



Feel good, keep moving,

# DANCE ON™

**A toolkit of inspiration,  
research and resources to help  
develop dance programmes  
for older people**

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## Funding and support from Sport England

Despite the positive benefits sport and physical activity can bring to our health and quality of life, maintaining an active life as we get older can be challenging. Work, family and caring commitments can understandably take priority and societal narratives often reinforce the notion that as we age, we will and should slow down.

Sport England has worked with 25 Active Ageing partners over the past five years to support more than 30,000 older adults into sport and physical activity; and, to learn how to provide positive, inclusive physical activity experiences that support older adults to build more sport and physical activity into their daily lives. This forms part of our mission to strengthen the connections between sport, physical activity, health and

wellbeing, so that more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.

One of these Active Ageing partners is One Dance UK. Through £616,775 of national lottery investment and support, working in strong local partnerships with darts, Yorkshire Dance and University of Leeds, they have rooted their fun, social and accessible dance programme in communities across Leeds, Bradford and Doncaster. Showcasing how the right opportunity and support can reframe physical activity as a fun and achievable experience, irrespective of your age.

We would love to see the learning and recommendations of this toolkit provide you with inspiration, ideas and actions that you can draw on to help the people in your local community become more active.



# Welcome to the Dance On Toolkit!

**Whoever you are, and whatever has brought you here, we hope you find the tools you're looking for to apply the Dance On approach in your own settings.**

We are so excited to share our practical experience and knowledge, backed up by academic research, from the past seven years, and to be a catalyst for positive change in older people's physical activity levels, mental health and social connection across the country.

Having a dance programme in your area can increase and then maintain physical activity levels, improve overall well-being, improve balance and mood, and reduce fear of falling.

## What is Dance On?

Dance On is a highly successful community-based dance programme in Yorkshire, designed, delivered and evaluated by darts, Yorkshire Dance, One Dance UK and University of Leeds. Dance On aims to raise physical activity levels and reduce isolation in older adults. Sessions aim to suit all abilities and aspire to be as accessible, person-centred and inclusive as possible; they are run by a team of professional, empathic and passionate dance artists with a wide range of skills and expertise.

## What is the Toolkit?

Our Dance On programme is a scalable and replicable model that you can customise for your own area. With this Toolkit you can tap into a bank of research and resources which will give you the evidence you need to develop your own dance programme for older people. Please note, however, that Dance On is not a franchise, and you will need to come up with your own name and branding. We are sharing our expertise and knowledge with you, but it remains our intellectual property – please credit us if you use it. See page 54 for full details of intellectual property rights.

## Who is it for?

The Toolkit has a wide target readership. You might be reading this as a dance artist keen to develop your practice, a healthcare practitioner or a local authority manager interested in preventative work with older people; you might work in public health, for a charity, a care home, a community group, a dance or community arts organisation; you might be interested in falls prevention, tackling loneliness and social isolation, or health and wellbeing in older age. Basically, if you're curious to know what we do, how we set it up, and what we've learned from the process, the Toolkit is for you!





## A note about terminology

Because of the inclusive, health-focussed and creative nature of this work, we are avoiding any language associated with conventional dance teaching. You will therefore notice the following references throughout the Toolkit -

- **Dance artists** not teachers
- **Sessions** not classes
- **Participants** not students



# Research

The research that underpins and evaluates Dance On has been led by Dr Sarah Astill, Associate Professor of Motor Control, School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Leeds. Dr Astill has been supported by colleagues in the School of Biomedical Sciences, and School of Medicine in addition to visiting research fellows. The evaluation of Dance On was principally led by Dr Astill, with Drs Camilla Nyjkaer, Laura Britten and Ilaria Pina. The work that evaluated if Dance On could modify risk factor for falls, and demonstrated its cost effectiveness, was led By Dr Astill with support from Dr Britten, and Drs Daliya Kaskirbayeva and Silvia Nikolova.

The follow-on work which explored the barriers and facilitators of long term (>1yr) maintenance of attendance at Dance On classes was undertaken by Drs Astill and Pina. The final project, which was principally funded by the Faculty of Biological Sciences at the University of Leeds, used ripple effect mapping methodology to understand the impact of 'Dance On' on the dance artists and was led by Dr Astill with support from Dr Pina and visiting research fellow Dr Robyn Dowlen.







## The key points from the research show that:

- Dance is a form of physical activity which integrates the body's movement with physical, cognitive and social elements
- There was a statistically significant increase in both physical activity and wellbeing. This was maintained for 12 months.
- Dance On classes are safe, cost effective and are good value for money, benefiting national health services through a reduction in the share of people 'at risk' of falls
- Dance On is feasible as an intervention in community-dwelling participants from socially economically diverse communities
- There was a significant reduction in the number of people who were categorised as having a high fear of falling

## Summary of findings –

**Dr Sarah Astill, Associate Professor of Motor Control, School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Leeds**

Academic research has been embedded in the Dance On programme from the beginning, alongside robust monitoring and evaluation. We invited all participants to take part in the research, which assessed physical activity and wellbeing over a 12-month period. In a smaller study, we explored if dance could modify some of the most common risk factors that can predispose people to falling. We also investigated if the dance programme was cost effective.

To establish if participants became more active, and if wellbeing improved, we used a mixed-method intervention design. We used a variety of questionnaires to capture physical activity patterns and wellbeing. We also ran focus groups to talk to people about their experiences of Dance On and aspects that supported their attendance. Community-dwelling older adults aged 55+ years were recruited from local community groups in Yorkshire (UK).

The programme comprised a 60-min mixed genre dance session per week. We used two different questionnaires; the Short Active Lives questionnaire (SALQ) to measure physical activity levels, with wellbeing being recorded on the EuroQol visual analogue scale (EQ VAS). We collected this data across four different time points (before they started Dance On, then at 3, 6 and 12 months). We also investigated adherence to the dance programme, recording how many sessions each individual attended out of those offered. Finally, we undertook focus groups; we asked the participants questions about the experiences of Dance On, and the barriers and facilitators of participating in the programme.

A total of 685 participants (89.1% females), with a mean age  $75 \pm 10$  years, took part in the research study. Overall, across the 12 months, participants attended 70% of all sessions offered. Our data analyses showed that physical activity increased, with a significant increase between baseline and 3 months, which was then maintained at 6 and 12 months of participation. Similarly, self-reported wellbeing also increased between baseline and 3 months and was then maintained for the remainder of the programme.

**Further analyses of the data can be found here:**

**<https://bmcgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-022-03646-8>**



There were three main themes from the focus groups, each having a number of subthemes.

- Theme one showed the reasons for participation, and these were for the perceived health benefits, as a means of exercise and for the social element of the programme.
- The second theme identified the physical (flexibility, mobility) and psychological (mood, mental wellbeing) health benefits that they attributed to their participation in the Dance On programme.
- The final theme was about factors that facilitated participation in Dance On. These included how the sessions were adapted to their needs, quality of instruction, music type and the group-based nature of the session.

The dance intervention showed a positive effect on physical activity levels and wellbeing across a 12-month period.

114 participants took part, and just over 90% were female. Nearly half, (48.25%) of those taking part said they had a physical or mental health condition. Nearly half (52.33%) said that their health condition affected their daily living activities. Out of all the sessions offered, over 76% of them were attended over the course of the 6 months of dance sessions. The time spent engaging in physical activity (PA) increased significantly between when they started Dance On and when we followed up after 3 and 6 months, with no significant decrease between 3 and 6 months. While we saw improvements in balance and mobility, improved life satisfaction, and perceived wellbeing, these were not statistically significant. However, between baseline and 3m, participants did become more confident in completing activities of daily living without fear of falling; this confidence was maintained at 6m. Finally, the health economics analysis showed the dance programme to be cost effective to deliver.

Overall, this piece of research showed that Dance On could increase levels of physical activity and reduce fear of falling in older adults. Given that several studies have indicated that people who are afraid of falling appear to enter a debilitating spiral of loss of confidence, restriction of physical activities and social participation leading to physical frailty, it could be that dance programmes like Dance On have a part to play in preventing frailty in community dwelling older adults.

Finally, adherence to the programme remained high throughout, and a cost-effectiveness study showed that Dance On is good value for money investment, benefiting national health services through reduction in the share of people 'at risk' of falls and associated utilisation of services.

## Summary of findings –

Led by Dr Sarah Astill, and supported by Dr Robyn Dowlen, Visiting Researcher, University of Leeds

The research focussed on the dance artists and the effect the Dance On programme is having on them.

Dance On is delivered by professional dance artists who develop expertise in working with older adults through their practice. While the positive impacts of Dance On for the older people who take part has been well documented, it is important to also understand the impacts of the programme on the dance artists who deliver it.

We used Ripple Effects mapping, a participatory evaluation method, to understand the impacts of the programme on dance artists' personal and professional development. Dancers came together in two workshops to explore their experiences of the programme, and how it had 'rippled' into their broader dance practice.

Dancers were shown to have a strong emotional investment in the programme and developed strong relationships with the group members. They became experts in dance work with older people and were able to adapt 'in the moment' to the different physical, emotional, and cultural needs of different groups. They also found a community of dancers through the work, where skills and expertise could be shared and evaluated. They also felt more connected to their local communities and felt a sense of pride in being able to showcase the work broadly both locally and further afield.



## Summary of findings –

Led by Dr Sarah Astill, and supported by Ilaria Pina, Research Fellow in Physical Activity and Health at the School of Biomedical Sciences at Leeds University

Findings were based on interviews with a group of Dance On participants who had been attending sessions for over a year. The importance of regular physical activity to policy and practice is exemplified by the widespread adoption of physical activity recommendations. Physical activity maintenance is a complex behaviour in older people, with a lot of interventions resulting in a volatile and short-term uptake. However, Dance On has managed to maintain a large number of older adults attending sessions for more than a year.

**We interviewed 18 of these older adults on facilitators and barriers to the maintenance of Dance On sessions. All acted as facilitators to physical activity maintenance.**

**Participants valued:**

- perceived physical health benefits
- being fit for longer
- adaptability to a wide range of abilities
- enjoyable environments
- accessible cost of the sessions
- creation of friendships
- being in a group with similar ages
- encouragement and involvement from the dance artist

Creating a weekly routine and the commitment to attend Dance On classes was important, because, as one long-term participant said,

**“It’s the interactions with music, I love a way to be able to express yourself where there isn’t a right or wrong language. The only language needed for dance is enthusiasm and imagination.”**



# Artists

**Whether you are a dance artist yourself or you are looking for a team to deliver this work, this section explains the qualities and experience you should have or be looking for. Members of the Dance On team come from a variety of dance backgrounds but are united when it comes to talking about what makes a successful dance artist in these settings.**

While some have previous experience in participatory arts, others have learned on the job and all of them say they are still learning and developing their practice.

## Terminology

As indicated in the Introduction, we deliberately use the term “dance artist” rather than “teacher” and talk about them running “sessions” or “workshops” rather than “classes.” They are not teaching our participants to dance in the conventional sense; rather, they are sharing their skills to enable people to move in creative, safe and joyful ways and to give them the tools and the autonomy to enhance their physical and mental wellbeing both in and out of the sessions.



## What makes a good Dance On artist?

We asked a group of Dance On artists for their thoughts.

### – Artistry

A good Dance On artist will engage with imaginative and artistic approaches; they draw on their creativity and experience in other contexts to move beyond traditional approaches often seen in older people's dance offers. They actively challenge out-moded perceptions of what dance for this generation should look like.

### – Authenticity

To truly connect and build trust with their participants, it is vital that the dance artist stays true to themselves, brings something of themselves to the sessions, is transparent in their processes and, to a certain extent, is willing to expose their own vulnerability. Leading a session of this kind does not require them to adopt a different persona.

### – Being a people person

Our artists put the participants first and make them central to all they do. They typically arrive early so the room is set up for the right environment, ready to warmly

welcome people into the space. They talk about giving people time, getting to know and understand them. They are aware that the sessions have a social role and actively encourage people to make connections and forge new relationships. They are good listeners and are often shown photographs and told stories, whilst keeping a careful balance between creating a safe friendly space and maintaining professional boundaries.

One of our dance artists says,

**“Having the ability to converse, listen and respond to participants enables the session to run smoothly, builds a relationship of trust between participants and dance artist, and encourages safe practice. Providing a listening ear, so that participants feel safe and work within their own capacity, is super important.”**

## – Having a plan

A good dance artist will have taken the time to thoroughly plan their session with an eye on safety, variety, creativity and inclusivity, including seated as well as standing options for each activity. We'll go into this in more detail in the next section.

## – Explaining what will happen in the session...

A good dance artist takes time at the beginning of the session to reassure the participants that there is no right or wrong, no expectations, and that everyone is welcome to get involved at their own level, including the chance to sit out if they are tired or having a challenging day. They give permission for participants to listen to their own bodies and be responsible for themselves.

Similarly, during the session, they explain why they are doing certain movements and the benefits they can have.

## ...but having the flexibility to change the plan if necessary

“Reading the room” – noticing how the participants are responding and adapting accordingly – is an essential skill for this work. It can mean offering alternatives if someone finds a certain move difficult, or noticing when a change of energy is needed for the whole group. It takes confidence on the part of the dance artist to make intuitive decisions as the session progresses.

One of our dance artists talks about,

**“recognising what brings the participants joy and using that information. As each session passes there is always something to gain and learn; being reflective and critical of your practice enables it to evolve. Knowing your crowd, I feel, is what keeps them returning, as is the ability to hold the space so that they feel safe and heard.”**

Another says,

**“Intuition is key – essentially it is active listening, with your ears, your eyes and your whole self. To notice, see and sense is so important in order to know who needs what, and to quickly respond.”**

## – Knowing their participants

Being able to address people by name and planning a session with the group in mind, is another key skill. Participants are often encouraged to suggest music for subsequent sessions, keeping them invested in the programme and helping them to feel valued. Artists are also alert to any changes in participants' mood or general health.

## – Offering choice

Our artists take time to break down their suggested moves and demonstrate both seated and standing options. They consider what it is like, for example, to be the only person in the room needing to be seated, and often factor in activities where everyone sits. That said, they do also encourage people to take safe risks when appropriate and extend what they can do.

## – Understanding

Through getting to know their groups and talking to partners in the community, dance artists will develop their understanding of the diverse range of needs in older adults.





### – Being interested in their own development

Dance On artists have a varied range of skills and specialisms; they know their USPs and enjoy sharing them with others. They build upon their strong professional practice, sharing that over several groups if working across many areas, to be more efficient with their energy and planning time.

Having said that, they are also keen to seek out new practices and ways of moving to broaden their offer to their participants.

**“Avoid boredom if you’re working across many groups – if you are bored most likely the participants will be!”**

One suggested that a dance artist needs to be a magpie,

**“committed to pulling from a range of passions and other creative pursuits to add to your tool kit and feed yourself as an artist.”**

Dance On has provided biannual artist training workshops, in which artists shared good practice and discussed challenges in a supportive environment. The artists are very appreciative of these opportunities.



## So, where do you find these wonderful people?

Hopefully you'll have realised by now that this is a highly skilled and specialised area of expertise and that the personal qualities you are seeking are as important as the artistic skills.

Community arts organisations or dance companies who have community programmes would be a start; some are listed here:

[www.communitydance.org.uk/knowledge-bank/useful-links/older-people-dancing](http://www.communitydance.org.uk/knowledge-bank/useful-links/older-people-dancing)

We have found dance artists from call outs, links to other participatory work and from local dance organisations. All our dance artists shadow and take part in sessions led by an experienced artist and attend peer to peer CPD in order to gain greater understanding of the approach and ethos of Dance On.

If you are lucky enough to be able to develop a team of artists, choose carefully which artist goes where - it's like a courtship between the group and the dance artist. A pilot period of 2/3 weeks should give you, the artist, and the group enough time to see if this is the right relationship. Ongoing reflection can inform future planning or training needs.

Once a session is established, it's useful to think about continuity – this links with participant retention. That said, it's good for both sides to have the occasional guest artist deliver a one-off or a block of sessions. Give your artists variety so they can move between groups and encourage them to occasionally shadow other dancers or co-lead a session.



# Approach in sessions

## What does a Dance On session look like?

The following section looks at the ingredients of a session, taken from a discussion with Dance On artists, and refers to a Session Template and a Dance On Safety Guide that you'll find in the Appendices.





**Inclusion** runs like a golden thread through the whole of this Toolkit. Here are artists' top tips for making their sessions as inclusive as possible:

- Set up the space in a circle – a safe, social, non-hierarchical arrangement with opportunities for eye contact
- Consider starting seated to create a level playing field and to ensure that everyone is comfortable no matter what their mobility
- Open with an introductory welcome, giving people permission to participate in the best way for them
- Set the scene or verbalise expectations for what they are going to achieve in the session
- Give physical space to those who feel uncomfortable or nervous in close proximity to others
- Keep the format of the session known, familiar and mapped out
- Consider the directions and orientation – take time to set up each task safely
- Choreograph with hands as well as feet so participants can join in with both or either
- Include some seated 'rest' moments or exercises that have a calming quality or a different focus
- Verbalise the artistic intention for the session or individual activity
- Give the participants ideas to take away to try at home, and explain the rationale behind those tasks
- Put in moments of attention and awareness for specific body parts
- As you close, recap what the group has done and acknowledge what has been achieved in the session

## Ingredients of a Dance On Session

Please see the **Session Template** in the **Appendices** – it will give you clear idea of the workshop structure together with further explanations of each element.

When asked what they felt were the key ingredients of their sessions, our dance artists listed the following:

- Crafting a session which encourages participants to experience escapism through the creativity and fun of dance
- Enjoyment and no pressure to achieve, only to take part
- Facilitating opportunities for social dance/ movement interaction
- Encouraging communication and a friendly community atmosphere in the room
- Finding ways for participants to connect, engage and interact with one another
- Fun, uplifting, joyful music which makes you want to move
- Offering movement instructions which are joyful to execute, inclusive, and mentally and physically stimulating
- Simplicity – not overly complex in content or how we talk about it to our audiences
- A safe space to challenge yourself, to explore, add to, take the lead, breathe, talk and listen
- Do something new that stretches you, in order to be active in your own health and well-being and your own individual creative journey
- Encouraging participants to let go of their inhibitions by building confidence
- A sense of achievement – and the buzz from that
- Chance to feel confident in self (could be through remembering the steps, often through repetition of an activity)
- Laughter and enjoyment with others, connecting, sharing and building positive relationships
- Physical release in energy, moving and the endorphins from the activity





The artists were also asked how they developed their artistic offer to keep their sessions fun and interesting:

- Week on week, don't be afraid to add to the material and develop the content, but also have confidence to revisit old favourites, perhaps with a new twist or just for fun
- Value the creative process and how that can evolve over time - the process is enough, we're not product dependant
- Feedback and ideas at the end of a session
- Challenge yourself to find new music and create new exercises each week
- Think of new creative concepts which feel familiar and playful, so that participants can access the creative part of the session with less trepidation. You could think of this as "creativity with stabilisers", in the hope that eventually participants feel more at ease and access a joyful and free way of moving
- Internet research for new ideas/styles/ music
- Revisiting of popular sessions-themed sessions to specific dates
- Adding small props as aids to include less active/less confident participants

“The music is a huge part of Dance On, and I feel it can truly make a session. I spend a lot of time thinking about the music, taking suggestions from participants and really trying to capture and hold that euphoric feeling music can have on you. I find that this is what keeps participants returning to Dance On, and makes what some participants may perceive as “hard work exercise” as more inviting. This I feel is Dance On’s unique selling point above other physical activity.”

“Know the group and what makes them move, be creative and use their imagination.”

## Music Choices

The Dance On artists know that the music they choose for their sessions is key to many people’s engagement.

Popular choices at the time of writing include Frankie Valli, Abba, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bobby Darin, Nancy Sinatra, Bill Withers, Beatles, 60s and 70s Western pop.

They add in other elements too, including current music that is played on TV and in shops, or music their participants can connect with their younger family members or friends.

Examples at the time of writing include Mark Ronson, George Ezra, Ed Sheeran, Bruno Mars, Duo Lipa. Pink, Justin Timberlake, TakiDaki, Basement Jaxx, Jennifer Lopez, Whitney Houston, A.R.Rahman and the Pussy Cat Dolls, Burna Boy, John Legend, Maggie Rogers, Gloria Estefan, and Yola.





**“Respond to the group’s musical choices – many may choose songs from their youth so consider when that might have been.”**

It is important to be mindful that music can trigger emotions and to find ways to manage those outcomes. Again, knowing the group is key. For example, at the end of one session the artist used a song requested by another member of the group - ‘He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother’ - and this moved another member to tears. We can’t always know what might trigger someone’s memories or past traumas, but we do try to keep the content light and accessible, and act sensitively if someone becomes upset. Asking and remembering certain tracks to avoid may be useful, although this is rare. We are also mindful of using songs about love and loved ones.

However, it is also true that using emotive music can be useful in helping participants be expressive and brave in the space with others – this can support group bonding and may also help individuals process feelings of grief and loss.

### **Some thoughts on cultural diversity**

While it is clearly important that the music chosen should reflect the culture and preferences of the group, a dance artist can also broaden horizons (and possibly foster increased awareness and understanding) by including music from cultures different to those of themselves and their participants. It is hugely important, however, that this is done sensitively, with a clear intention, and that the music is presented within its context, particularly when introducing music from a previously colonised country or an enslaved community.

Dance On has been particularly successful in engaging diverse communities, with sessions delivered with Polish people, African/Afro Caribbean elders, South Asian Women only groups, Hindu elders etc.

Each Dance On group is different; it is shaped and influenced by the people taking part. No two sessions look the same and dance artists leading the sessions use all their techniques and skills to make sure all participants can take an active part in the dance sessions. Dance is a universal language and dance artists are used to communicating with their bodies. They are experienced at delivering physical cues and phrases, which through repetition can increase concentration and build confidence. Familiarity can be important to focus the participants and develop a movement memory of the previous week. Community partners and other participants often help translate in an informal way – if some participants need extra support.

Dance artists never make assumptions about the preferred music choices of participants or groups, offering a wide and often eclectic selection. Music choice is essential to engage participants and can be used to encourage a specific way of moving or dynamics. Dance artists ask for feedback, requests and suggestions from the groups, incorporating these in future sessions.

In some communities, ‘dance’ and ‘performing’ can have negative connotations, so here the physical activity and exercise benefits are promoted and encouraged.

Here are some suggestions from our artists under some of the Session Template headings:

### Warm up

The emphasis here is to ease the group into the session, choosing music that is upbeat, easy to listen to, lots of repetition, with clear beats to match the movements. At the time of writing, dance artists chose songs such as the following:

- 'Do Your Thing' Basement Jaxx
- 'Let's Get Loud' Jennifer Lopez
- 'Beggin' Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons
- 'Here Comes the Sun' Christina Perri
- 'Under The Boardwalk' The Drifters
- 'Young Hearts' Candi Staton

### Higher intensity

A musical climax to the session and a peak enjoyment point. Choices will be subjective to the group and/or the artist. Current favourites include:

- 'Gimme Gimme Gimme' ABBA
- 'Love Machine' The Miracles
- 'Sugar Pie, Honey Bun' The Four Tops
- 'September' Earth, Wind and Fire
- 'I Feel Good' James Brown
- 'Build me up buttercup' The Foundations
- 'Oye' Gloria Estefan
- 'I can't help myself' The Four Tops

### Creative

This can depend on the activity, reflect participants' choices or the theme of the session if there is one. Our dance artists have used these examples:

- 'Do you Love Me' The Contours
- 'The Snake' Al Wilson
- 'Sway' Dean Martin
- 'Stellar Garden' Reiki music(seated)
- 'Hey Baby' Bruce Channel
- Participants' choice/own creations, using small props-scarves/silks/hats/canes/fans/balls/poms/ropes/silk parachute

### Cool Down

Music to calm and allow people to switch off and be fully present in the moment and in their bodies. One dance artist prefers her music for this section to be largely instrumental for that reason, often choosing an instrumental version of a song previously used in the session, or a piece of film music. Here are some slow easy-listening songs as examples:

- 'Lovely Day' Bill Withers
- 'Wonderful World' Louis Armstrong
- 'Sitting on the Dock of the Bay' Otis Redding
- '1,000 years' Christina Perri
- 'Somewhere only we know' Lily Allen

### Stimulus Ideas

Sometimes our artists use themes and props in their sessions. Here are some of their ideas.

- Set the space with the music. Create themes, escapism or other worlds – carnival, upbeat, uplifting, sea, travel etc.
- Seasonal themes, e.g., St Patrick's Day, summer
- Props - scarves, bamboo canes, bowler hats, floating feathers, juggling balls, large beach ball
- Tributes to an event or global happening
- Films – choreography, style, music
- Dance Styles – flavour or fusion



"I love to use my bamboo stick dance canes. Participants always enjoy dancing with this prop; I feel it provides an element of escapism and imagination. Using a cane immediately transports participants out of the session setting and themselves, presenting an opportunity to indulge in an alternative universe, hovering in a make-believe reality as if they are performing at the Palladium, or dancing on Broadway. I feel it also encourages individuals to move in a different way, is mentally and physically stimulating, and gives participants a bit of a security blanket as they have something to do with their hands, giving them a new sense of direction."

## Sample Session Plan

While the **Session Template** is there for their guidance, our Dance On artists use their creativity and knowledge of their groups to put in their own content.

Here is one artist's session plan in more detail:

**Warm-Up:** Rub, Pat and Shake each body part to bring awareness into the body, start mobilising it and easing it gently into movement. I find that this warm-up is a great way to prepare the body for dancing in an inclusive and accessible way.

**Mobiliser:** Dancing, moving and mobilising each body part in isolation, introducing the element of travelling through the space, bringing awareness to the space and the other participants. In this part of the warm-up, I may also introduce instructions which play with speed, size of movement, change of direction or imaginative concepts which encourage participants to move in a way they do not naturally do. I encourage connection through instructions such as look or reach towards another participant.

**Endurance:** This element of the session is what you would describe as the "keep fit moment". The endurance section of the session is specifically to get the heart rate up, to ensure the body is fully warm and ready to move. This exercise includes movements such as marches, knee lifts, squats and bends and reaches, all of which is taken and executed within each participant's own capacity.

**Brain Gym:** I like to think of this part of the session as a bit like a sudoku puzzle. It encourages mental stimulation in the form of changing partners, with potential changes of direction, travel or/and speed. It has huge emphasis on participants making connections with one another, and the aim of potentially dancing with as many different people as possible.

**Contemporary Influenced Swing or Travel exercise:** An exercise which encourages participants to move around the room, mobilise, travel and experience using their body in a different way, to encourage new physical learnings.

**Dance:** This element presents an opportunity for the group to learn some choreography. I always try to tailor it in a way that it can be taught efficiently so that there is more time spent dancing than standing and listening to instructions. I feel that participants prefer this and its follow along nature.

**Creative:** A creative exercise which encourages participants to explore different ways of moving. This could be potentially working with a prop, a partner or as a team.

**Cool Down:** An opportunity to relax, check in with the body post session and to allow it to fully cool down. This part of the session involves gentle stretches, breath work and mobilisation of the joints.



# Community development – participants

Our Dance On participants have always been very forthcoming when it comes to telling us what they think of the sessions and what attending Dance On has done for them. They feel fully invested in the programme and know the value of their feedback in terms of our ongoing research and for securing funding for the future. The quotes below, arranged in categories, tell personal stories of the impact Dance On has had on the respondents.

## Enjoyment

This is high on the list of priorities for people attending, and more importantly coming back to, Dance On sessions – almost all our feedback mentions fun and enjoyment. The dance artists clearly succeed in creating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere and choose appropriate music for their groups which maximise these feelings, but they also lead their sessions in a playful, engaging manner which allows people to relax and truly enjoy themselves.

“It is music and movement, they go together. It motivates you. It is Indian music which makes it easier for us to follow.”

“Come down and enjoy yourself because we do, we have a laugh and a giggle and you know, we all make mistakes and we all go wrong, but it’s fun and it gets you out.”

“I like it. Especially the music. I like that (the dance artist) uses Indian music which is why I enjoy it. Beforehand I would only dance at weddings and ceremonies. I don’t do any other exercise, but I love dancing.”

“It makes me smile. It’s good that there are other men that take part too – so I’m not the only one! My favourite thing about the class is being able to sing whilst dancing.”



## General Health and Wellbeing

All our respondents talk enthusiastically about the benefits of Dance On to their general health and wellbeing, and report changes they have noticed (please also see our Dance On Safety Guide in the appendices):

"It's being creative, it's freedom, it's a big sense of freedom for me... It's the best way for me to keep fit... for me, dancing is for everyone. But in our culture, we don't think that. People think that you might have to be a certain age, size, or know how to dance, but everyone can dance. It's so good for you, it should be on the NHS!"

"I can notice a difference when I am at home now or out and about. I'm stronger and sit and stand better."

"Well it's really changed my lifestyle because since I retired, I think I was deteriorating. It's certainly improved my lifestyle and I feel years younger in just the few months that I've been coming. I feel a lot better."

"I found ways I wouldn't usually move."

"You're exercising your bones, your muscles and your brain - everything is covered really!"

"I feel toned and I don't feel podged. It really tones you up and tones your body up."

"I have more mobility, more flexibility. I feel fitter and healthier."

"After a Dance On session, I feel exhausted but brilliant! I'm a lot better now than I've ever been."

"I am 89 and feel younger with DANCE."

"It helps me to do more - I have more energy."

"The dance classes have had a positive effect on my health. I sleep much better now after the exercise with (the dance artist.) I also definitely feel better in myself. I come every week and know it is good for me."

"Improved balance and general fitness, noticeably worse during lockdown when no classes took place."





## Specific Issues

During Dance On sessions the dance artist often focusses on warming up and exercising different parts of the body when planning their activities, always introducing them with care and inviting people to do as much or as little as feels appropriate for them.

“I feel I can walk upstairs easier since coming here. I don’t stop halfway!”

“I had a really bad knee. It used to be clicking and everything, but it’s a lot better.”

“I had a bypass a couple of years ago but since taking part, I have been able to feel a lot better. It helps me to do lots more walking too.”

“My breathing is much better since I started these sessions. I feel I can do more.”



## More Serious or Chronic Health Issues

Whilst they are not health professionals, our dance artists take time to research specific long-term chronic health conditions and will always talk to a new participant about their condition. They ask what the participant's healthcare professional has said to them about any limitations on what they should do, in order to safely take part in the sessions.

Here are two case studies of participants with serious conditions or illnesses:

One participant, living with Parkinson's, having seen the Jeremy Paxman documentary on TV about how dance for Parkinson's has such a positive response, chose to come along to Dance On to maintain or even improve his wellbeing. He noted that usually his morning medication makes him feel very wobbly when walking about after taking it, but that he didn't feel this effect when dancing and using his body in a more 3-dimensional way.

Another participant had recently completed a series of chemo treatments for cancer and was very unwell. She was persuaded to come along to the Dance On session by her friends who had been coming for a few weeks and said it was good fun, but she was really concerned about whether she would feel well enough to participate or if it would make her unwell again. After coming along and joining in at her own pace, she said her confidence in herself increased immensely, and she no longer felt too nervous about the negative impact she perceived it might have on her health. She has since engaged with other arts activities and has become a volunteer on other projects. She said it has given her a new lease of life and confidence in her recovery.

And here are testimonies from others:

**"I've got Parkinson's Disease. I think it does seem to help. The music, also sharp movements like the robot and as a form of exercise. Usually I don't think I would do that much exercise a week but with dance it's easier because it's more enjoyable."**

**"I had rheumatoid arthritis for over 30 years. It was so bad that I was taking a lot of pain killers. I was bed-ridden. I was trying to break away from pain killers and, realising that moving, exercise and dance is so important, I managed to change. To have an opportunity to come regularly, every week, it almost organises your life for you in a sense, and it's so nice to see friendly faces and everyone is happy and enthusiastic. I'm just looking forward to the dances. I really feel good!"**

**"I have limited mobility, use a wheelchair and have COPD. However, the dance moves and exercise help with my mobility and give me a sense of freedom of movement. It also helps with my breathing, and I try with the foot exercises where I can, which helps enormously."**

## Mental Health

Many Dance On participants report positive effects on their mental health:

"I feel more confident since I have been coming here. I'm more likely to try other activities now."

"Mentally I feel better because I tend to worry a lot, and while I'm dancing it takes my mind off things. It relieves stress and everything, it's really beneficial."

"The prop gave me a focus point so I could explore moving without being embarrassed about what other people thought."

"Nobody's looking at you, nobody's judging you, nobody's being unkind or anything. It's just a lovely place to be, where we can just be together and have a really good time. But also, you feel like you're doing a bit of gentle exercise, so you feel good at the end of it."

"Once you've finished... you just feel elated and everybody's smiling."

"It clears your brain. I can't explain the feeling. You feel elevated, you've had a good time."

"Loved using the tea light prop to light up the space around me, while cooling down. It was therapeutic and mindful."



## Social Benefits

One of the drivers behind Dance On is to reduce social isolation and this aspect is clearly important to many of our participants, who find sharing sessions with likeminded peers extremely beneficial. They often choose to continue socialising with other members of their group outside the sessions.

**“People who’ve maybe not known each other before, they sit round together and have a scone or a drink and they’re actually making friendships, so that’s breaking down that isolation.”**

**“It’s just a lovely group with a lot of likeminded people, doing things that we like to do.”**

**“They’re such friendly people, they made me feel at home straight away.”**

**“It’s the time we spend together that is the most important for me – being here, having a laugh and sharing.”**

**“Before I was given this chance, I felt lonely and alienated. I have new self-confidence and have met lovely people. Thank you.”**

**“I was struck by the enthusiasm of the men (in particular) choosing to be creative and dance, not just with other women in the space but also with one another. This was in response to the offer of playing with human connection, using touch, connecting by hands and exploring counterbalance.”**

## Wider Impact – Other Activities

Here are two instances where a Dance On programme has led to participation in other activities, the first for a participant:

**“A participant hadn’t done anything active for a very long time and was unsure as to whether she would be able to keep up. She was very reticent at the beginning but came along with friends for the fun of it. After a few weeks of taking part, she told me that she feels much more aware of her level of ability and her stamina and understands what she can and can’t do now physically. She said she would now be much happier to accept invitations to participate in other activities, e.g., tennis, as she feels she knows where she is at physically and has confidence in herself.”**

And the second, in the words of a dance artist, where staff in a care home were so inspired that they organised further activities for their residents:

**“I took in several props – a parachute, soft ball launchers, bean bags etc. - to use alongside the dance moves and the musical theme. The participants were having such a fun time that the office staff kept coming out to see what was happening and one lady even joined in with us. As a direct result of seeing the residents enjoy this so much, the staff organised a games afternoon the following Wednesday and they all had a great time. M. couldn’t wait to tell me about it on the next session and said it was all down to the Dance On sessions that more events like that were being planned for the summer. These sessions most definitely make a difference to people’s lives and even let the staff who care for them see them in a different light. I am proud to be a part of that.”**

# Community development – venues

What should you consider when setting up a dance programme in the community? Here's a handy checklist based on our experience.

## Active partner organisation/s

It is vital to have partners on your side, with robust links to members of the community. They could be involved with a church, or a community hall with existing activities, e.g., a slimming group or regular coffee morning. They need to know what you have in mind in order to advise you as to the best way to attract your participants, and to let people know what you are doing. If there is a local medical practice, they would also be a key partner for signposting or referring their patients to you.

Once you're up and running, it would be a huge advantage, if possible, to have someone from your partner organisation(s) actively involved in your sessions to support your participants.



## A busy venue

Ideally your sessions should take place in a place that is well known to the local community and something of a hub, with regular footfall both outside the venue and with other user groups, where you might find potential participants. There should be easy access to public transport, easy parking and all venues should have disabled access and disabled toilets.

## Volunteers

Community volunteers can support your dance session by easing people's engagement with your sessions: encouraging them to attend, advising on transport to and from sessions, supporting participants in the sessions and checking in with people in between.

## Attendance charge

Dance On was funded by Sport England, Active Ageing and Public Health in Leeds, Bradford and Doncaster. The programme also benefited from financial support from other local authority partners. We took a mixed model approach regarding participants' fees, working with local community partners to determine the best approach. Where participants contributed financially, the average cost was £3 - £4 per session. This supported sessions to move towards a more sustainable model, particularly in instances where space was provided in-kind.



### **Active community member(s)**

We have found that, if those with direct links to members of the community regularly attend sessions themselves, they can be great ambassadors for us when out and about between sessions. They and other members of the group can help with marketing both by talking to others, distributing flyers, and putting up posters. We found word-of-mouth to be the most effective marketing tool for Dance On.

### **Refreshments**

In view of the social aspect of the sessions, we feel it's essential to have links with a local café or ideally have one in the venue where you hold your sessions. At the very least, if refreshments can be provided, it is important that members of the group can have a space to sit down and enjoy them together.

It's also of course vital to have water available during the sessions for hydration.

### **Safety Precautions in Exceptional Circumstances**

The Covid pandemic has made us acutely aware of extra precautions to be taken in venues. In the light of this and in case of future such emergencies, it would be wise to have in mind whether your venue is an appropriate space for social distancing, whether the layout allows a one-way flow, and other considerations e.g., sanitiser stations.

# Community development – attracting partners and participants

We worked with Magpie, a creative marketing company in Leeds to explore how to engage communities and develop an audience for Dance On. We have included some useful segments from Magpie below.

## Identify your local network

### Who are they?

Those who are connected with your target audiences and influencers and have a connected network – e.g.

- Community groups
- Health and Medical organisations
- Online influencers
- Local Businesses
- Faith groups and places of worship

### How to find them

- Google search
- social media search
- walk around the community
- email/make contact
- set up a meeting or phone call

When you launch your dance project, keep adding supporters as you go.

### Mobilise them

- Add your supporters to a support network database
- Ask if they will share your digital/print resources through their channels to their audiences
- Always follow up to check they are doing what you've asked and remember to regularly thank them.

### Keeping your network onboard

- When you have a new message to promote, enlist their help and ensure they feel valued. A regular newsletter or email will also help keep them inspired.
- Ideally give them something to help with each quarter – or as often as you need support. Don't overwhelm them, but don't forget them either.





## Raise awareness

- Create a referral network – encourage GPs, nurses and other social prescribers to refer target participants to your programme.
- Advertise – put leaflets and posters in community hubs, GP surgeries, community centres, hospitals, care homes, post offices, charity shops and local businesses.
- Write articles or put adverts in local newsletters and magazines. Don't forget hubs and places of worship who might create their own newsletters.
- Consider designing a banner for your project and display it outside your venue.
- Social Media – organic posts and boosted (targeted and paid for) posts have the potential to reach your target demographic on Facebook.
- Local What's On guides, online magazines and online forums.
- Send out invites to a taster class – this way families and influencers can be reassured, or participants can be referred for a free session.

## Encouraging and retaining participants

- Remind people of the benefits of your dance project – at the end of session wrap-up, ask everyone what their favourite part of the session was. This way they go away remembering the benefit and experience.
- If you are sending out a reminder text, include something about the social/fun/engaging benefits to encourage people back.
- Print and share a list of upcoming sessions and give each one a fun theme and/or engaging title.
- Where possible, remind people a few days before
- Encourage repeat visits with a loyalty card scheme – e.g. after 5 sessions you get the 6th one free.
- Extend a taster session to friends of the group to encourage new members.
- Think of each class like a cliffhanger in a soap – create intrigue about the next session – this could be a discussion around the era of music for the next session or saying things like 'I've got a fab session planned for you all next week'.
- Promote the sessions in action (with the permission of the group) – let others see what a good time the participants are having. See if your support network will promote these posts for you too.
- If you use a newsletter to keep your support network engaged, ensure you include a photo, so they feel closer to the experience.
- Promote participant testimonials - quotes and (if possible) videos of participants' experiences will attract newcomers and encourage influencers to share stories. Include these in your regular newsletter to encourage positive action from your support network.

## Socials and celebrations

We enable Dance On participants to come together to share dances they have been working on, perform live together and socialise at events such as darts' Dance On Socials in Doncaster, Yorkshire Dance biennial Ageless Festival and International Women's Day celebrations in Bradford's Broadway Shopping centre in 2020, 2022 and 2023. These celebrations break down stereotypes around who can dance and provide opportunities to celebrate the creativity and social aspects of the programme.



- Get to know what participants like and dislike to tailor the best experience for them and keep them coming back for more. Feedback forms will help with this, but you could also ask simple questions in sessions to get to know your attendees better and deliver great experiences that they'll love.
- Include votes on 'next week's theme' or music choices to keep participants engaged.

## Wording to attract participants

We're often asked how we promote the groups and how we explain what to expect in a Dance On session. Here are some things we say:

- 'Fun, social dance for adults over 50 to get moving, keep fit and feel healthy'
- 'Dance On is fun, local and social'
- 'Whatever your level of ability, take part in a way that suits you – sitting, standing or boogying around the room'
- 'Dance On is suitable for all abilities and we aim to make it as inclusive as possible'
- 'All sessions are drop in, so you don't have to book'
- 'Participants don't have to learn long or complicated routines – it's just a chance to move, leave your concerns at the door and connect socially with others in the room'
- 'You don't need to wear anything special – just something you feel comfortable moving in'



# Safety

## How do we keep our participants, volunteers and dance artists safe?

Clearly there are specific considerations when working with older people – Dance On was set up for people over 55 years of age but our demographic is much older, with some people attending in their late 80s and early 90s.

Check your venue as to the procedure in the event of fire, whether there is a first aider on the premises, etc.

## Your dance artists

Our dance artists have Enhanced DBS Certificates and have undergone training in safeguarding, basic first aid and falls prevention. Because they are working for darts and Yorkshire Dance, they are covered by our organisations' public liability insurance policies – you will need to check this with your venue and/or with any freelance dance artists you employ.

Make sure the dance artist understands your Safeguarding policy and who the Safeguarding Lead is at your organisation. If you have set up the work yourself as a freelancer then you can raise any concerns about abuse or neglect of an older person by contacting the local authority where the person is currently located. Their website should explain how to report possible abuse and neglect, or you can call the main local authority number and say you want to raise a safeguarding concern.

We advise artists to avoid being alone with a participant.

## Your Participants

Consider what your process will be if a participant falls or is taken ill during a session - will the dance artist be first aid trained? Will you advise them to call an ambulance?

It would be impossible to list all possible health conditions – it would be too long to put on a risk assessment and would need constant updating. In Dance On groups, we encourage our participants to take responsibility for themselves, checking in with them as to how they are feeling, using phrases like, 'look after yourself, do it within the guidance that you have been given by your GP', and giving them choices within the dance activities so they can choose to amend, adapt or sit out. Within sessions, artists bring awareness to any warning signs to pre-empt potential problems, e.g. if a person is looking overly flushed or exhausted.

It is important that the dance artist has awareness of any significant health conditions within the group so that they can amend their plans or instructions accordingly, e.g., if a participant has had a hip replacement, they should not cross the centre line if they have been advised so by a health practitioner or GP. Likewise, the dance artist should ascertain whether a participant with high blood pressure or heart problems should raise their heart rate or lift their arms above their head. Participants must have their conditions 'controlled' by a health professional and know what their limitations are. If the artist is in any doubt, the participant must provide a letter from the health professional with confirmation of what they should or shouldn't do.

We collect emergency contact details for each of our participants at the point of registration and strongly recommend this; it may also be useful to have the name of their GP.

Please see the Appendices for the Risk Assessment for a typical Dance On session. We also give participants a Dance On Safety Guide which you will also find in the appendices.

## **And Finally...**

Thank you so much for reading the Dance On Toolkit! We hope we have inspired you to take the next steps in your adventure in dance for older adults and given you the practical advice you need to do so.

If you use the Toolkit, do please share your story with us! We would love to know about your own programmes and how you used the Toolkit to implement them.

**Good luck!**

# Case study: Dance On in Doncaster

## Strategic context

Physical activity and sport has been one of Team Doncaster's strategic priorities since 2017. Doncaster's whole system and place-based approach to addressing high levels of inactivity is known as Get Doncaster Moving (GDM), and the first GDM strategy in 2017 set out a framework for delivery. Delivery of GDM is coordinated by the GDM Team, who are based in Public Health within City of Doncaster Council.

In December 2017, Sport England recognised Doncaster's compelling vision for change, and Doncaster was selected as one of twelve Local Delivery Pilots (LDPs); bringing investment, support and resources to test new ways of working and explore what it takes to secure long-term population scale change in physical activity behaviour.

### GDM Strategy Framework in 2017 included:

- Doncaster's priority groups; inactive people, people on low incomes and families with children & young people.
- Five delivery themes; Walking, cycling, dance, sport and parks & open spaces.
- The need to work cross the whole life course; starting well, living well and ageing well.
- A set of values, principles and ways of working; Evidence-led, community-centred, collaborative and commitment to long-term change (sustainability).

## Dance, arts and culture in Doncaster

GDM recognises that dance is uniquely placed to contribute to supporting people to be active because of its ability to engage inactive people who are not motivated by health or fitness, but because it is viewed as a fun and social activity. The popularity of dance with women and girls who are generally more inactive than their male counterparts at every age across the life course, indicates the potential to target a significant proportion of GDM's priority groups.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Doncaster had made significant progress to establish a sector-led dance steering group. Utilising investment from City of Doncaster Council (via GDM), the steering group procured the services of One Dance UK to develop Doncaster's first dance strategy, which was approved in 2019.

## Dance On and the Local Delivery Pilot (LDP)

Dance On has been delivered in Doncaster by darts since 2018, when it was initially funded by Sport England through the Active Ageing Fund, supported by a small amount of match-funding from Doncaster Public Health. darts have taken a test and learn approach to evolve the programme while demonstrating impact in communities and residential care. Research conducted by the University of Leeds showed compelling evidence that the programme had a positive impact on behaviour, health and wellbeing; in particular having a sustained increase on physical activity levels and reducing social isolation in women over 55.

GDM contributed funding via the LDP to extend and accelerate Dance On delivery in Doncaster for two years beyond the life course of the Active Ageing Investment, to develop our learning further so that we can continue this positive impact with a wider cohort of participants. The LDP investment helped darts to apply learning to the design and delivery of a Dance On programme that focused on recovery and reinvention following the Covid pandemic.

darts has a proven model of community participation and a strong body of independent evidence to support the Dance On approach.

## Impact in Doncaster:

- Continued Community Dance On groups in five locations, running six times a week.
- Development of a skilled team of local dancers to deliver Dance On in both community and residential care settings.
- Training of Age UK and care home staff to continue to deliver Dance On in their settings.
- Attendance has recovered to pre-pandemic levels.
- 30-35% of the total delivery costs of the programme are covered by participant contributions.
- The programme has effectively engaged and supported:
  - Older people
  - Women
  - People on low incomes
  - Inactive people

## The future of Dance On in Doncaster

Between 2021-2023, darts established strong links with the health and care sector, with NHS and public sector partners interested in the model, in the face of rising demand and increasing health inequalities.

At the time of publication (Autumn 2023) darts plan to build on the work that has been done so far, and through a further two years of LDP investment will aim to:

- Strengthen the current Dance On offer in community and residential care settings across Doncaster.
- Dedicate capacity to work with health and social care partners and support workforce development.
- Extend the Dance On approach to specific, related health areas; E.g. frailty, falls prevention, pulmonary rehabilitation, mental health, fibromyalgia and long covid.
- Establish Doncaster Dance Alliance; to widen participation and pilot new programmes which take the lessons learned from Dance On to address new areas of need.

## Our learning: conditions and enablers for the acceleration of Dance On in Doncaster

- The positioning of Dance within GDM strategies and the Arts and Health Board has provided a strategic backdrop; darts have developed Dance On locally to align with strategic priorities and to test the strategy ambitions.
- There is clear alignment between GDM and darts ways of working. This is characterised by a community-led, evidence-based approach that is open to learning and makes a commitment to tackling inequalities, capacity building and long-term sustainability.
- darts take a hyper-local approach to increasing physical activity. Residents can usually walk to their local session and this has helped to create a community amongst participants beyond the activity itself.
- Sport England and the GDM Team recognise the time it takes to establish a self-sustaining, community-led programme and have taken a long-term 'test and learn' approach to investment over a number of years.
- Funding agreements have offered the flexibility to focus on quality of delivery rather than only being outputs-orientated. This balanced approach has supported darts to develop a quality workforce and adapt based on learning, which has more potential to be sustainable in the longer term.

### Further information about Get Doncaster Moving:

[www.getdoncastermoving.org](http://www.getdoncastermoving.org)

[GetDoncasterMoving@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:GetDoncasterMoving@doncaster.gov.uk)

 [@DoncasterMoving](https://twitter.com/DoncasterMoving)



## APPENDIX 1

### Dance On Session Template

#### WELCOME, INTRO AND ICEBREAKER (2 mins)

Welcome to our Dance On session – welcome new members / reminder of names / name game?

Introduce the session – theme (if there is one) and aim of session to have fun and get a little bit fitter.

Health & Safety, Risk Assessment and evacuation info – bags and coats well away, fire exits, loos etc. If there are a few who need to remain seated, it works well to seat everyone in a circle to start, so they all feel equally part of the session. Invite everyone to go at their own pace and within their own ability (whether standing, seated or with support) and give them permission to adapt where necessary throughout the session, following their health professional's advice. Listen and respond to those in the room, tailoring the session accordingly and evolve the content organically, without forcing.

#### BREATHE, CHECK IN AND BODY SCAN (3 mins)

A moment to bring the attention into the space, leaving everything else at the door. Time for a posture check, body scan and check in with yourself, paying attention to your body's needs.

#### MOBILISERS; JOINTS AND CIRCULATION (5 mins)

Circulation stimulation to wake up the body – i.e. rubbing / shaking / tapping / brushing / squeezing / circling / tilting / turning / opening / closing / lifting / dropping etc. Work through each part of body, noticing the inside and tiny areas as well as the large major limbs and joints.

#### WARM UP; HEART RATE AND MUSCLES (10 mins)

Aim to raise heart rate and for members to feel a little warmer / out of breath / increased huff and puff, this can include a joyful sing along or an upbeat 'workout' type exercise. This could include sequences with larger / more upbeat movements such as swings, circles, bouncing, bends, marches, squats etc.

#### TRAVEL AND CONNECT (10 mins)

To see and be seen, to connect, smile, move, swap places, take up space, change facings, transfer weight, dance with one another etc.

#### BALANCE AND BRAIN GYM (5-10 mins)

To strengthen muscles, build control and to improve balance and / or cognitive function – this could include rises, pliés, lunges, opposition, movements across the body, control, postural strength. Remember to suggest a chair for support if needed – you could even have one chair in front to use as a barre and one behind if they need to sit at any point.

#### CREATIVE (10-15 mins)

A chance to get creative / listen to ideas / learn or create a sequence or improvise / connect members / enjoy dancing together – these could be in response to a variety of stimuli – music, text, props or a theme, for example.

#### COOL DOWN STRETCH AND COMING BACK TOGETHER (5 mins)

A full stretch through the body – side tilts, twists, spine arch, shoulder rolls, hamstring etc.

A steady repeat of mobilisers could also be done here, slowing the pace and cooling down. You could create a calm unison moment to finish the session – perhaps a circle to copy each member's move or establish some flocking.

#### BREATHE AND FINISH (5 mins)

Finish off re-establishing posture, seated or standing, focusing on being present, complete a final body scan / check in and breathe. Thank yourself for showing up today and thank one another for sharing this experience together.

## TOP TIPS FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICE – A FEW THINGS TO NOTE WHEN PLANNING YOUR SESSION

Include time to remind participants that they must always follow the guidance of their health professional and if they are concerned or feel unwell, they must stop participating and seek further advice.

Always consider what adaptation might be possible as an alternative for participants who may need to amend or change the instructions to suit their body e.g., a seated participant or someone who gets too dizzy turning from side to side.

Remind them to check their own space is free from hazards, below, above and beside, and make sure they are wearing appropriate clothing/footwear.

Check they have completed their emergency contact details recently.

Ensure they have water breaks planned in and water available.

'Follow-me' choreography with longer repetition works better for those with memory issues e.g. repeating a move for 8 or 16 counts rather than a single count or just 2 counts.

Include visual and verbal cues for those with memory/hearing/sight impairment.

Invite members to the general purpose of a move, rather than a specific that may not be appropriate or safe, for example:

Forward flexion/ roll down forward to be avoided for those with osteoporosis/ balance issues.

Twisting hips, crossing legs and lifting knee above hip level to be avoided for those with hip concerns.

Lifting both arms above head to be avoided for those with blood pressure/respiratory problem.

Be mindful of members who may feel uncomfortable if asked to contribute creatively, improvise or learn a complex sequence – choreography should be straightforward enough for all to copy and/ or achieve.

Always have chairs nearby and use the back of the chair for support, when necessary, but ensure they don't have to spend time changing facings or carrying chairs to a different spot in the space to engage in the choreography.

If using a prop, consider the quality/intention of the movement it stimulates and make sure it works for men and women and whilst playful, doesn't infantilise the members.

## APPENDIX 2

### Dance On Safety Guide

We want you to enjoy Dance On in a fun, safe and comfortable way. By participating in our Dance On classes, you agree to:

- Follow the advice given to you by your GP or health professional about exercising
- If you have any concerns or feel unwell, please stop and seek medical advice
- Make sure the space around you is clear of hazards you could bump into or trip over (including pets if online)
- Amend or adapt any of the exercises and movements to best suit your body's needs
- If you prefer to sit down, please use a solid hard back chair. If standing with support, make sure you feel steady and secure
- Wear suitable clothing and footwear. Footwear must be flat, anti-slip and firmly secured to your feet (not socks or slippers)
- Clothing must be comfortable and loose, without anything that could get caught (such as jewellery or scarves)
- Make sure your phone or personal alarm is nearby as a sensible precaution, especially if dancing alone in the house
- Rest when you need to and always have a bottle of water handy

We are not responsible for any injury sustained by you during the course of any dance activity.

Please take the sessions at your own pace – and enjoy!





## APPENDIX 3

### Example of a Dance On risk assessment

Risk Assessment: Dance On  
Last updated: xxx

Risk type	Who is at risk?	Risk Score*	Action required to mitigate risk
Fire	All users	1x5=5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure evacuation routes are clear and unlocked</li> <li>• Ensure all users are familiar with evacuation routes</li> </ul>
General accident & illness	All users	2x3=6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check whether there is a First Aider on the premises</li> <li>• Ensure working area is clear, safe and free of trip hazards</li> <li>• Ensure equipment is in good condition</li> <li>• Ensure PAT tests are up to date for any electrical equipment</li> <li>• Ensure mobile phone is charged and has relevant contacts</li> </ul>
Safeguarding	Participants	2x3=6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow safeguarding policy and procedures</li> <li>• Avoid one-to-one working or work in public areas</li> <li>• Consent required if photographs to be taken</li> <li>• All staff to have up to date DBS certificate</li> </ul>
Staff / personal safety	Artist	1x5=5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure someone knows when and where you are</li> <li>• If lone working, inform someone when you have a break</li> <li>• Ensure mobile phone is charged and has relevant contacts</li> <li>• Avoid poorly lit or deserted areas where possible</li> <li>• Take care when entering and leaving empty buildings</li> <li>• Ensure personal items are carried discretely</li> <li>• If you feel there is a personal risk to your safety, stop</li> <li>• Take breaks when needed and where appropriate</li> </ul>
Slips, trips and falls	All users	2x3=6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check whether there is a First Aider on the premises</li> <li>• Adequate supervision</li> <li>• Keep workshop area clear with no obstructions</li> <li>• Adequate space for participants to dance</li> <li>• Water bottles only in workshop space</li> <li>• Report spillages to venue</li> <li>• Give clear instructions</li> <li>• Locate cables or trailing wires away from workshop</li> </ul>
Injury caused by equipment/props	All users	2x3=6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure any equipment/props are well maintained</li> <li>• Ensure PAT tests are up to date for any electrical equipment</li> <li>• Ensure workshop area is clear with no obstructions</li> </ul>
Injury caused by unsuitable clothing/footwear	Participants	2x2=4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants advised on most appropriate footwear</li> <li>• Participants asked to remove jewellery/ scarves etc</li> <li>• Store personal belongings e.g. coats and bags at the back</li> </ul>

	Who is responsible for action?
for the areas in use es	Artist
ses hazards equipment used numbers stored e.g. venue contact and project manager	Artist
if one to one is unavoidable	Artist
delivering arrived home/back at work numbers stored e.g. venue contact lings, especially at night p the session and notify the venue contact or emergency services as appropriate e	Artist
ses pp area and tape down securely	Artist
and robust equipment used s	Artist
ar/ clothing for activity, ideally prior to session c. if deemed unsuitable the side of the space away from area where activity is taking place	Artist

Dehydration/ exhaustion	All users	2x2=4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artists and participants to have access to water during the workshop</li> <li>• Ensure workshop space is an appropriate temperature</li> <li>• Remind participants to take part according to the instructions</li> <li>• Ensure breaks are taken as and when needed</li> </ul>
Muscle strain	All users	2x3=6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient warm-up and cool down at beginning and end of workshop</li> <li>• Give clear and safe instructions</li> <li>• Ensure movement is appropriate to individuals</li> <li>• Remind participants to take part according to the instructions</li> </ul>
Access to the venue	All users	2x2=4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of any specific instructions for venue access</li> <li>• Check directions for the destination</li> <li>• Ensure mobile phone is charged and has relevant contacts</li> </ul>
Venue keyholder responsibilities	All users	2x4=8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the key to the premises is collected before the workshop</li> <li>• Ensure the key is stored securely when not in use</li> <li>• Be aware of any specific instruction for venue security</li> <li>• Ensure mobile phone is charged and has relevant contacts</li> <li>• Take care when entering and leaving empty buildings</li> <li>• Ensure that personal items are carried discretely</li> <li>• Ensure that the premises are physically secure before leaving</li> <li>• If the premises are not secure or there has been an incident, contact emergency services as appropriate</li> <li>• Leave immediately any time if a personal risk to safety</li> <li>• Ensure that the premises are secure whilst working</li> <li>• Before leaving, ensure all staff and participants have been accounted for</li> <li>• Before leaving, ensure the premises are secure and that all equipment is remaining on the premises</li> </ul>

\*Risk score = Likelihood x severity (1 = unlikely/incidental, 5 = frequent/catastrophic)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<p>ing sessions  ture  ir own ability</p>	Artist
<p>nd end of session  ir own ability</p>	Artist
<p>cess  numbers stored e.g. venue contact</p>	Artist
<p>the session date  urity e.g. number/ types of locks  numbers stored e.g. venue contact  ings, especially at night  ore entering  ny damage to the premises, do not enter and notify the venue contact or  fety is felt  g alone e.g. before participants arrive and after they have departed  ve vacated the premises  d all doors and windows are closed/locked, unless some other responsible person</p>	Artist

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Feel good, keep moving,

# DANCE ON™

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