

Dance and health

The benefits for people of all ages



department for
culture, media
and sport

Foreword

In this country an increasing number of people lead sedentary lifestyles and rates of obesity are rising. The need to improve levels of physical activity and develop healthier lifestyles has never been more pressing. The Government has provided leadership and guidance on making healthier choices in the documents *Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier* and *Choosing Activity: A Physical Activity Plan*, but if people are to make positive decisions about improving their health and well-being, they need to be able to choose from a range of suitable options.

Dance can have a powerful effect on people's lives and we want to see the physical, emotional, mental and social benefits of dance extended to as many people as possible.

Efforts to improve health and well-being need to reach everyone in our society. Anyone can dance and enjoy dancing – young or old, disabled or non-disabled. The vibrant range of styles drawn from different cultures gives dance an impressive reach in our multicultural society. Dance also has a long history of successfully working with hard to reach groups and building a sense of social cohesion within communities.

There are many examples of how dance has effectively promoted the health and improved the lives of people, a small number of which are included in this folder. We hope that these will provide the information and inspiration to develop further partnerships to enhance the health and well-being of people throughout the country.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Flint'.

Caroline Flint MP
Minister for Public Health



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Lammy'.

David Lammy MP
Minister for Culture



Choose dance

Dance makes an enormous contribution to our physical, social and creative health and well-being. This folder shows some of the many ways in which individuals, dance companies and organisations across the country engage people in dance activities that provide a wide range of health benefits.



Dance is one of the activities we can choose for improving our fitness and health. It has particular appeal to a number of groups that may not readily engage with traditional sports – young women, older people and culturally diverse groups, for example. Dance can also provide a good way of introducing people to other forms of physical activity.

Triple F – Fitness and Fun through Football

Launched in 2005, Triple F is a groundbreaking initiative devised by Birmingham County Football Association, Black Country Sports Partnership, and Sandwell and Wolverhampton Local Education Authorities. The project targets girls aged 14–16 who take little exercise, and uses elements of football and dance in sessions designed to engage those taking part in a way that traditional physical education lessons do not.

Dance is for everyone

Anyone can enjoy dancing regardless of their age or background, if they are disabled or non-disabled, whether or not they have danced before, and whatever their shape and size. Dance can be done as part of a group or practised alone and can happen in a variety of places – including social, education, community, arts and health settings. At its simplest, dance involves moving rhythmically to music. Anyone can do this with benefits to their physical health.

There are numerous styles of dance, each with its own attractions: ballet, ballroom, African dance forms, South Asian dance, contemporary dance, morris dance, ceroc (a fusion of jazz and salsa), hip hop – the list is almost endless.





The broad appeal of dance is easy to demonstrate:

- Dance is the fastest growing of all the art forms
- Each year, nearly five million people take part in dance activity in their communities
- In a recent Physical Education School and School Club Links (PESSCL) survey, dance was shown to be second only to football as the most popular activity. Dance also showed the largest increase in the number of school club links created
- A survey of over 50,000 Year 9 pupils in over 700 schools in the North West of England showed that dance was the top activity for girls outside school and that demand for dance was greater than the opportunities available

Big Dance

Big Dance is a week-long country-wide celebration of dance, launched in 2006 as a partnership between Arts Council England, the BBC and the Mayor of London. By involving thousands of people in fun and unusual dance activity, and by bringing dance to schools, fitness centres, arts centres, parks, museums, theatres and shopping centres throughout the country, Big Dance shows how popular, accessible and enjoyable dance can be.

The benefits of dance

Physical and mental

Dancing can bring a wide range of physical and mental benefits:

- healthier heart and lungs
- stronger muscles
- stronger bones and reduced risk of osteoporosis
- better coordination, agility and flexibility
- improved balance and enhanced spatial awareness
- increased physical confidence
- improved mental functioning
- increased energy expenditure can help counteract unwanted weight gain

Personal and social

The creative and collaborative nature of dance can bring further benefits:

- improved general and psychological well-being
- greater self-confidence and self-esteem
- increased trust
- better social skills
- reduced social isolation and exclusion

Educational

Dance can play a role in changing attitudes to a range of health related issues including teenage pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Photography credits

Cover

Start to Finish, an East London Dance project.

Photo: Hugo Glendinning

Foreword

attik dance's Laura Greaves teaching over-50s at the Barbican Theatre, Plymouth. Photo: Tim Cuff

Choose dance

EXTEND exercise training. Photo: Barry Ricketts

Akademi's *Escapade*. Photo: Dan Burn-Forti

Laban's *Pick up the Pace* project,

www.laban.org. Photo: Benedict Johnson

Folder pocket

Euro Hakka at Final of UEFA European Women's Football Championship.

Photo: Brian Slater

Getting started

Page 3 and 4 Laban's *Pick up the Pace* project,

www.laban.org. Photo: Benedict Johnson

Case studies

Promoting active lifestyles

Touch Production. Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company.

Photos: Adrian Burrows

Promoting healthy, active lifestyles in children and young people

JEMS after school club at Danegrove Primary School taught by Natalie Green.

Photo: Garry Samuels agi photographics

(g.@agi.co.uk)

Dalcroze Society, *Stepping into Music*.

Photo: Talula Sheppard

Promoting active ageing for older people

EXTEND exercise training.

Photos: Barry Ricketts

Tackling health issues through dance

Akademi, *Waterscapes*. Photo: Richard Haughton

Dancer: Munisha Sevani

Qdos Dance Theatre. *Under the Influence*.

www.designandimageworks.com

Photo: Mick Mitchell

Changing lives through dance

Laban's *Pick up the Pace* project,

www.laban.org.

Photo: Benedict Johnson



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Between 2006 and 2008, we will invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and the National Lottery in supporting the arts. This is the bedrock of support for the arts in England.

We believe that the arts have the power to change lives and communities, and to create opportunities for people throughout the country.

This publication is a partnership between Arts Council England, the Department of Health and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

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