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**myplace**  
support team

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Dance

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# Introduction

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Dancing has never been more popular as an activity. Millions tune in each week to watch Strictly Come Dancing and a group of young dancers won television's Britain's Got Talent in 2009. But it's not just a spectator sport – after football dance is the most popular physical activity among young people. This briefing provides some useful pointers and advice on what to consider if you're planning to tap into this rich seam in your **myplace** centre.

## How to dance

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Wherever young people congregate there is dance. It's an essential and natural part of their culture. Young people enjoy dance. And, as well as being fun, they value it as an accessible, adaptable and enjoyable form of physical activity, improving fitness and potentially opening up new career opportunities. Everyone can dance and enjoy dancing, regardless of their background, gender and age and joining in can help to break down social and cultural barriers, improving communication between individuals and groups. It also has a strong appeal to people who may not readily engage with traditional sports, such as young women and some cultural or ethnic groups.

Start by looking at existing dance provision in your area to identify need and potential gaps in the market. This provision doesn't have to be working studios or full-time dance companies but could be after-school or community-based sessions. An initial audit of facilities might start by identifying:

- › How many spaces for dance provision are available in your area?
- › How many dance providers are working within the area?
- › What are the dance education opportunities at school and further education levels?
- › How is dance provision funded?
- › How is the present provision managed?

By identifying what's available already you can shape the planning of your dance studio.

You will also need to consider what will encourage participation and ownership by young people. Is the dancing purely for enjoyment, for example, a social activity to meet new people or do they hope to learn proper technique and use it as a springboard to a career in dance? It could of course be both of these for different individuals and groups. Providing a range of different dancing lessons and techniques though would suggest that a range of dance tutors would be necessary.

In planning your dance space you will also want to consider the following:

- › Consult with colleagues, young people, existing and potential community users and dance experts about their requirements. What range of dance activities will you offer? Can you offer recognised formal dance courses and training?
- › Overall studio dimensions, including height, are critical for a high quality experience and achievement. Spaces that are too small or too low cannot easily be rectified at a later date.
- › A sprung floor provides a safe area to dance on and helps to avoid injury. Take expert advice on flooring systems though; they are expensive items to get wrong.
- › Allow adequate access for the disabled.
- › Remember the need for changing space; for storage, shoes and bags; sound and video equipment and a music facility within the dance space.
- › Consider the qualifications of tutors and their insurance and CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks.
- › Is the studio suitable for activities other than dance? This is important if you want to be able to hire the facility to other external and community organisations.

Space is the essential requirement for dance. It must be safe for the physical activity of dancing. It must also inspire participants, be clean and clear of obstacles. It is important to have the temperature and ventilation right and the right size of group for the space. Natural light and light coloured decoration can help to create the right environment.

“Through dance, young people can widen their aspirations and achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident artists and responsible citizens.”

“We want every young person to have access to the highest quality dance teaching at every stage of their development.” The Government response to Tony Hall’s Dance Review (March 2008). ”

“Dance plays a key part in contemporary culture and is a popular social activity. Its impact is visual, kinaesthetic, intellectual and emotional.”

Arts Council

## Action planning

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### **Young People**

How can young people be fully involved in planning and developing a dance studio? Think about three ways you can ensure their full involvement at different stages of the process.

### **Making a Difference**

Choose one aspect of the development process where you can positively drive it forward. Identify the steps you'll need to take and by when to make sure this happens.

### **Vision and Values**

How does provision for dance fit within the wider values and ethos of your ***myplace*** project?

### **Practicality**

Be realistic about the size and scale of dance activities that you can run. How much time and other resources can you devote to this aspect given your other commitments?

## **Tools, ideas, exercises:**

It will be too late to plan visiting this year's Serious about StreetDance event by the time you read this (its being held on Sunday 27 February at IndigO2, London), but perhaps start planning to visit next year. The event features some of the best street dance companies from the UK and overseas and is bound to inspire young people to want to give it a go.

Alternatively, consider staging your own version of 'Strictly' with young people working towards a dance performance in a style of their choosing in front of their peers, with a panel of invited guests to help with the judging.

## **Links and Further Guidance**

See **Arts at the heart of *myplace*** a guide for ***myplace*** centres produced by the Arts Council.

See **A good practice guide to planning for dance in *myplace*** centres. This good practice guide provides useful pointers and advice on what to consider in developing a dance facility in ***myplace*** projects. It considers the purpose and ethos, issues about the physical space and how the facility would be staffed and managed.

Youth Dance England is the national organisation that champions and promotes dance for children and young people. It works to ensure that dance is available to all. It believes that dance changes and enriches young people's lives and strives for every child and young person across the country to have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of high quality dance - whether it is for fun, to develop skills and an understanding in dance, keep physically active or train to become a dance professional.

YDE also offers advice, training, support and resources to both young people and those who have developed, or are thinking about developing, a career in dance. See its two recent publications Young People's Dance: A ten year vision and Dance in and beyond schools – an essential guide to dance teaching and learning, available on the website at [www.yde.org.uk](http://www.yde.org.uk)

The resources section of the website also has free downloadable information about child performers licensing, the use of recorded music in dance, safe and inspiring dance spaces, tips to help you fundraise, case studies and useful links. The site includes a youth zone for young people interested in finding out more about what's going on in dance.

See also the Council for Dance Education and Training website at [www.cdet.org.uk](http://www.cdet.org.uk) CDET is the national standards body of the professional dance industry.

Dance UK is the national voice for the dance profession, aiming to improve the conditions in which dance is created, performed and experienced. See [www.danceuk.org](http://www.danceuk.org)

The Foundation for Community Dance is the professional organisation for anyone involved in creating opportunities for people to experience and participate in dance. Its vision is for a world where dance is part of everyone's life. See [www.communitydance.org.uk](http://www.communitydance.org.uk)

The Arts Council is the national development agency for the arts, supporting a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art, carnival to crafts. See [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk) for a full list of Arts Council England publications or to download a copy of arts at the heart of **myplace**

Dance4 has developed an exciting programme for passionate and committed young people willing to shape the future for youth dance in the East Midlands. Working with Youth Dance England, Dance4 is the strategic voice and development agency for youth dance in the East Midlands. Its role is to coordinate, promote and develop exciting programmes for young people's dance in the region.

The programme has been developed from the success of YDE Stride! an annual leadership and development programme aimed at young people wishing to explore the many career opportunities available within the dance sector. Dance4 will be selecting five Regional Young Dance Leaders who will be representing, promoting and creating exciting youth dance programmes across the East Midlands. The role is very important to the future developments for youth dance within the East Midlands, and Dance4 wants to ensure young people are at the heart of the future direction of dance in their region. Dance4 will be encouraging the young dance leaders to develop their skills in advocacy, facilitation, consultation, creating work, reporting and teaching. They will become part of a peer support network for young people wishing to pursue a career in dance.

For more information see [www.dance4.co.uk](http://www.dance4.co.uk)

