



Dance and Health

**Project examples from across the
South West**

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The following case studies have been submitted from partners across the South West who have used dance as the vehicle to tackle health related issues relevant to their localities.

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1. Gloucestershire: Salsa on Prescription – Stroud District Council

Project Aim:

- To improve patients' health by increasing their physical activity levels through a fun and sociable group activity.
- To tackle health inequalities by subsidising classes and targeting those who are experiencing some degree of ill health – both physical and mental.

Context: The council already run a successful exercise referral scheme (healthy lifestyles) in partnership with NHS Gloucestershire and local leisure centres. The introduction of dancing is to compliment this and offer an alternative form of activity for health improvement; providing social support as well as physical activity. There is an established need to increase physical activity levels across the district and especially improve the health of older people (although the scheme is open to all ages over 14 years)

Location: Stroud District (Cam)

Concept: Patients are referred by a medical professional and attend an initial consultation with the physical activity referral coordinator. They are then entitled to 12 weeks of dancing taught by a professional salsa teacher at a heavily discounted rate. The referral coordinator reviews the patient's progress at a 12 week review appointment.

Age Range: 41-55:**29.4%** 56-70:**64.7%** 71+:**5.9%**

Session Length and duration: 12 week course, 1 hour sessions.

Outcome: Feedback from the participants is as follows –

Has your level of physical activity increased since taking part in the scheme?

Yes: 90% No: 10%

Has your health and in particular the reason for which you were referred improved?

Yes: 80% No: 20%

Details of improvements...

'Weight loss, asthma improved; less reliant on inhaler'

'Feeling much more mobile'

'Lost weight and lost inches from waist and hips'

'Improved mood and focus with energy to spare'

'Mental well-being has improved and increased my confidence'

Do you intend to continue dancing?

Yes with Salsa: 70%

Yes – other types of dance: 40%

No: 10%

For more information visit; http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/health_development.asp#dance

2. Wiltshire: Dancing Through Life – Wiltshire Dancing and partners

Projects aims:

- To explore through action research how dance can impact on the inclusion and access agendas of others for example social services, rehabilitation facilities and the NHS.
- To start research into the benefits of dance with older people with the view of developing this work in the future.
- To explore the demand and potential for a longer term project.

Context: The Dancing through Life project was developed because of a clear gap identified in a mapping exercise and with the knowledge that with the on-going changes in the UK's population (more than 50% now being 55+) working with this age range is a key priority for local authorities, together with a drive by central government towards primary interventions to ensure more active and thereby healthier older people.

The project was a partnership between Wiltshire Dancing, Salisbury, West Wiltshire, Kennet and North Wiltshire District Council, RICE (Research Institute for The Care of the Older People), ICIA (Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts), The Pound Arts Centre Corsham, ArtCare, Fit Together, The Alzheimer's Society, Salisbury Branch and Arts Council England, South West. The project created an opportunity to develop these partnerships to utilise the power of dance to deliver on their agendas.

Location: 'Dancing through Life' was a pilot project which ran from for the over 80's, The project ran for 10 weeks in eight locations across Wiltshire, offering weekly dance classes to 8 groups (4 groups specifically targeted to those who have Alzheimer's or dementia).

Concept:

The Research looked at:

The benefits dance has for older people and people with Alzheimer's and Dementia

Levels of depression and if taking part has had any effect in lifting it

Improved and increased flexibility, balance and co-ordination – leading to reduction of falls

The ability for people with memory loss to learn something new or recall something they may have forgotten

Increased social interaction, inclusion and participation

The measures used were:

- Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) (Folstein, Folstein & McHugh, 1975)
- Trails A & B (Reitan, 1992)
- Beck's Depression Inventory - II (BDI) (Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996)
- Bath Assessment of Subjective Quality of Life in Dementia (BASQID) (Trigg, Skevington & Jones, 2007)

Age Range: 80+ (although some younger ones joined in 60-80)

Session Length and duration: 30mins -1hr once a week for 10weeks

Outcome:

Only score on BDI showed significant improvement

Improvement on every measure for both groups, except quality of life measure

Especially important as patient group traditionally would show a significant decrease in cognitive test scores over time

Small number of participants – if bigger follow on study, could expect to see greater significance in results

For more information contact; info@wiltshiredance.co.uk

3. South Gloucestershire: Dance on Prescription (DOP) – Dance South Gloucestershire (DSG)

DOP aim:

- To provide Exercise on Prescription clients aged 50+ with another positive pathway to exercise. DOP uses creative movement to energise the whole being: mentally, physically and socially.
- The partnerships: Thornbury & Kingswood DOP: DSG and South Gloucestershire Council GP referral programme: Exercise on Prescription with support from the Leisure Trust
- Frenchay DOP: DSG, Exercise on Prescription and North Bristol NHS Trust Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre.

Location: 3 x weekly classes: Thornbury Leisure Centre, Kingswood Leisure Centre and Frenchay Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre

Age Range: Fifty years plus

Referral concept: Thornbury and Kingswood DOP: Clients are referred to Exercise on Prescription via their GPs due to underlying health reasons, Exercise on Prescription then assess the client, referring them to the correct physical activity programme, including DOP.

Frenchay DOP: Clients are referred from Phase 4 of the North Bristol NHS Trust Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre programme. These are clients who have gone from Phase 1 to 3 of the programme and during Phase 4 are introduced back into community physical activities.

Session Length and duration: Weekly classes last for one hour which includes warm up, creative/routine led session and warm down/relaxation period.

Outcome: Participants were asked whether the project had increased their self confidence, changed or increased their interest in keeping fit / healthy and increased their involvement in dance. Responses as below:

1. 12 (60%) said it had increased their self confidence; 7 (35%) said “possibly”; and 1 (5%) said “no”
2. 16 (80%) said it had changed or increased their interest in keeping fit/healthy; 4 (20%) said “possibly”

“The project has exceeded our expectations; to be part of something so successful is something as a Service we are delighted to be able to provide. It is a joy to watch the group together and hear them laugh and leave us smiling each week.” Beverley Hennegan Cardiac Rehabilitation Service Manager, North Bristol NHS Trust

For more information contact; Beverley.Hennegan@nbt.nhs.uk or lisalort@gloucestershiredance.org.uk

4. Bristol: ReStaged schools' dance & health – Bristol City Council and Active Bristol

At the start of 2010 Bristol City Council received funding of £5000 from the local Change4Life Activity fund. The application was submitted by the local authority Youth Dance Officer and the Active Bristol Manager, to sustain the post of the Project worker who delivers dance engagement activity to children and young people in areas of deprivation.

Recognising the potential of dance to encourage people with low levels of physical activity to become more active, the project aims to engage children and young people in a programme of sustained activity and evidence the physical impact of dance.

Participating schools were identified through the East Central Partnership Development Manager according to schools' physical engagement targets and targeted Change4Life families in clusters 1, 2 & 5, where time constraints are prohibitive and localised activity is more successful in attracting participants.

Taster sessions were delivered to recruit participants and promote the sixty active minutes message, with weekly after school sessions then delivered in four primary schools. A total of 158 children in years 5 & 6 were engaged in weekly activity over four months, culminating in performance to an audience of 800 plus at the ReStaged platform event.

Sessions were designed to combat a number of health and fitness issues; namely improving resting and recovery heart rate, core strength, cardio vascular strength, balance and flexibility. Alongside these activities we promoted Change4life messages and dance resources, utilising games and the Diversity dance routines from the website.

Outputs were measured over weeks 1, 2, 8 and 14 with average mean improvements shown below:

Resting Heart Rate over 1 min – 8%

Recovery Heart rate over 10 mins – 15%

Core Strength (plank & sit ups) – 6%

Cardio Vascular strength over 2 mins – 40%

Balance – 21%

Flexibility – 5%

These figures demonstrate particular improvement in cardio vascular activity and heart rate recovery. Although not all of these improvements can be solely attributed to dance activity, the statistics demonstrate the power of dance to motivate children beyond their physical comfort zones, encourage sustained physical activity and improve co-ordination and balance.

For more information visit; <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Arts-Entertainment/youth-dance.en>

5. Somerset: Step Change Project – NHS Somerset and Take Art

The benefits to the NHS of regularly, active people are well-documented as a means of preventing ill health and managing many health conditions. Dance is one way of realising the benefits that physical activity can offer physical, mental and social health and well being. Delivering physical activity initiatives within the community can increase the opportunities available to Somerset residents by reducing the barriers to participation through improved access.

The Step Change project was a two and a half year dance and health project for adults, young people, including a specific strand for older people and adults with a learning disability. The project was largely looking to increase participation by empowering individuals to take control in determining their own healthier lifestyle choices. It was reported by Take Art that the project touched the lives and lifestyles of more than 1,900.

NHS Somerset contributed £50,000 towards the project. Step change was delivered in partnership with a number of stakeholders, including NHS Somerset, Somerset County Council and four of the county's five district councils.

Evidence collected by the Take Art evaluation indicates many positive gains in participant's attitudes towards improving physical and mental health. To include; improvements in physical health such as increased stamina, flexibility and muscle tone through regular participation in regular exercise, increase awareness of personal health and what it means to be healthy in both body and mind, increase sense of wellbeing through enjoyment of regular sessions and being able to feel less stressed and more relaxed, improvements in aspects of social inclusion through regular volunteering bringing rural communities together and develop friendship. Our understanding is that some of the classes have become self financing and will continue to run.

“Step Change has been an enlightening project, which has engaged with some difficult to reach groups and promoted physical activity through dance to benefit physical and mental health and well being.” Kay Selman Health Promotion Manager - Healthy Weight, NHS Somerset

For more information visit; <http://takeart.org/projects/entry/step-change/the-impact-of-step-change>

6. Dorset: Dance Generations project – Dorset County Council and Activate

We chose dance as the art-form for this intergenerational project because we aimed to engage and inspire individuals from a range of backgrounds, ages and abilities to take part in physical activities and research shows that dance can do this, in a fun and interactive way. The added bonus of using dance is that as well as the physical benefits, being creative, imaginative and working with others can bring a host of emotional, mental and social benefits too. By removing language barriers, we hoped that children, adults and older people with a range of disabilities would be able to communicate in a different way and learn from one another.

The project aims and outcome:

- Use dance to deliver health and well-being promotion in care settings and promoting the concept of arts and health work to deliver care.
- Use professional dance artists - to deliver dance sessions for service users; to deliver training to care staff and teachers to increase skills and knowledge; to deliver training to local artists to develop the skill pool.
- Create a performance piece of dance, offering opportunities of exchange between the different generations involved in the project.
- Research the benefits of dance and health.
- Through a seminar - share good practice; highlight the health outcomes of the project; advocate for the benefits of dance and health work.

The length of the intervention and how many people took part:

- 10 artists employed
- 409 Others taking part
- 2000+ audience
- 20+ performance/exhibition days
- 4 new products or commissions (Toolkit, Final Public Report, Academic Research report and Dance Generations Film)
- 94.5 artist employment days
- 65 sessions for education and training

The total project cost was around £79 000. The project provided value for money because:

A high proportion of individuals directly benefited from the project within workshops.

- Carers and family members were able to attend performances and share the positive experience participants had within the project.
- Participants, audience members and everyone else involved in the project was able to benefit from the intergenerational aspect of the project and learn about different people.
- The project was sustainable i.e. the training sessions for staff has enabled dance to continue in these settings and empowered staff to feel confident enough to run them.
- Social Care staff and Arts professionals were able to build partnerships and learn through the process of the project for the future.

- The DVD and post project presentations have inspired more projects to be initiated as well as educate other people about the power of dance, effective partnership working and the successful outcomes of this project.

Due to the nature of the project, health professionals were not directly involved as the project was a partnership primarily between social care and arts professionals. But the project has since been recognised by Health professionals and this relationship will develop as we build towards further phases of development.

Since the completion of the first 3 phases of Dance Generations, we have been working to identify funding to continue this work. It is hoped that we will secure additional funding to continue to run some refresher training sessions for centre staff and several 'off-shoot' projects are already in the development stage.

“The project has achieved a high profile within the County Council and has proved once again that dance can bring lasting benefits to participants from a wide variety of backgrounds. The encouragement and professional support offered to those participating and leading sessions in numerous venues around Dorset has been of the highest order and has encouraged an on-going commitment to developing the work further.” **Mike Hoskin Arts Develop Manager and lead project partner, Dorset County Council**

For more information and the full report contact info@activateperformingarts.org.uk

7. Cornwall: Shall we Dance Project - The Works Cornwall and Arts for Health Cornwall (AFHC)

The benefits of dance are well documented in terms of physical, mental, emotional and social health. The evaluations of previous AFHC projects have supported these findings, so the opportunity to extend these benefits to a wider audience was welcomed.

Our aim was to improve their quality of life and health and well-being of older people through a sustainable dance project.

- To provide dance opportunities in a range of settings across the county, in order to engage older people of all ages and abilities.
- To open up these opportunities to a range of dance practitioners in order to increase the pool of appropriately experienced and skilled dance practitioners, thereby creating a sustainable resource that will support further opportunities.
- To work with a range of partners to promote and demonstrate the benefits of dance in contributing to physical, mental emotional and social health and well-being.

Each individual project consisted of five, 2 hour interventions, involving 46 health professionals over a period of 3 months. The total project cost was £15,000, with an additional £7100 contributed in kind, with the effects of the outcomes extending far beyond the life of the project.

The health and well being benefits achieved were:

- Increased happiness, confidence and feelings of being valued.
- Increased levels of socialisation, with conversations, friendships and communication extending beyond the activity sessions (between participants and staff).
- The sense of belonging, through participating together and feelings of value and purpose.
- Improved concentration, sleep patterns, relaxation and general fitness.
- Changes in environment, increase in skill levels, understanding and a sense of calm.

Practitioners reported feeling inspired to do more and felt privileged to be working with people who had led such rich and interesting lives.

Health professional felt a stronger bond with the clients, enjoyed the dance and could see the benefits.

The long term effects are:-

- Confident, skilled, motivated care staff who continue to run dance sessions and seek to engage in other opportunities with AFHC and others in order to improve the health and well being of the participants (and their visitors).
- AFHC have been commissioned to provide a team of art practitioners to work alongside the NHS rehabilitation team on the Stroke Unit Camborne Redruth Community Hospital, in the memory cafes and on Arts response, a countywide mental health project
- Dance practitioners have reported increase in skills and knowledge, and improved ability to communicate this knowledge as well a rise in demand for them to lead sessions in a range of different care settings.

- Other organisations have used this model to support the development of their own projects.

The Exit Strategy:- To up-skill, motivate and develop confidence in the care staff, so that they continue delivering the opportunities in the long term. Further AFHC work has used the contacts gained to enable the individual 'project participants' to link into other AFHC and other projects and community groups.

“It was a wonderful project to be involved with; the positive attitudes, enthusiasm and commitment by the health care professionals, dance practitioners and participants developed a momentum that continues to inspire and motivate dance and creativity across the county.” **Jenny Atkinson, Older Person's Project Coordinator, AFHC.**

For more information visit; <http://www.artsforhealthcornwall.org.uk/projects/shall-we-dance-overview-2>

8. Plymouth: Time to Dance project – Attik Dance

What does the program include?

There are three key areas/participation categories within this program: **Active older** dancers, **vulnerable older** dancers which include both chair based classes and sessions for adults with learning and physical disabilities and finally **health related** sessions. This last one encompasses GP referrals from cardiac and obesity professionals as well as having organised activities for stroke groups.

There are two practitioners working to facilitate this program, one is full time the other is a three-day post. The sessions are delivered within care and community hall settings. Over a period of 3 years Attik's Time to Dance program has grown from one class a week to a program of 13 regularly delivered sessions across Plymouth. Since then we have seen a 962 % increase in participation and engagement levels. Currently the program comes into contact with over 125 people on a weekly basis and this continues to grow as people identify with or hear about Attik's Time to Dance program.

The age range for this work is early 50's to late 80's.

Concept - To take the dance program out of the studio and into the places where people live and work to ensure that dance plays a part in strengthening communities and raising the profile of dance.

The project aims:

- To provide older people with the opportunity to experience the joy of dance whilst providing physical and mental stimulation in a safe and accepting environment.
- To treat participants as individuals not 'older people', avoiding stereotypical sequence dancing and encourage individuals to express themselves to create a unique community of voices.
- To provide opportunities for the work to be showcased to the public and to highlight positive peer group models that inspire and engage.
- To focus on the escape from social isolation.
- To assist with falls prevention.
- To provide these activities in the communities own spaces, increasing access and usage of the community centres by the older age groups.
- To challenge own and others perceptions about the capabilities of older people.

Outcomes:

We have had seen a variety of outcomes over the years including people becoming more aware that dance can play a vital role in getting and keeping people active. Our future target is to pursue this link between dance and health professionals and we invite all interested parties to experience the work first hand so as to see its potential.

For more information on this project contact; info@attik.org.uk

9. SOUTH WEST DANCE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



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