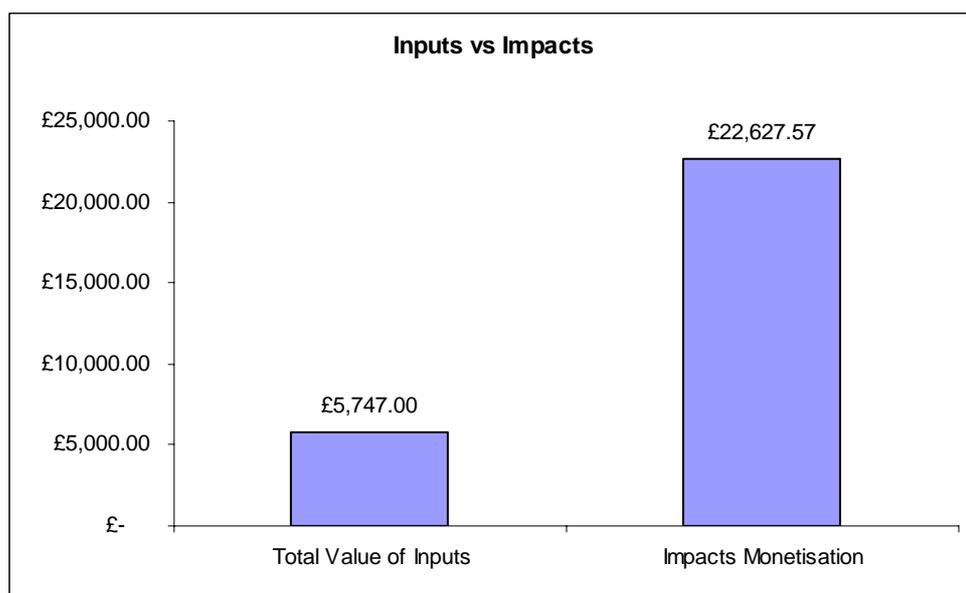
I have thus calculated the cost of potential unemployment to the Exchequer, namely the rate of Job Seeker's Allowance and loss of contributions, on this basis. The annual cost for one person amounts to £3065.

No achieving outcome	Deadweight	Attribution	Impact	Weighted cost of unemployment per year per person	Monetarised impact
7	85%	100%	1.05	£3065	£3219

This represents a saving of £3219 per year to the Exchequer.

## Calculating the SROI

The total value of the monetarised impacts of Urban Beatz is £22,627.57 . The total value of the inputs is £5,747. Dividing the impacts by the inputs results in a **SROI of £3.94:£1.00**. In other words, for every £1 spent on the project, there is a social return, in terms of potential savings to the treasury, of £3.94.



## Sensitivity analysis

The SROI analysis is based on assumptions. To test the validity of the assumptions, a sensitivity analysis alters each assumption to see how it changes the SROI figure.

Were the projected costs of unemployment to be deducted from the SROI analysis, as there are many variables that could affect a pupil's progress in the next two years, the SROI would be £3.38, namely a saving of £3.38 for every £1 spent on the project.

Reducing the attribution to Urban Beatz of reduced truancy and risk of exclusion to 70% would change the SROI figure to £3.17, and to 50% would change the SROI figure to £2.37.

What this sensitivity analysis suggests is that the potential monetary benefit to society of the Urban Beatz project is considerable, even when attribution rates are low.

## **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

This SROI analysis shows that the Urban Beatz project had a significant impact on the pupils who took part for the duration of the project until the end of the academic year in terms of motivation and attendance at school. It also increased their self-confidence, widened their friendship network and resulted for some in increased levels of participation in purposeful out of school activities.

Were similar dance projects to become an established option at Beaconsfield School for a larger number of pupils displaying disruptive behaviour or truanting, the savings to the educational authority could be significant as could the impact on the pupils involved, other pupils in the school, the teaching staff, and the school as a whole.

What has not been calculated in this paper are the longer-term costs in terms of unemployment, crime, health, homelessness, substance misuse issues and related issues with self-confidence and self-esteem that can accrue as a result of truancy and/or exclusion from school, and are well documented.

Thames Valley Partnership is committed to using art to offer different ways to engage, learn, energise and motivate as well as to tackle risk factors. This SROI analysis has shown that the Urban Beatz project enabled the pupils involved at Beaconsfield School to engage better with their mainstream schooling, and, by so doing, to reduce their likelihood of truancy and/or exclusion during and after the project, and potentially improving their longer-term life prospects.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the impact of Urban Beatz analysed in this report and its social cost benefits, I would recommend:

- Funding for similar dance projects to be made available at Beaconsfield School on a regular ongoing basis to ensure the possibility of engagement with a wider group of pupils.
- The roll out of similar dance projects in mainstream schools throughout the country to impact on truancy and exclusion rates and subsequent life choices for young people.
- Continued evaluation of like projects to build up a body of evidence of effectiveness.
- Use of the SROI approach as an effective tool to demonstrate social added value.

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7. How confident in yourself do you feel now?
- |                         |                    |           |                   |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Not at all<br>confident | Quite<br>confident | Confident | Very<br>confident |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|
8. What after school or out of school activities did you do before Urban Beatz?
9. What after school or out of school activities do you do now?
10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please circle one of the answers.
- a) Since taking part in Urban Beatz I enjoy school
- |      |          |      |
|------|----------|------|
| More | The same | Less |
|------|----------|------|
- b) Since taking part in Urban Beatz I concentrate in lessons
- |      |          |      |
|------|----------|------|
| More | The same | Less |
|------|----------|------|
- c) Since taking part in Urban Beatz I go to school
- |                |                 |                |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| More regularly | The same amount | Less regularly |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
- d) Since taking part in Urban Beatz I have
- |              |                               |               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| More friends | The same amount<br>of friends | Fewer friends |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------|

11. Before taking part in Urban Beatz, how good did you feel about yourself?  
Please circle a number. 1 = not good at all, and 6 = very good.

1            2            3            4            5            6

12. How good do you feel about yourself now?

1            2            3            4            5            6

13. Before taking part in Urban Beatz, did you ever get into trouble at school?

Never            Sometimes            Often            Very often

14. Since taking part in Urban Beatz, have you got into trouble at school?

Never            Sometimes            Often            Very often

15. If you had the chance to do Urban Beatz again, would you?

Yes/No

If yes, why? If no, why not?

16. Would you recommend doing something like Urban Beatz to others?

Yes/No

If yes, why? If no, why not?

Thank you very much indeed.

Tania Wickham  
Thames Valley Partnership Associate

The Thames Valley Partnership is a charity which brings people and organisations together to create safe and stronger communities through sustainable solutions to the problems of crime and social exclusion. We work by building partnerships with practitioners from criminal justice sector, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations and the private sector.

**For further information:**

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