



DanceSyndrome

Dancer Led, Disability Inspired

Registered Charity No:1152664



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COMMUNITY FUND

2022-2023

Impact Report

(End of Year 1, September 2023)



Everybody Move More

Project ID: 20192887

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Summary

The first year of our project has been successful, as outlined in the **Completed Delivery** and **Progress Towards our Objectives** sections of this report. We have also remained very close to our intended **Budget**, with a slight overspend due to bringing forward some aspects of the Year 2 plans.

There have been a few occasions where targets haven't been met and the reasons why can be found in the **Challenges/Learning** section of this report.

We are delighted to have been chosen as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) for 2023-36, with this project starting in April 2023. This funding boost has enabled us to progress more quickly than expected with some of our broader Everybody Move More aims, which is a really positive position for us to be in. It has also resulted in a lot of additional learning for our team, which can also be applied to this project. This learning is also outlined in the **Challenges/Learning** and **Looking Forward to Year 2** sections.

As part of the process of becoming an NPO, we have documented our **Artistic Vision**. As this is also relevant to our Everybody Move More project, it is outlined here on Page 6.

We have also tried to become more strategic about **Communications**, which can be seen on Page 9, and in the way we monitor and evaluate our work, which we outline in more detail on Page 30.

We hope you will agree that we have had a very positive and productive year with lots of valuable learning.

We are excited to see what Year 2 brings!



Our Strategy

DanceSyndrome is currently in the middle of delivering on our three year long strategy "Vision 2025", which is outlined below.

DanceSyndrome Vision 2025



To be recognised as a North-West Leader in co-produced & co-delivered inclusive dance.

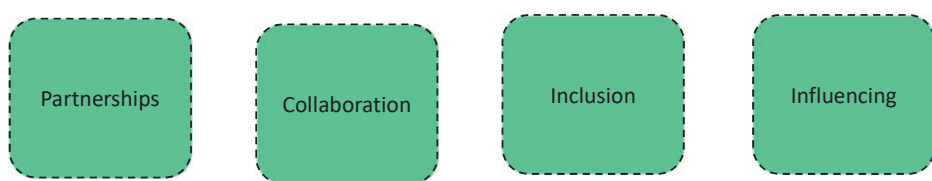
- We will work with people with learning disabilities & professional dance artists side by side.
- We will work across our communities & online in collaboration with partners.
- We will work to the highest standards of inclusion, quality & artistic excellence.

To create a pathway of opportunities from early years to adulthood.

- We will focus on creating better life chances, health & well-being, fulfilling lives & employment for people with learning disabilities.
- We will provide consistent teaching practices through the different stages of dance progression.
- We will introduce achievement goals & skills development through to accredited qualifications.

To develop a best practice model that others can replicate across the UK which embeds our values, maintains our quality & delivers on our mission to empower people with learning disabilities.

- We will develop a DanceSyndrome quality standard tool kit.
- We will identify & support like-minded organisations to adopt the DanceSyndrome model.
- We will work with these organisations to achieve the DanceSyndrome quality standard kitemark.



Our Delivery Strands

As part of the Vision 2025 strategy, we deliver our work in three different strands:



Community Dance

- Weekly 'Everybody Dance' Classes (In person & on Zoom)
- Weekly 'Technique' Classes (In person & on Zoom)
- Commissioned Classes & Workshops
- Outreach & Mass Participation Events
- "Dance by Example" Leadership Training
- 'Everybody Dance' Social Replication Model/DanceSyndrome Kitemark (In Development)



Artistic Development

- DS Collective Performance Company
- Dance Leader Professional Development Programme (Progression Pathways, Tailored Dance Development, Masterclasses & Life Skills)
- DS Youth Collective (Company of Youth Dancers)
- Dance Sector Partnerships (In Development)
- Dance Accreditations (In Development)



Training & Consultancy

- "Breaking Down Barriers" Workshop (for dancers in training/education, community dance artists, dance teachers in traditional dance settings)
- "Inclusion in Action" Workshop (for Businesses, Universities, Colleges & Schools)
- DanceSyndrome Consultancy (In Development)

Artistic Vision

Co-production

Relevance

Excellence

Authenticity

Talent

Equity

"... there is no right or wrong way to move and there is beauty and significance in everyone's movement..."

Our Artistic Vision is to CREATE opportunities for people with learning disabilities (PWLD) to participate in meaningful dance activity and develop their skills as leaders and artists.

Everything we do is underpinned by our organisation principles which link to our current strategy: Partnerships, Collaboration, Inclusion and Influencing.



This is what the Artistic Vision words mean to DanceSyndrome

Co-production

Co-production is intrinsic to the way we work at DanceSyndrome. Everything we do is inspired and designed from the ideas of our dancers. This ethos is threaded throughout everything we do, and this is displayed in different ways. From PWLD developing skills to co-lead community dance workshops, to providing training and support for PWLD to progress as artists and provide opportunities to co-create their own work.

Relevance

We want to make work that is relevant and meaningful to our participants and to our audiences. We want to provide valuable leadership skills which allow our dancers' voices to be heard in the workshops we deliver, and provide platforms for our dancers to develop their artistic voices and skill sets and create high quality art.

Excellence

Excellence might look different to each of our dancers from those participating in a community dance workshop to those developing as an artist but is always driven by quality experience and processes. We believe that a process driven by artistic integrity, respect and professionalism will always produce high quality outcomes, which are measured relative to the individual.

Authenticity

We encourage dancers to listen to their own bodies and explore; how we want to and are able to move; respond to natural movement impulses; push and challenge our habitual movement styles to initiate growth; and find moments of connection with others through dance. In performance, movement ideas derive from the individual dancer and then are shaped and moulded to form choreography that dancers truly own and embody.

Talent

We are all individuals with unique interests and talents, which we can all bring to the dance space. We work closely with each dancer to discover their own unique journey through our programme of work. From listening to the interests of workshop participants and incorporating them into community sessions, to providing masterclasses which develop specific artistic skill sets to support a dancers professional development plan, we aim to nurture and support dancers and their unique talents on their differing paths with us.

Equity

We want to provide artistic opportunities for people with disabilities that are not readily available across the North West, removing access barriers to high quality dance activity and artist development. We understand that each dancer is an individual and has different circumstances, and we need to work with each person as an individual and potentially in different ways to best support them and create an environment for them to thrive in, to give everyone an equitable chance of success.





Good News Stories

DanceSyndrome Founder Recognised with BEM (link to news story)

DanceSyndrome's inspirational founder, Jen Blackwell, has been recognised with a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to Disabled People in the 2023 King's birthday honours. Jen has been invited to Lancaster Castle in October to receive her award.

DanceSyndrome Ambassador invited to 10 Downing Street (link to news story)

DanceSyndrome Ambassador and Spokesperson Becky Rich was invited to 10 Downing Street by Hyndburn and Haslingden MP Sara Britcliffe as one of her chosen Community Champions. Becky had a great day and wrote a blog about her experience.

New Ambassadors

As part of a more strategic approach to communications, we have been looking to recruit some new ambassadors who will help us to reach new audiences with our work and will champion what we do in new ways that compliment our existing communications. We have agreed roles and responsibilities with two new Ambassadors. Sara Britcliffe, MP for Hyndburn and Haslingden (the constituency where DanceSyndrome's office is based) is the 4th youngest MP currently in House of Commons. Neil Darby is an award winning member of the local LGBTQIA+ community and former Mayor of Preston. Announcements will be made about these appointments in September 2023.

DanceSyndrome perform at Edinburgh Fringe

In December 2022 we ran a successful fundraising campaign to raise £10,000 to support a trip to the 2023 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The DanceSyndrome team performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017 and 2018 and during the pandemic there was regular feedback from the team that they would like to return once life "got back to normal". As an organisation which is driven by feedback from our participants, we were keen to make this a reality. The performances received excellent feedback from both audiences and performers (see Page 10).



Communications Campaigns

As part of our commitment to challenging perceptions about what people with learning disabilities are able to contribute to society, DanceSyndrome issues strategic communications as part of key national campaigns. We are committed to issuing a major social media campaigns on a quarterly basis.

Down's Syndrome Awareness Week (March 2023) (link to news story)

This year for Down's Syndrome Awareness Week the national campaign theme (as chosen by the Down's Syndrome Association) was "With us, not for us". We created a series of videos which highlighted the way that we support people with Down's syndrome and other learning disabilities to be involved in co-produced activities and how we empower them to be able to influence the direction of our work and be more visible citizens. We amplified the campaign by starting the week with a video message from our Ambassador professional dancer Giovanni Pernice and a live TV appearance on Channel 4's "Steph's Packed Lunch" on World Down's Syndrome Day itself. This week is historically the most successful on our annual calendar for fundraising, so we tried to capitalise on all of this with a train station takeover event at Manchester Piccadilly Station, ran an online auction for some vouchers for local attractions and an online fundraising appeal. In March 2023 we raised £6,018 which was a 200% increase on the previous March.

Learning Disability Awareness Week (June 2023) (link to news story)

The national Learning Disability Awareness Week theme is devised by Mencap and for 2023 this was "Busting myths about Learning Disability." In line with our ongoing tenth birthday celebrations, we chose 10 myths that we wanted to challenge. Our dancers with learning disabilities all met to discuss myths that they dislike and how we could challenge them. We then pieced together photographs and videos of our Dance Leaders taking part in activities that challenged the myths. We were also fortunate to be able to share the news about our Founder Jen's BEM during this week and another train station takeover at Blackpool North.

Upcoming Campaigns

In September we will be running a campaign to celebrate national Inclusion Week and then in December we will be running a seasonal fundraising campaign.



Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Audience feedback from the Edinburgh Fringe performances:

"Outstanding. Beautifully staged, wonderfully performed. Transfixing, mesmerising movement and dance with perfect music that altogether helps you understand the challenges the actors face in their daily lives. Heartwarming, informative, sensitive, brilliant."

"A wonderful performance! I was so excited to see you all at the Fringe - I am forever grateful to DanceSyndrome for the Lottery funded project that helped me to start my inclusive dance group in Nottingham!"

"We both felt that we had witnessed and been involved in a small way with something transcending every other performance we've seen, something very special. The messages were so powerful, so poignant, and so incredibly pointed when told by those directly affected."

"My son has DS - he is a traditional musician. Ground-breaking performances such as this can only help to raise the profile of people with DS in performing arts. "You can't be what you can't see" More power to you all. Thank you."

incredible eye-opening episodic cute provoking deep
uplifting wholesome talented joyful engaging
remarkable powerful good inspirational
thought-provoking entertaining new
inclusive impressive visual bold moving expressive empowering thoughtful
emotional captivating impressed emotive fun
creative inspiring beautiful complex
amazing slick mesmerising relaxing journey magical enlightening
interesting brilliant

Dancer feedback about the trip to Edinburgh:

"Am definitely doing performance again I absolutely love it every moment I totally overwhelmed how the performance was amazing good... I'm so amazed how far I've gone to be on show full of wonderful people"

"It is absolutely amazing to perform in Edinburgh Fringe and to promote our performances to a massive community in Edinburgh. It created for me really special memories in the community. It shows we can now perform in other places we done not yet in other parts of the UK. I like to do more trips yes please."

"The trip was amazing experience it's my first Edinburgh trip with everyone... Wonderful to be part of an experience like this thank you."

The performance was documented by photographer Brian Slater who has been working with DanceSyndrome throughout 2023 (see right) and a full performance film was created by Arrol Films. The filmmaker also provided us with a short video for social media (click here to view).





The difference we make

Aims

Funding of £179,483 over 3 years will help us to use dance as a vehicle to empower and make positive change for people living with learning difficulties. In turn, participants will gain more independence and confidence and improve their communication and social skills in addition to benefiting to their health and wellbeing.

Working from locations around Lancashire, we will use this funding to develop an enjoyment and a love of dance whilst also making people feel less isolated.

Over the course of the 3 year project, we said that we would:

- engage 300 people weekly through workshops and sessions;
- engage 3,000 people through community outreach and performances;
- train 12 new Dance Leaders per year;
- train 15 Dance Artists per year.

In Year 1 we said we would offer:

- 301 x weekly Everybody Dance community dance sessions which are co-led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist.
- 4 x Dance By Example courses, a dance leadership training programme accredited by Sports Leaders UK to Level 1 and 2
- 172 x dance technique sessions in Street, Ballet, Theatre Jazz and Contemporary dance styles
- 10 x inclusive Dance Performances to inspire audiences and challenge the perceptions of people with disabilities
- 2 x inclusive approaches training for dance professionals
- 5 x inclusion in practice training session using co-production for students and employees outside the dance sector



Progress towards targets

At the end of Year 1 we have:

- 311 people participating through our weekly Everybody Dance sessions, plus varying weekly totals for additional ad hoc workshops;
- engaged 3,031 people through community outreach and performances;
- almost completed delivery on 1 Dance By Example training course for Dance Leaders
- commenced training for Dance Artists.

We have delivered:

- 314 x weekly Everybody Dance community dance sessions which are co-led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist.
- 1 x Dance By Example course (see Page 27 for details about the challenges around this)
- 174 x dance technique sessions in Street, Ballet, Theatre Jazz and Contemporary dance styles
- 14 x inclusive Dance Performances to inspire audiences and challenge the perceptions of people with disabilities
- Inclusive Approaches training has been delivered on a 1-to-1 basis (see Page 29 for an explanation as to why)
- 7 x inclusion in practice training sessions using co-production for students and employees outside the dance sector

See the following pages on “Completed Delivery” for more detailed breakdown of this project delivery.

Some progress has also been made towards Year 2 targets. More information about this can be found on Page 32.



Completed Delivery

1st September 2022 - 31st August 2023

Based on the Year 1 delivery plan in our Stage 2 application, this is the completed delivery from the year, compared to the target.

DanceSyndrome Main Hub at Plungington Community Centre, Brook Street, Preston PR1 7NB

Activity	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Total	Target
Weekly Everybody Dance inclusive sessions, led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist	23	39*	62	43
Dance By Example courses (in-house dance leadership training) Level 1 and Level 2**	0	1	1	2
Weekly 'Day of Dance' days***	23	20	43	43
Weekly inclusive Ballet technique sessions***	23	20	43	43
Weekly inclusive Contemporary technique***	23	20	43	43
'Life Skills' workshops	0	1	1	6

* An additional weekly session was added for 18 weeks due to an increase in participants. See Page 26 for information.

** See Page 27 for more information about Dance By Example. While this course was planned to be delivered at our Plungington hub, there was not availability for the times required, so it was delivered at nearby Ashton Methodist Church.

*** This technique session works towards an annual performance each year. The performance took place at the Lowry, Salford Quays in February 2023 to celebrate DanceSyndrome's 10th Birthday of becoming a registered charity. They are now working towards our next community showcase.

Community Venue - St Mary's Centre, Clitheroe BB7 2DG

Activity	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Total	Target
Weekly Everybody Dance inclusive sessions, led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist	23	21	44	43

Community Venue – St George's Church Hall, Halliwell Street, Chorley PR7 2AL

Activity	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Total	Target
Weekly Everybody Dance inclusive sessions, led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist	15	19	34 +	43

Community Venue – Hyndburn Community & Voluntary Resource Centre, Cannon Street, Accrington BB5 2ER

Activity	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Total	Target
Weekly Everybody Dance inclusive sessions, led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist	22	23	45	43

Community Venue - Bangor Street Community Centre, Norwich Street, Blackburn, BB1 6NZ

Activity	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Total	Target
Weekly Everybody Dance inclusive sessions, led by a Dance Leader and a Dance Artist	0	13	13	N/A**

+ This session didn't meet the target due to challenges with recruitment when it was initially opened. The session was paused while our Community Development Manager did some networking in the Chorley area and the session was re-opened with good attendance.

** This session was an unexpected outcome. Please see Page 26 for more information.





Completed Delivery (continued)

Online Sessions

Activity	Months 1-6	Months 7-12	Total	Target
Weekly Monday Night Everybody Dance Inclusive sessions	23	20	43	43
Weekly Friday Night Party Inclusive sessions	23	24	47	43
Weekly Street Dance inclusive technique sessions* (Click to watch the video)	23	21	44	43
Weekly Musical Jazz Dance inclusive technique sessions* (Click to watch the video)	23	21	44	43
Weekly Rave themed inclusive sessions**	15	0	15	43
Wake N Dance morning inclusive dance sessions**	11	0	11	43

* For technique sessions (Street Dance and Musical Jazz) there is a pathway to a 'virtual' performance which participants friends and family can join the session to watch as a virtual audience. These took place in December 2022 and July 2023.

** See Page 27 for information about why this session didn't meet the target.

Other outreach activities/performance

Months 1-6 Events	Activity type	Attendance numbers
Dudley Voices for Choices Conference	Mass participation performance and inspirational speeches	175
Manchester Airport Train Station Takeover	Mass participation performance	200
Accrington Halloween Family Festival	Flashmob, parade and inclusive workshop	500
Community Rail Staff Conference	Mass Participation performance	150
GM Moving Conference	Mass participation and solo performance	400
X:Ten 10th birthday celebration performance at The Lowry	DS Collective team performance	150

Other outreach activities/performance (continued)

Months 7-12 Events	Activity type	Attendance numbers
Include Summit at Manchester Central	Mass participation performance	300
Lancashire Careers Hub Inclusion Conference, Preston	Mass participation performance	50
ESPO Conference, ACC Arena Liverpool	DS Collective team performance	400
Progress Housing Staff Conference, Leyland	Mass Participation and solo performance	40
Creative Space Centre 30th Anniversary Ball, Wrea Green	Mass participation	120
Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust (LSCFT) Inclusion Conference	Mass participation	200
Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust (LSCFT) Student listening Event	Mass participation	200
Edinburgh Fringe Festival performances of SENse	DS Collective team performance	146

Inclusion in Practice

Months 1-6:

- Liverpool University
- University of Central Lancashire
- Preston College
- Fabric Dance
- People First

Months 7-12:

- Salford University

Life Skills Workshops

- Team Building Drawing Exercise (Bitesize Workshop) June 2023

Please see Learning/Challenges section on Page 28 for more information on why these have not been delivered as planned.





Our project objectives

- Be recognised across the North West as the 'go to' organisation for inclusive dance.
- Be fully active in 4 face to face locations engaging 80 people with learning disabilities on a weekly basis by the end of year one; be in six locations in year two engaging 120 people and eight locations in year three engaging 160 people.
- Increase online participation from 100 in 2023, 150 in 2024 and 200 in 2025.
- Specifically reach individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Develop accredited Bronze and Silver levels across four dance techniques – Ballet, Contemporary, Musical Jazz & Street Dance
- Develop both early years and youth provision.
- Develop employability skills & provide a pathway to both volunteering & work opportunities.
- Increase physical and mental health & well-being.
- Increase confidence, self-esteem, and independence.





Progress towards our objectives

DanceSyndrome will conduct questionnaires with participants annually to measure participants' subjective improvements on key metrics as a direct result of participating in our sessions.

The first questionnaires were completed in Autumn 2022 and the headlines from those questionnaires are included in the impact measurement below. We have also collected responses from performance audiences and participants in smaller projects throughout the year as they have come to an end. Qualitative comments are included in bold & italic where relevant.

Be recognised across the Northwest as the 'go to' organisation for inclusive dance.

In the Communications Campaigns section (Page 9) we detailed how we continue to strive for increased brand awareness. During this reporting period we have continued to capitalise on our relationship with celebrity Ambassador Giovanni Pernice, as well as adding two new Northwest-based Ambassadors (see Page 8). Our performances in Edinburgh have also helped us to reach new audiences, both physically and online. New visitors to our website are up 39% on the same period last year. Our position as a new Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation has raised our profile in the Northwest Arts community.

Our target was 300 participants on weekly session registers at the end of the project (August 2025). Current engagement exceeds this target:

	Baseline (September 2022)	6 month report (February 2023)	End of Year 1 (August 2023)	Target (August 2025)
Number of participants on weekly session registers	196	240	311	300

"[NAME] has loved this experience and got a lot from it. She loves the dancing. Thanks to everyone involved we would love the sessions to continue a great opportunity for our young people to see role models like themselves, be creative + have fun"

"Lovely to see the performance & to see the dancers develop a beautiful dance sequence"

"Enjoyed the team working in unison with each other. Amazing performance. Good to see how they improve with each class"

Be fully active in 4 face to face locations engaging 80 people with learning disabilities on a weekly basis by the end of year one; be in six locations in year two engaging 120 people and eight locations in year three engaging 160 people.

We are currently running in-person dance sessions in 5 Lancashire communities and our team is aiming to start 2 further sessions in 2023/24 (see Page 22). Attendance in person is already exceeding targets, as shown by the figures below:

	Baseline (September 2022)	6 month report (February 2023)	End of Year 1 (August 2023)	Target (August 2025)
Number of participants on weekly session registers	127	171	218	160

"This is a new activity for me. I haven't been coming for long but am very glad I found it. Thank you for making me feel welcome"

"I love coming to dancing it's one of the best things that I do in my week. It gets me out!"

"Confidence Building. Hope there's many more"

"[NAME] has thoroughly enjoyed coming to dance. Finding a dance class that is inclusive over the years has been very difficult so to continue these classes would be amazing"

Increase online participation from 100 in 2023, 150 in 2024 and 200 in 2025.

Online attendance has proven challenging, please see Page 27 for more information:

	Baseline (September 2022)	6 month report (February 2023)	End of Year 1 (August 2023)	Target (August 2025)
Number of participants on weekly session registers	69	69	47	200

"I like that I can access the dance on zoom and they help me feel included and supported"

"I love that I can access it from France on Zoom, I feel as though I am part of the Dance Syndrome Community and thoroughly enjoy the dance and exercise classes. I work from home and these classes are high quality and easily accessible at home."





Specifically reach individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds

Lancashire is DanceSyndrome’s main area of operation for regular in person sessions. The geographic area of Lancashire is divided into 14 district councils. Two of those (Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen) are unitary and the remaining 12 are part of Lancashire County Council (a two-tier council area).

Since 2015, all except 3 of the Lancashire-14 district council authorities have become relatively more deprived on the IMD rank of average rank measure. Preston has the greatest percentile change, -6%

Burnley (11/317) and Hyndburn (18/317) are both in the most deprived 10% of the lower-tier local authorities within England on the index of multiple deprivation (IMD) rank of average rank measure, Pendle and Preston are both in the most deprived 20%. Blackburn with Darwen (14/317) is also in the most deprived 10% in England.

With this in mind, DanceSyndrome is aiming to establish new activities in the most deprived areas and will concentrate on the Burnley area for our next new session.

Index of Multiple Deprivations data for the 5 current DanceSyndrome Everybody Dance Locations:

Community Dance Class Locations	Post Code	Index of Multiple Deprivation Rank	Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile	Health and Disability Decile
Blackburn	BB1 6NZ	4071	2	2
Preston	PR1 7NB	5723	2	1
Accrington	BB5 2ER	241	1	1
Clitheroe	BB7 2DG	24123	8	5
Chorley	PR7 2AL	4421	2	1

4 of our current locations fall within the 1st or 2nd decile (1st decile is the most deprived) making them among the 20% most deprived small areas in England. For Health and Disability specifically, 3 of 5 locations are in the most deprived 10% of small areas, and a further 1 is in the 20% most deprived of small areas. 2 locations (Blackburn and Accrington) are within the 20 most deprived local authorities in England (Blackburn with Darwen and Hyndburn). For Health and Disability specifically, 3 of 5 locations are in the 10% most deprived local authorities (317 total).

Develop accredited Bronze and Silver levels across four dance techniques

We have developed a relationship with Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and are also consulting with National Youth Ballet to look at the existing Bronze and Silver levels that are available and how they can be adapted to fit our work.

As part of our Arts Council England NPO project, we have created a new role of Technique & Community Lead which has been filled by Dance Artist Donna Wheeldon. As part of this role, Donna will use her expertise in inclusive technical dance teaching to take this forward. She has been researching what dance technique accreditation currently looks like and is considering how it needs to be adapted to work for people with learning disabilities. This process is very similar to the learning around our Dance By Example accreditation (see Page 27) with many questions around assessment not always being inclusive.

Develop both early years and youth provision.

We delivered a project in Blackburn called “Making Connections” which ran from February to May 2023. This project involved working with young people aged 16-25 from deprived areas of Lancashire using dance to help build independence and life skills. The project was a partnership with Community Rail Network and was useful in testing how we might work with young people in the future. Feedback is in the word cloud below.

We have also been trialing a partnership with North Lancashire Down’s Syndrome Family Group which involves delivering to children and young people aged 11 and over. We have been delivering this since February to test how sessions with young people might be delivered.

The development of a Children and Young People Collective is part of our Arts Council England NPO project. As a result, Dance Artist Anna James has been employed for 8 hours per week as our Children and Young People Lead since April 2023. Anna has developed a structure for a weekly DS Youth Collective and held a free taster day in August which had 8 young people in attendance. The taster day was a valuable learning experience and helped Anna to refine her ideas around how the weekly sessions should be structured and what level of support will be needed from parents/carers if performance work is to be successfully delivered. The weekly sessions will begin from 11th September 2023.

“It makes me think about how to control my body”

“It’s brilliant that young adults in wheelchairs are totally inclusive”

“I would just like to add a big thank you to Dave and Sophie for the hard work they do and for showing such patience with [NAME] during her let’s say more stubborn moments. Thank you, you’re amazing”





Develop employability skills & provide a pathway to both volunteering & work opportunities.

- 59% of participants report starting other activities in the community, 10% started paid work and 17% started a volunteering role all as a direct result of participating with DanceSyndrome.

We have created a Mentor Manager role through some external funding and employed Kate Battersby to work with our DS Collective to create CVs, showreels and to consider performance work, choreography and teaching skills. Since March 2023, Kate has been working with our team of volunteer Dance Leaders develop individual plans for personal and professional development. Each Dance Leader has been given a folder to develop a portfolio with a personalised cover. Our whole team was invited to a photoshoot in May to have professional headshots taken and these have been used on the covers of their portfolios (examples below).

Here are some of the successes from the last 6 months:

Helen Cherry (first from left) & Peter Pamphlett (second from left): Were invited to be part of Parable Dance company's Steering Group to help them make their website and social media more accessible for all audiences. Peter will be attending meetings with the support of DanceSyndrome Artistic Director Sophie Tickle to feedback to the company.

David Corr (third from left), Ellie Bamber (fourth from left) & David Darcy (third from right): All three took part in the LPM "Dance Artist training programme". Over three separate days, they worked with local and international dance artists.

Jess Reid: Jess has been successful with applying for an internship starting in September 2023. This will be 4 days a week and she will be able to continue with DS Collective on Wednesday.

Helen Cherry: Has been performing professionally with Unmute Dance Theatre in Liverpool in their latest show.

Jamie Montwill (first from right): Received his Level 1 British Sign Language Certificate.



Increase physical and mental health & well-being.

- 91% of participants report that they have more friends since joining us
- 78% reported feeling more positive about their future as a result of participating
- Qualitative comments on the questionnaires report a feeling of being part of a "family"

"I like mixing with other people and helping others. It helps me to understand a lot more. I like getting to know people, sharing feelings with each other and building bonds with people."

"I really like that disabled and abled can co-deliver with each other."

"I like about DanceSyndrome is learning different methods of dance also enjoying meetings new and old people in this community"

"It is brilliant. I am making loads of new friends and get to be more flexible."

"I like how they work with disabilities and being more friendly in DanceSyndrome. I like DanceSyndrome because we are family being more talkative, feeling welcomed in DanceSyndrome as well. I like how we expand ourselves in DanceSyndrome as well."

"I like that it is friendly and people use simple language that I can understand"

Increase confidence, self-esteem, and independence.

- 87% of participants felt either a bit more or a lot more involved in their community as a result of participating
- 91% said they felt more confident as a direct result of participating with DanceSyndrome
- 76% said they felt inspired by seeing a disability led activity

"We have absolutely loved being part of this project, it has helped [NAME]'s confidence. Thanks so much"

"Since starting DanceSyndrome she has a whole new routine to her Saturdays and as a direct result has seen improvement in her college work (foundation skills) which means she has shown enough improvement to continue her classes, something which may not have happened without this routine."

"Really enjoyed the way the participants grew in confidence each week"





Challenges/learning

In-person session capacity

Sessions in Preston and Accrington have been very well attended to the point of being oversubscribed. At times sessions had as many as 27 people attending (plus carers/ support workers), despite the fact that we prefer to limit sessions to 20 participants. We felt it had reached a point where there was a risk not only to health and safety but to the participants' enjoyment of the sessions.

In Preston, we took the decision to create a second session and to divide the group up over two separate back-to-back sessions. This solved the problems with over-crowding but created different issues. We found it difficult to divide the group up in a fair and equitable way and participants were disappointed to be separated from their friends, which in turn impacted on their social outcomes. Some participants were unhappy with an earlier start time, or found it difficult to find transport and/or support at a different time. We have lost some participants as a result, and this has resulted in us returning to the original one session.

When the situation started to become similar in Accrington, we tried to learn from this experience in Preston. Instead of allowing people to join a session that was already at capacity, we started a waiting list. For our next term, we are creating a completely new session with a different day and time and new co-leaders and keeping the original session as a "closed" group which isn't advertised anywhere. We are hoping that this slightly different approach will be more successful and will enable us to eventually reach double the number of participants in the Accrington area and can be replicable in other areas, such as Preston when the need arises.

New Blackburn session & venue challenges

Following delivery of the Making Connections project in early 2023 (see Page 23), consultation with partnership organisations in the area suggested that there would be demand for a session in Blackburn. As this was one of our Year 2 aims, we decided to make the most of the demand.

After initially launching our Blackburn session in May at an accessible town centre venue, within a few weeks we started to experience challenges with anti-social behaviour outside the venue which was impacting confidence in the session. This is the first time DanceSyndrome has encountered this type of challenge and a quick decision was made to move the session to an alternative venue before we built up a consistent group of participants, to avoid disruption later. This move took place in June and the new venue is much better for the group, however, we believe this has impacted on recruitment to the session so, in Autumn term, our Community Outreach Manager will be focussing on the Blackburn area and increasing numbers in this group. As we reported at the 6 month period, we have experienced challenges with recruitment to new sessions initially at other locations, but outreach work has not only resolved this but brought those sessions up to full capacity.

Online sessions

In our previous report we highlighted the challenges we were facing with online session recruitment and attempts we had made to change the content of sessions on offer and the days/times that they were delivered. During this reporting period, we have attempted to do more to raise awareness of the sessions that are on offer. In June, we worked with Third Sector magazine journalist Zoe Amar to inform her article "How are charities' digital services evolving?" (Link to article) in the hope that this may raise awareness of our online offer. There is more information on Page 9 about our online campaigns and general awareness raising that we have been doing on a national level, which should have also aided recruitment to our national, online offer. We have also taken the decision to do a brief social media campaign focussed exclusively on our online offer ahead of our Autumn 2023 programme starting to help with recruitment.

Dance By Example

At the start of the project, we were given feedback from participants who completed our previous Dance By Example training course. The feedback suggested that the paperwork provided by Sports Leaders UK* (the accrediting body) for the delivery of Dance By Example was not inclusive for people with a learning disability. As part of our commitment to inclusion and improving inclusive practises across all aspects of life, we decided that the best course of action was to work directly with the accrediting body to look at how this could be improved so that it met the needs of the people with learning disabilities that we work with at DanceSyndrome, and that may work with Leadership Skills Foundation in the future via other accredited organisations.

Our Artistic Director, Sophie Tickle (internal verifier) and Dance Artist Anna James-Clayton (who delivers the training) invested significant amounts of time into this process over the first 6 months of the project to get to the point where we felt ready to commence delivery again in April, with an end date of September 2023. As a result, we have not completed the delivery of 2 Dance By Example courses in Year 1, as we initially aimed to, however, we are now optimistic about future delivery of the course.

This process has been really useful for both DanceSyndrome and Leadership Skills Foundation as part of our continuing commitment to improving our own inclusive practices and it also demonstrates that as a small charity we do have the power to support changes in practice within national organisations and to encourage others to become more inclusive in their work too.

[*NOTE: Sports Leaders UK have recently rebranded and will be known as Leadership Skills Foundation from 1st August 2023]





Payments for Dance Leaders with Learning Disabilities

DanceSyndrome has an ambition to work towards paying Dance Leaders for sessions where they co-lead.

Sue Blackwell, our Chair of Trustees, and Jen's dad Malcolm Blackwell co-delivered a workshop session with all parents and carers to discuss the various elements of paying Dance Leaders and the implications around benefits and social services in April 2023.

We have consulted with Independent Community Advocacy Network North (ICANN) who provide assistance to people with completing benefits assessment paperwork, but they can't legally advise us on how to proceed in terms of making payments to Dance Leaders. They recommended that we speak to Citizens Advice, and a meeting has been scheduled with them.

This has been more complex to navigate than anticipated but we have gathered a good set of information to share with our Dance Leaders. We are anticipating that we will be able to make an offer to Dance Leaders within the first 6 months of Year 2 of this project, giving them some different options to choose from, depending on their personal circumstances. We are optimistic about rolling out payments from the start of the next financial year.

Life Skills Sessions

We committed to delivering 6 x Life Skills workshops in each year of the project. The intention was that these would be delivered to our team of Dance Leaders as part of their personal development. Our Mentoring Manager Kate Battersby has taken on the role of organising delivery of these sessions and is working with external providers where appropriate. The target of 6 sessions in the first year has not been met as Kate only came on board in March 2023, which was a key point in the timeline for our Edinburgh Fringe rehearsals. Kate has faced challenges with availability of members of the team for life skills workshops, and as such, some scheduled sessions were postponed due to low uptake. We have created an availability calendar to help us to maximise on attendance in the future and we have communicated with the team about new opportunities for this coming year and how important they are.

We have also created some new life skills opportunities which can be accessed within the Day of Dance. These are called "Bitesize Skills". The first session (Team Building) was delivered in June and we have Physical Touch Exercises and Trust Exercises scheduled for October. These short sessions will be delivered in the lunch break, with different members of our team working collaboratively to deliver these. As an example, Michelle Patterson (Family Liaison Officer) will be working with David Darcy (Dance Artist) on delivery, with content also being contributed by Kate Battersby (Mentoring Manager).



Inclusive Approaches Dance Artist Training

Our initial target was to train 15 Dance Artists in Year 1 through our Inclusive Approaches training for Dance Artists. We were approached by Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) to deliver this course at the end of July 2023. We promoted the course through their networks but there were only 2 enrolments which led to the cancellation of the course. Both RAD and DanceSyndrome had expected this to be a successful method of recruitment so we understand that there is some learning to do here. We have paused delivery of the training and are re-developing the course content to create a new training course call Breaking Down Barriers. We will also look at the way that we communicate the course and it's content in a more clear way that will appeal to a wider audience.

Despite these challenges, we have successfully recruited 8 new freelance Dance Artists and delivered 1-to-1 training to 6 of those over the course of Year 1 of the project.

Social Replication

In our previous report we commented on our franchising pilot process and the challenges encountered. Our Governance Group paused delivery on this strand of our strategy as they considered whether this is the right direction of travel for our organisation. Since our last report, we have continued to deliver straight commercial contracts with these partners, while we have been working on how to take this forward. Our Governance Group has agreed that a kitemark approach may be a more viable long-term solution than franchising, so they have been working on a range of packages that would suit potential partners and refining the finalising Heads of Agreements. Buzz Hub in St Helens have agreed to be our first kitemark partner and we are hopeful that this will roll out in the next 6 months.

IT Strategy and CRM system

As a growing organisation with an increasing number of staff, it has become apparent that some of our IT systems need to be reviewed and updated. An ongoing project has been started working with a local IT business which will look at migrating our current systems from Google to Microsoft in October. We have also been researching a new Customer Relationship Management system to enable us to automate more of our processes and create greater efficiency and capacity within our team. A new website is the final phase of this plan, but cannot effectively be completed until all the other processes are in place, so it is likely to be towards the end of Year 2 of our Everybody Move More project before this is completed.



Monitoring and Evaluation & the Data Manager Role

It was reported in our previous report that Emma Gomez had joined DanceSyndrome as a Data Manager on voluntary basis. As work on our Arts Council England project commenced it became clear that due to limited capacity within other existing roles, a new paid role (8 hours per week) needed to be created to manage more strategic monitoring and evaluation of our growing project work and to assist with streamlining of the processes involved in evidencing our work. Emma took this role until August 2023 and it has now been filled by Judy Blackburn.

Social Media Intern

We have been aware for some time that more work could be done to develop our social media presence. Capacity to do this has been limited and other Communications priorities have meant that this work keeps being delayed. In order to move forward with this, an intern has been recruited to carry out some specific briefs in relation to social media development. This intern will focus on developing our presence on Linked In and Tik Tok. Our Linked In page has grown organically over the last 3 years (when the business page was initially setup), but there has not been capacity to develop this and we understand that this platform could be fundamental to growth of our partnership work, profit making business services and volunteer/staff recruitment. Tik Tok is a platform that we have previously avoided due to a lack of alignment with our target market and challenges around online bullying/trolling which we need to be very conscious of when working with vulnerable adults/young people. As time has gone on, the platform's audience has evolved and is now more aligned with our own audience. With the launch of our new DS Youth programme, we felt that the time was right to reconsider Tik Tok as a communications platform. A Tik Tok account has been created and the intern has been given a brief to look at some initial content messages to create some evergreen content until there is more capacity within the team to post more frequently.

Development of Short Film about Co-Production

Over the course of Year 1 of our project, we have found ourselves involved in many different conversations around co-production and what it means. Co-production seems to be a "buzz word" on social media at the moment (on a national level) and we wanted to clarify what it means in the context of DanceSyndrome's work, as it is a key element of our Artistic Vision and charitable mission.

We decided to work with the same filmmakers who previously made a film about professional dancer Giovanni Pernice meeting our team. We developed a story board and came up with an ambitious shooting schedule for a full day in July. The film was edited over the summer and will be ready to share as part of our Inclusion Week social media campaign in September.

(Right: behind the scenes photographs from some of this years' performances capture the feeling of being a "dancing family")





Looking Ahead to Year 2

Delivery Plan - 2023/24

To deliver as per Year 1, but with a focus on increasing participation by 25% in all community sessions

As outlined on Page 12, we already have 311 participants in weekly sessions which already exceeds our Year 3 target of 300. We are confident we can maintain this number and will work to increase it further.

To open two new face-to-face community sessions

On Page 26 we gave details about the Blackburn session that was opened earlier in 2023. We will work to raise attendance in this session in Year 2. We previously planned on the second new session being in Great Harwood but initial research in communities suggests that there may be greater demand in Burnley and this would also help us with our aim to reach people in areas of deprivation (see Page 22).

To embark on our first Spring/Summer Tour of annual performance at various events, conferences & festivals across the UK

Following the success of our Edinburgh Fringe Festival performances, we are currently working on a Production Pack to help us to promote our new SENSE show to venues as part of a Northwest tour. We hope to launch this during our 2023 Inclusion Week campaign, with a view to the tour taking place around the mid-point of Year 2.

To develop and roll out the technique achievement goal syllabus'

Year 1 has presented some challenges around this syllabus (see Page 23) but we are hopeful that the roll out will begin by the end of Year 2.

To identify and develop new community partnerships & business engagement for future sponsorship of our community sessions

Our Community Outreach Manager aims to build on her existing contacts in areas such as Accrington, Blackburn and Burnley to further grow our workshop attendance numbers and prepare to launch our next community session. It is hoped that through this networking we will be introduced to some potential business partners in these communities.



To develop our work in schools

This work is already underway. See Page 23 for information about our Children and Young People Lead, Anna James, who has already developed a programme of activities which can be sold to schools, along with an enquiry form and processes to roll this out with local schools from the start of September.

To develop a Youth DS Collective Group

We have already commenced recruitment to the DS Youth Collective (as discussed on Page 23) and sessions will begin on 11th September 2023.

To identify and build partnerships with organisations who would like to adapt the DanceSyndrome model and kitemark (social replication model)

As outlined on Page 29 we are still refining the details of the social replication project, but we have secured our first partner with a view to starting this in early 2024. We have also been working with a second potential partner who is looking into options for funding their kitemark. In Year 2 we will drive this forward and look for further opportunities for partnership work.

To identify and work with relevant awarding bodies towards our awards/training to be accredited.

This work will follow on from the research discussed on Page 23 in relation to current accreditation and the challenges it presents in terms of remaining fully inclusive. We are confident of making progress on this in Year 2.

To have robust systems in place for our data collection and to be able to report on this externally

This work is already underway. See Page 30 for information about our new IT Systems and the new Data Manager role. We hope to finalise the transitions to the new systems by the mid point of Year 2.

To understand our environmental impact and to be able to report on this externally

As part of our Arts Council England NPO project, we are required to form a working group that will lead on organisational sustainability. This group is currently being established and will consider the environmental impact of all aspects of our work, including our weekly delivery, touring performances and operational activity such as marketing and merchandising.

Budget

	Year 1 Budget	Actual spend	Difference	Notes
Salaries (inc. on-costs such as NI and pensions)	£31,500.00	£26,700.00	£4,800.00	Salaries didn't kick in until we had recruited for the roles to support this project
Overheads/Utilities	£2,250.00	£2,250.00	£0.00	
Rent/Accommodation	£2,484.00	£3,690.00	−£1,206.00	We opened up 2 x new sessions
Professional Fees	£14,885.00	£19,800.00	−£4,915.00	This includes travel of our team & Freelancers
Office Costs (inc. digital costs)	£3,375.00	£3,375.00	£0.00	These costs were upfronted in first 6th months
Training	£1,575.00	£981.00	£594.00	This includes travel
Volunteer Costs	£252.00	£252.00	£0.00	Recorded under other headings
Travel	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	Included in salaries & Dance Artists fees
Equipment	£900.00	£900.00	£0.00	4 x laptops
Marketing	£675.00	£675.00	£0.00	Leaflets, Business Cards, calendars, X:Ten programme
Capital	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
Evaluation	£360.00	£292.00	£68.00	Design Surveys/Collate Baseline Data/Extract 6th month results
Total	£58,256.00	£58,915.00	−£659.00	





DanceSyndrome
Dancer Led, Disability Inspired

Registered Charity No:1152664

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