



dance network association

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

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c/o The Mercury Theatre, Balcerne Gate, Colchester CO1 1PT

Photo by Rachel Cherry

THE DANCE NETWORK ASSOCIATION CIC

Dance Network Association (dna) is a dance organisation that enables people to live more connected, joyful, and aspirational lives through dance.

Dancing with dna provides opportunities for people to improve their confidence and physical wellbeing nurtures creativity and independent thinking and enhances friendships through social interaction.

Directors:

Gemma Wright: Chief Executive Officer and Founder

Lyann Kennedy: Operations Director

Paul Convelly: Director

Will seize role as directors of the CIC from 1 September 2022

Trustees to be appointed to the board from 1 September 2022
as the organisation changes into a CIO

Elsa Urmston

Frances Maynard

Gemma Wright (Chair)

Lyann Kennedy (Secretary)

A YEAR IN REVIEW

From Gemma Wright CEO and Founder of the Dance Network Association

The year started full of the joys of dancing, and we kicked off with the dna Annual Conference 2021 hosted at the Mercury Theatre, Colchester. It was a wonderful day bringing people together in a 'live space' full of smiles, laughter and dancing. Here we announced and launched our 'Dance on Prescription' initiative to support people to live well through dancing. We described how we wished to partner with link workers, health services, teachers, and other community organisations to prescribe people to our programmes to benefit their health—building on our business strategy for the next five years.

"Thank you so much for yesterday's wonderful conference - the best ever! It was high quality throughout the venue, catering, and individual sessions. I attended three sessions, and they were all superb: well-presented, relevant, informative and the practical's fun". Attendee feedback

"We've planned our assemblies...No more sitting down! Assembly will be dancing!" Attendee feedback.

Our goal for 2021 was to move from streaming classes to returning to community spaces as soon as possible, ensuring our mission of connecting people through dancing together and finding the benefits dancing can bring them. People attending our classes could come of their esteem or could be referred by a link worker as a benefit to their health.



Any person that was prescribed into activity would have 12 free weeks of attendance in any of our sessions.

However, we needed people to feel confident about returning or attending classes with us to do this. Unfortunately, in the first few months of the year, participant numbers were low as many were still scared to return to town centre venues and felt like they were no longer due to ailments able to travel (or didn't want to) and didn't want to pay for programmes.

A resident from one of the sheltered housing schemes said they are happy to attend sessions at Rohan but doesn't want to travel outside of their scheme. Another resident said I don't want to travel that far.

In one session where we had no attendance - Feedback from the Scheme Manager was that the residents did not want to pay for the session.

Another COVID-19 lockdown in late 2021 continued its devastating effects on both the organisation's ability to deliver any classes in the community; and the physical and mental health of the people we work with. Additionally, we also lost two freelance contractors due to ill mental health. For DNA, I believe this was the start of a challenging year of what we hoped to be 'POST' COVID.

Project funding started to become a worry, and we saw a downhill slide in funding availability between January 2021 – August 2021. Project funds from January 2021 were not available in the same way as they had been over the past 6 years. dna is structured so that project funding could cover the core costs of the business, and by applying for around 8 – 10 project funds per year, we could keep staff members on salary. However, the project funds we were now making applications for would not cover the administrative part of the projects.

This put a tremendous financial struggle on the organisation with no option but to make redundancies at the end of the financial year. The funding landscape for our organisation is a concern, and our future is still being determined. It is even more important that our charity status is achieved over the next financial year to give us more financial stability.

All this said... I am so proud to share that we turned six years old and are still dancing despite COVID's best efforts to shut us down.

When I started the organisation in November 2015, my mission was and still is, to support people to live well by experiencing the joy of dancing—a task created from personal experience.

"Dance is the best medicine money can buy!"

“Over the next 5 years, DNA will move forwards to increase health and well-being through dance in East of England.

As part of the five-year vision, we will continue our first significant step in changing our organisational structure from a Community Interest Company (CIC) to a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This changeover has begun, and at the beginning of this document, we welcome our newly created board. This board will help us achieve comprehensive growth and further develop our services. The change will offer us more financial stability and allow us to receive charitable donations (to attract Gift Aid).

As part of our vision, we will be looking for a more robust financial management cycle and look to the National Lottery and the Arts Council England to fund long-term core support funding, which will inevitably help us to enhance our support for project grants from other trusts and foundations and build on our solid strategic position nationally.

Moving into the following year, rather than thinking of an expansion, we are going to concentrate on the stability and development of each project. Ensuring first that we can continue to deliver our work in the five districts we are currently, mainly working in Colchester, Braintree, Chelmsford, Brentwood and Barking and Dagenham.

Where possible we plan to invest in each project, ensuring it is profiled and marketed correctly, engaging with as many residents as we can, but also fully committing to our Dance on the Prescription programme and ensuring relationships are created for people to prescribe into our work.

We are aware that further training opportunities need to be offered for our work to be realised as there are currently very few skilled freelance artists in Essex that could deliver our programmes. We want to be able to upskill members of staff/freelancers, pay them a fair wage and more importantly support them to look after their mental health.

No other organisation such as ours is delivering this kind of work in Essex. The Dance Network Association fill the provision, for those that are older and/ have lived conditions and/or suffer isolation and/or poor health.

We are by far the leader in the market share for dance for health and wellbeing delivery in the county.

The organisation offers various dance programmes reaching people of all ages and abilities. DNA this year alone has connected with people 16,124 people from 6-week-old babies to 96-year-old adults.

We've offered 1188 local dance artists contracted work and delivered over 900 hours of dance in greater Essex.

In a year of uncertainty, dna should be celebrated for this incredible work, and we thank each and every person that dances, delivers, watches and supports us.



Photo Rachel Cherry

PROGRAMME 2021/22

DANCE FOR HEALTH 'DANCE ON PRESCRIPTION'

Annual Conference
Babies in the Barn Braintree
Dancing with Dementia Braintree
Dancing with Dementia Colchester
Dancing with Families Colchester
Dancing with Parkinson's Colchester
Intergeneration Colchester
New Adventures Door Step Duets
Positivi-TEA
RE:Generation Brentwood
RE:Generation Chelmsford
RE:Generation Colchester
Youth Dance

DANCE FOR EDUCATION

Annual Conference
Artist Tea
Barking and Dagenham Early Years
BE:Spoke Schools Projects
Intergenerational Project
Mass Dance (Barking and Dagenham)
SCITT Programme



HIGHLIGHTS IN NARRATIVE

Our projects over 2021 – 22 were about getting back out into the community, connecting with residents, and supporting those most in need of our activity through socially prescribing dance.

Dance on Prescription:

We launched our 'Dance on Prescription' initiative in September 2021. We want to thank the over 20 funders who have believed in our work and who have been as passionate as we are that socially prescribing a person to dance may be complimentary or, in some cases, a better model than medication.

This work has provided Essex-based link workers and GPs a holistic way to prescribe 'medication' through the joy of dancing. Prescribers have become 'DNA Hosts' and given 'Dance on Prescription' referral cards to pass to patients for 12 weeks of FREE dancing activity in one of our classes.

The people that have been prescribed into our dance programmes are those that require the most support to improve their mental and physical health and well-being post-Covid. As all our community classes already sit under a 'dance for health' umbrella, many participants can be referred to specialist dance classes to support their lived conditions and ailments further, all meeting dna's core mission and values.

Over the year 2021/22

439 dance cards were given to 'DNA hosts' to prescribe people to our programmes socially.

Annual Conference:

43 attendees joined us this year for our annual conference hosted at the Mercury Theatre. It was an incredible day for all involved, and we thank all who supported, delivered, and took part.

“Consistent approach to inclusivity in all sessions”.

“Brilliant Day Best Annual Conference yet!

“Loved the dance for health workshops – so inspiring!”

New dna team members:

With the support of Active Essex Brentwood, we have been able to advertise and employ a new Dance Development Assistant role. Combining this with other funds, the role has supported the delivery of the social prescribing initiative 'Dance on Prescription' by speaking to local community organisations and healthcare providers to engage them to become 'DNA hosts' and prescribe people into our programmes. We have also employed a research team to examine the impact of our 'Dance on Prescription' programme, which we will report on in late 2022.

The Jubilee Baton Relay | Mass Dance

September 2021 to July 2022 dna supported by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD), has worked to create and deliver the mass dance piece titled 'The Jubilee Baton Relay' for Barking and Dagenham schools and students.

Over the past 10 years, we have worked with various partners to produce and create the 'Mass Dance' projects and this year, partnerships were further developed with Dagenham Park School, whose students performed and supported the creation of the tutorial video and were our Dance Captains and Dance Ambassadors; and the University Centre Colchester film team who filmed and documented the final performance day.

The project reached 26 school groups and nursery settings, and in total 1894 participants (dancers, volunteers, teachers, artists, and deliverers) have directly danced with us. Additionally, we have reached an approximate audience of 250 in Barking and Dagenham, viewing a live performance day and a virtual sharing video presentation in the Summer of 2022.

Full Video: vimeo.com/dancenetworkassociation/jubileebatonrelay

Barking and Dagenham Early Years Programme

In an exciting new development of our London Borough of Barking and Dagenham early years provision. We brought together 2 x Commissioned Artists specialising in early years dance, Liz Clark and Cherie Coleman, alongside local Co-Creative Artists Rachel Newby and Lucy Brown and a writer/facilitator Bobbie Gargrave. This team supported 30 teachers from across the Borough to be curious and creative in designing a new programme and pedagogy for dance in the early years.

This new development phase of our early year work aimed to empower teaching staff in the Borough to have more ownership over how dance is delivered to the early years as our own creative 'syllabus'.

Early Years Resource Pack visit the [resource page](#) of our website

Activate Summer Schools

We delivered 63 creative dance summer schools as part of the ActiVate programme. Six dance practitioners delivered creative dance to 427 young people aged 5 - 19 years throughout the summer in the following areas:

Halstead | Chelmsford | Maldon | Braintree | Tiptree | Manningtree | St Osyth | Greenstead | Shrub End | Mile End | Old Heath | New Town | Great Clacton | Brightlingsea | Walton & Great Notley Country Park

There were over 200 clubs and 130 outreach sessions, providing over 200,000 FREE places over 5 weeks of the summer holiday targeted at children aged 5-19 and we were one of those trusted organisations to deliver physical activity.

Matthew Bourne | New Adventures #ADoorStepDuet

In August 2020, we were fortunate enough to work with New Adventures as they shared 'A Doorstep Duet' with 10 of our local care homes and sheltered housing schemes in Colchester and Tendring, as well as a special event for our MYC Company Dancers and Mercury passers-by.

A Doorstep Duet was performed to over 100 older adults and approx 50 young people and observers at the Mercury Theatre and followed two everyday people being transported back in time through music and discovering the joy of dancing together in different eras.

This lively, characterful and playful duet has been devised by New Adventures' artistic team Kerry Biggin, Etta Murfitt and Paul Smethurst and was performed by some of New Adventures' finest dancers.

Thank you so much to the New Adventures team for providing this opportunity to our participants we know they absolutely loved it - as did we as a team - what a treat!

Intergenerational Projects:

Intergenerational Dancing in Colchester Castle and a join-up between Enoch House and Hazelmere Primary School.

These two programmes motivated our team and were cemented by evidence on why dna does what it set out to do. These classes brought people together from all generations and walks of life. During classes, participants shared their stories and experiences whilst exploring the dance space, connecting, and moving creatively.

From Hazelmere Primary School, A school involved in our Intergenerational work "Lovely activities. They particularly enjoyed warm-up activities like pizza and tacos. Karen had a lovely manner with the children and encouraged the more reluctant children without drawing attention to them. The activities were well matched to the children's abilities and suitably challenging. Lots of lovely warm-up ideas and a reminder of activities that we haven't used for quite a few years. Thank you for a fantastic dance workshop. What an enjoyable way for our children to finish a difficult first year in school." Vicky, Nursery & Reception teacher.

See the film here: VIDEO LIBRARY | Dance Network Assoc
(dancenetworkassociation.org.uk)

Engagement

16125 people across Essex and Barking and Dagenham have Danced with us

128799 online engagement via our website, Vimeo and YouTube Channels, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

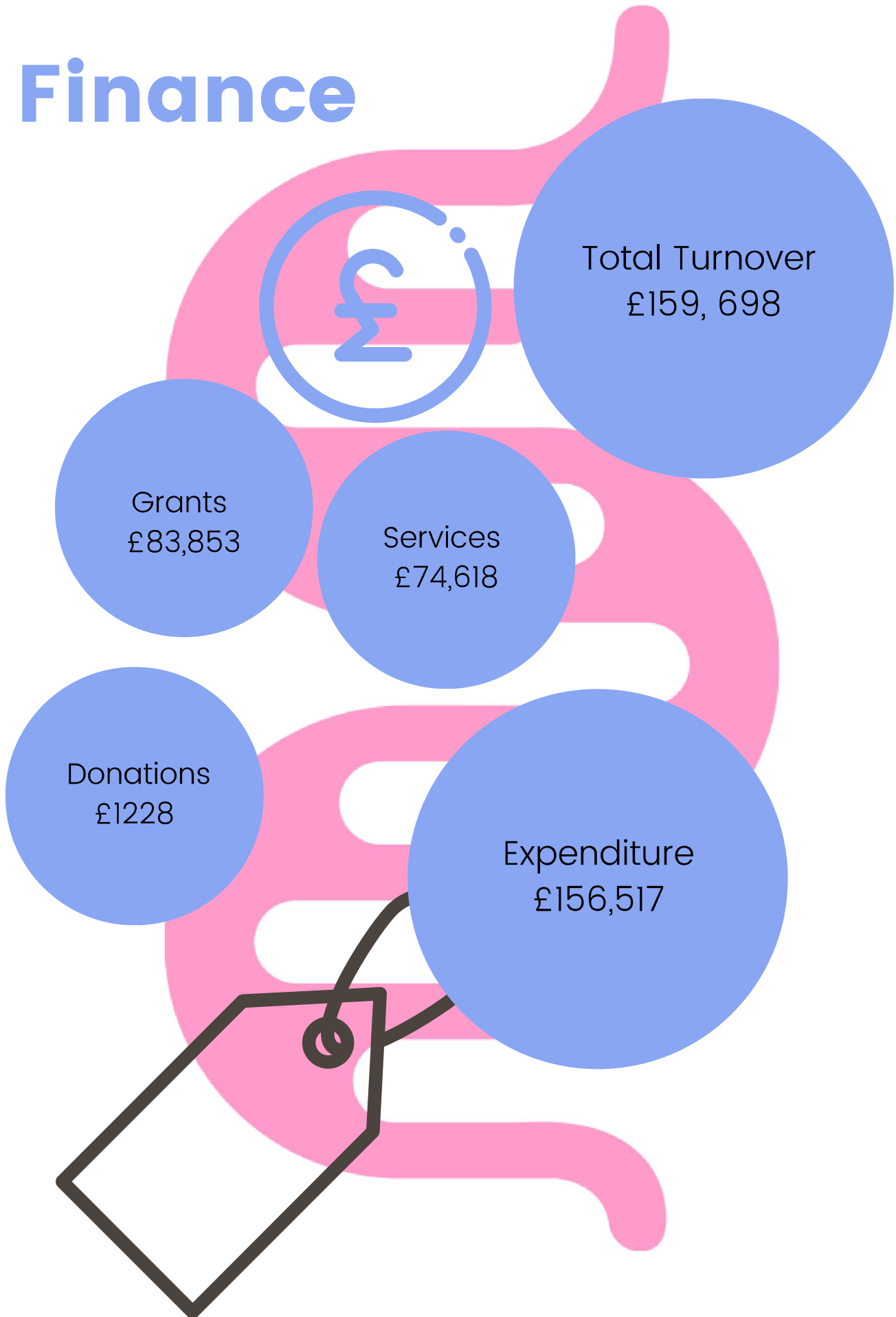
1189
Freelance
Deliverers

35
Volunteers

2979
Audience
Members



Finance



FEEDBACK

Age appropriate. Karen followed the children's interests, including their own ideas in the activities. Well planned, and adapted well to the children's concentration and attention. Good lesson planning, eg warm-up, activities and plenary. Reminding children of what they'd been learning. Getting their participation. Karen had a lovely manner with the children and a lively personality that kept them involved. Every time I told the children it was a dance session, they cheered.
Nursery and Reception teacher

"I had a fall recently and usually would need help to get back up again but this time I was able to do it myself, this is because of coming to dance classes - I'm using muscles I'd forgotten I had"

RE:Generation
Chelmsford participant
and CHP resident

"I honestly love this group, abbie and I met at another baby group and the class was great, but it really lacked that social element for us and this bit at the end where we can talk to other mums and our babies can all interact, it's honestly so precious and I feel like over lockdown our little ones really missed out on that talking to other babies stage." Another comment about the yoga section- "I feel looser after this, and I can tell I haven't done it in a couple of weeks! It feels lovely, especially in my back."

Feedback Babies in the Barn programme

"I feel like a new man!" "that was the best response we've had to a visiting group that wasn't singing! We would absolutely love to have you in more of our sessions" "I feel invigorated"

Community partner taster day feedback -
Warm and Toasty Club

I enjoy the dance, but it also makes me feel good" "I like doing the exercises with other people." "Mental benefits as it makes you feel good" "It's fun and you get a lot of benefits from it. And the people are very friendly
Dancing with Parkinson's Participant

"I'm knackered now! Absolutely ready for my cup of tea!" "I feel more relaxed after class! I can't believe it's been a month since you were here, It's flown past!"
Dancing with
Dementia Dancers

SUPPORT

Colchester+Ipswich
Museums



Barking &
Dagenham

