

Get Doncaster Dancing Strategy



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Introduction

Physical inactivity contributes to 1 in 6 deaths, equal to smoking. It is the fourth leading cause of poor health in the UK and Doncaster has recognised the need to tackle the high levels of inactivity in the borough.

Dance is uniquely placed to contribute to getting people active and improving health and social outcomes. At its best it combines physical activity, social interaction, emotional and creative expression, all of which evidence shows improve health and wellbeing. Insight shows dance can also engage inactive

people who are not motivated by health or fitness because it is viewed as a fun and social activity. Dance is a popular activity with over five million people participating in dance across the UK each year.



Gender inequality

Dance is particularly popular with women and girls who are more inactive than their male counterparts at every age across the life course. Only 38% of girls achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day compared with 63% for boys. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Taking Part survey shows over 40% of girls aged 5 – 10 years dance outside of school. Surveys have also shown dance is the most popular choice for PE for adolescent girls. Amongst adults 25% of women are inactive

compared to 19% of men. The Active Lives Survey showed that more women get their physical activity through dance than through cycling. This survey also shows dance engages women living with disabilities, with twice as many women participating in dance than men.



Benefits of dance

Dance is a creative activity as well as a physical activity and there is a wealth of evidence on the benefits of arts to health gathered in the All Party Parliamentary Group Creative Health Report. Taking part in regular dance activity provides a wide range of benefits across the life course:

Early Years: Dance improves cognitive and physical development and enhances social skills. Parent and toddler dance sessions can provide opportunities to build bonds and positive relationships.

Children and young people: Dance increases cardiovascular fitness, improves bone mass content and can prevent or reduce obesity. It can also improve attainment, social skills and self-esteem.

Adults: Dance can help maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of a wide range of health conditions including Type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal problems and chronic heart disease. It can also reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Older People: Dance shows particular promise in improving the health of older people as it can maintain mobility, reduce the risk of falls, prevent social isolation and improve cognitive function.

Wider benefits

Dance can engage a diverse population from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures so has the potential to improve cultural cohesion. Dance therapy can provide benefits in a clinical setting including improved quality of life, self-esteem, or coping with a disease.

Strategic Context

The DCMS Sporting Future strategy defines physical activity as “sport, dance, walking and cycling” so dance is recognised as an essential part of creating an active nation. The Get Doncaster Dancing Strategy forms part of the Get Doncaster Moving Strategic Framework and will link to Doncaster’s Creative and Cultural Strategy. It aims to provide a vision for dance to improve health and social outcomes and to contribute to inclusive growth in Doncaster, through a community and sector led approach. The Get Doncaster Dancing Steering Group whose members include representation from local arts sector, PE and School Sport organisations and Doncaster Council Public Health are leading the strategy. It will provide a platform to bring together, inspire and mobilise the dance sector to improve health and social outcomes through dance. The strategy will also provide a bridge between the cultural and physical activity and sport strategies encouraging closer cross sector collaboration.



Where are we now? Overview of dance in Doncaster

Current dance provision in Doncaster

Mapping was undertaken with input from the Steering Group and the public and provider surveys. It gives an overview of the dance provision currently on offer in Doncaster and also identifies the gaps in dance provision, across the life course.

Early years: provision is primarily through private dance schools and it is unclear how consistently dance is offered in early years settings.

Children and young people

In school: Offering dance, as part of the curriculum in schools is an effective way of reaching children and young people, regardless of their backgrounds, to ensure participation. Dance is placed within the PE curriculum and should be offered in all primary schools with options for secondary schools to deliver dance if they choose. The Active Fusion survey of schools in 2017 showed a mixed picture about how far dance is offered in curriculum time, with the majority of primary schools offering it as an extra-curricular or one-off opportunity.

Out of school: The largest provider of dance for children and young people out of school is the private dance sector. The local audit showed there are approximately 60 schools operating in Doncaster engaging mainly girls, with approximately 2,700 children and young people participating each week through a range of dance styles including ballet, tap, stage dance, street dance and Scottish dance.

Adults and older people: There are some private dance schools that also offer adult classes, but the survey responses indicate that there is generally not enough provision. Respondents wanted more classes at different levels, especially at beginner level, and in various dance styles including Salsa, Rock & Roll, Modern and Jive. The Dance On programme does provide a network of dance sessions for older people accessible for those with limited mobility but not in all areas.

Disabled people: No regular dance sessions/ programmes for disabled people were identified so this is as a gap that needs addressing.



Location and costs: Dance provision was mainly in the centre of the town rather than near where people lived. The charges made by providers are not high, with an average £5 per session, but this fee would be a barrier for people living on low incomes.

Workforce: There are some dedicated and highly experienced dance practitioners in the area, but they are not well networked. There is a lack of skills in working with older people and people living with disabilities but an interest to gain training and improve people's health and wellbeing through dance.

Performance and wider dance opportunities

Performing is an important element of dance, which allows people to share their passion with others and builds confidence and self-esteem. There are some performance opportunities through private dance schools however Doncaster lacks Youth Dance Groups, has no schools dance festival and few links to the wider national dance networks. Survey respondents recommended more public performances, festivals and celebrations of dance to encourage people to participate and raise the profile of dance.

Consultation Process

The consultation process was led through the steering group to reach the widest possible range of stakeholders to inform and shape the strategy. This included:

- Public online survey hosted by Doncaster Council and promoted through partners and targeted social media advertising received 508 responses. 151 (30%) currently dance, 165 used to dance but don't currently dance (32%) and 192 don't dance (38%). 91% of respondents were female.
- Dance provider's online survey with 28 responses submitted from a range of dance schools, organisations and voluntary societies.
- Face to face consultations with disadvantaged groups including adults with disabilities, mental health issues, older women and people living with dementia.
- Networking event for strategic leads with attendees from public health, NHS, dance and cultural organisations, PE and School Sport and voluntary organisations.
- Networking event for dance teachers and practitioners.
- Consultation with Arts & Culture Programme Board.

Results of the Consultation

From the surveys and the consultations, reported barriers to dancing were multi-faceted and included not knowing where to find dance activities, health and mobility problems, lack of motivation, confidence and local provision. There was high level of consensus about what needed to be addressed in the strategy.

1. Promotion

The respondents suggested that there should be promotion of the benefits of dancing as well as information about provision made widely available through using: social media, poster/print, advertising and a Get Doncaster Dancing website. There were also suggestions about creating dance presentations to encourage participation e.g. flash mobs, a dance festival, films on YouTube and promoting dance activity at performances at Cast and other venues.

2. Dance provision offered

Whilst there was recognition of current dance provision, many thought there needed to be changes to make it more attractive to people by offering: wider choice of styles, introductory level classes, shorter and low impact sessions, inclusive teaching approach and including social elements. Also, sessions made available via the internet for people to join in at home.

3. Access

Proposals to increase take up were focussed on taking activity to target groups through running classes in: care homes, schools/colleges and community centres etc. The importance of partnership working was raised, suggestions included working with hospitals, leisure centres, weight management clinics etc. to refer patients to dance classes and embedding dance within other strategies such as Starting Well (0-5 years). Running sessions at different times of the day and evening to encourage take up. Working with communities to support 'ground up' stimulation of localised activity in disadvantaged communities was a theme running through consultations with strategic leads.

4. Workforce development

There are highly experienced dance practitioners/artists working locally but there needs to be further training to increase the number able to work with priority groups. Creating a network for practitioners would provide a strong and coordinated group of workers to support the delivery of the strategy.

5. Cost/resources

The financial barrier to getting inactive people dancing was raised by many respondents. It was proposed that low cost sessions, free taster sessions and free classes for vulnerable groups are offered. The strategic leads felt it important to consider sustainability to support activity beyond short-term programmes, to make impact with target groups.

Priorities identified

From the surveys and consultations, the following priorities have been identified, to be addressed in the strategy:

- Promotion – encouraging people to take part in dance, building confidence and addressing attitudinal barriers
- Promotion – signposting what opportunities are on offer in the borough
- Address gaps in provision – stimulating dance activity for adults, initiating/incentivising creation of local activity for those living in the most disadvantaged communities and for those living with health conditions and/or are disabled
- Increase access to dance in schools for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or are disabled
- Increase and upskill professional and volunteer dance workforce to work with and support disadvantaged, those living with health conditions and/or disabled people.

Ambitions

These ambitions reflect the aims and priorities developed through the consultation process and an action plan will be developed and taken forward to deliver these:

1. Changing behaviour and inspiring people to get active through dance
2. Improved communication and promotion of dance opportunities for less active people
3. Dance is accessible to everyone regardless of their age, ability and cultural background
4. Dance is accessible locally for people living in disadvantaged communities and contributes to reducing health inequalities
5. The dance and wider workforce has the skills and confidence to reduce inequalities through dance
6. Dance is embedded in and supports all strategies that meet health, social and educational outcomes





Governance & reporting

- The Get Doncaster Dancing Steering Group will be principally responsible for the implementation, the governance and monitoring of the recommendations of the strategy. With support from Doncaster Council it will be responsible for establishing the best approach to taking the strategy forward and developing a detailed action plan with timeframes. Monitoring will be on-going and progress will be reported to the Get Doncaster Moving Board.

Measuring impact

Impact will be measured by one or more of the following methods, showing an:

- Increase in the percentage of inactive people being physically active through dance measured through Active Lives survey (Boosted to increase numbers of Doncaster residents surveyed)
- Increase in opportunities to dance, mapped against baseline mapping.
- Increase in the numbers of schools providing after school dance activity (baseline to be determined).
- Impact on dance specific delivery programmes will be measured through methods specified in their design.