Move on Up

Merseyside Dance Initiative's

Dance and Health Strategy

2012 – 2015
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Move on Up:  
Merseyside Dance Initiative's Dance and Health Strategy for 2012 – 2015

Linked to the Move on Up programme of Community and Professional dance for Merseyside.

Introduction:
Dance and dancing is a fundamental part of our society and something that people in the UK are both good at and we enjoy.

We know that participating in dance can build confidence and self esteem as well as improve our health and wellbeing,

Over the next three years MDI intends to deliver a comprehensive programme of community and professional level dance and health work. This programme will set out to create a positive impact on improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities across the Liverpool City Region.

By working to this strategy MDI will identify itself as the regional hub for dance and health in the NW region and position the organisation at the forefront of dance and health practice nationally and work in partnership with Local Authorities towards developing a dance Manifesto for the North West region.

We see the Decade of Health and Wellbeing as an opportunity to frame both the strategy and the dance work within the context of the 5 ways to wellbeing as outlined by New Economics Foundation (NEF).¹

We will revisit the methodology and findings from our 2002 Out of Reach Report (available to download from the MDI website) and transfer our learning and evaluation tools (updating and developing tools as appropriate) to our current projects to measure and report on the impact of dance on people's wellbeing.

In 2011 – 2014 MDI will deliver dance work targeted at groups across a wide social, economic and ethnic spectrum and to age groups ranging from 18months to 50+. This will enable us to report back on what impact participating in dance activity has for a diverse range of individuals and communities.

We have identified five key priority groups that align with those, set out in the MDI business plan:

¹ New Economics Foundation http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/five-ways-wellbeing
Our programme will include African People’s Dance, Youth Dance Development, Education work, Ward Based Community Provision, Continuing Professional Development for dance artists, new commissions, participatory projects, studio classes and performance programming. The programme will reflect the artists and communities we work with and therefore will explore and celebrate diversity through practice and participation.

Our programme will deliver and produce work in line with the three strategic aims detailed in the MDI business plan.

**Art form Development:** We will push the boundaries of dance and health work and develop new models of working for artists and community groups.

**Community Engagement and Education:** We will develop exciting ways of deepening community engagement through strong partnerships and meaningful, sustainable projects and events.

**Organisational Development:** We will build capacity in the organization to deliver the programme successfully by building a core team. And we will help build the region’s capacity to deliver such work by investing in training and development for artists and dance professionals.
The Five Ways to Wellbeing

MDI will deliver our programme linked to the 5 ways to wellbeing through the following methods:

**Participation:** Ensuring as many people as possible participate in dance activity whether practically or as an audience member.

**Promotion:** Raising the profile of dance across the region and promoting high quality dance work by artists from Liverpool City Region, the UK and beyond.

**Performance:** Creating performance opportunities including community events, artist's platforms, festivals and large scale performance projects and events.

**Partnership:** Work in partnership with our stake holders to deliver a vibrant and engaging programme of community and professional dance and health activity.

### The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are:

**Connect** - with others, at home, at work, in your community. Dancing together encourages you to learn about others in your group and appreciate difference. Dancing together once a week may be the only time some people share human contact. Connecting with people is easier with a common interest in dance.

**Be active** - an active lifestyle not only keeps our bodies healthy, but makes us feel good as well. Taking part in a dance class, workshop or performance at any level will keep you active. Being an active and engaged audience member will help develop the dance community.

**Take notice** – Watch and appreciate other people dancing on the street, in the church hall, on the stage. Notice the beauty and skill in what they are sharing with you.

**Keep learning** - trying something new can help keep our minds and our lives active. Learning a new dance style, a new technique or a new way of working together are all valuable learning experiences that can broaden our knowledge and appreciation of the world we live in. See lots of different types of dance and learn what you like best.

**Give** - giving to others makes us feel better. Share you dance skills and knowledge with others through a performance or sharing of work and ideas. Through training and developing dance artists and volunteers we aim to provide new and valuable dance experiences to as many people as possible.
Current position:

Merseyside Dance Initiative (MDI) was established in 1993 to provide a strategic overview for dance development in Liverpool, the Merseyside region and beyond. It is a dance development agency with a long and successful history of producing, presenting and promoting dance in the region and its work is seen as having local, national and international significance. MDI inspires people to take part, create and see dance. It works in partnership with artists, venues and others in an environment that is inclusive, supportive, challenging and innovative. Its focus is on strengthening the dance sector, by nurturing and sustaining a healthy dance culture. It is a Regularly Funded Organisation of Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council.

MDI has delivered numerous dance, health and wellbeing projects instigated by a major three year intervention and research programme Out of Reach running from 1999 – 2001 which explored how dance could be used as a tool to promote social inclusion for young people and adults. This project provided the framework for MDI to develop intervention style activity in a number of specialist areas including: Early Years, Over 50s, Hospitals and Mental Health.

MDI is a Cultural Champion at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital and has also worked with Aintree Hospital Trust researching the viability of an arts programme in an acute Hospital, partnered Liverpool PCT as a Dance Ambassador for 2010, Liverpool’s Year of Health and Wellbeing, produced and delivered educational projects for schools and community groups and designed resources and dance in education tours.

Since inception MDI has produced LEAP, an internationally recognised contemporary dance festival, and delivered a diverse range of conference and seminar events including Memory (2010) in partnership with local South Asian dance company, Chaturangan, the first ever conference examining the use of dance in dementia care.

MDI has already taken steps to lead an artist forum specifically focused around dance and health issues in the region, this will allow us to bring together artists in the region, offer support, assess the field as a whole and address the needs we identify.

Our work will link the priorities of government campaigns, health authorities, local councils and neighbourhood initiatives. We will share our research findings and best practice with other dance professionals. We will disseminate this information through appropriate methods including: Seminars, training days, publications, website and demonstration of good practice.

MDI has excellent contacts in Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region and is well respected in the field of dance and dance and health. Therefore the organisation
is well positioned in to successfully deliver this ambitious programme and ensure that the programme is sustainable beyond the three years of this project.

**Aims and Objectives:**

**Aims:**

- Put dance at the centre of people’s lives and use it as a tool to create transformative experiences for individuals, groups and communities.

- Gain acknowledgement from health professionals on a regional and national level that dance is a valuable tool for improving people’s health and wellbeing in order that dance be routinely considered as a viable method of tackling health inequalities.

- Become a regional hub, recognised nationally as an exemplary centre for dance and health practice.

- Work with Local authorities to develop and dance manifesto for the North West Region

**Objectives:**

1. We will form a steering group that will ensure we link with our stakeholders and partners health based priorities and tie in with local, regional and national arts and health networks, strategies and government policies where possible.

2. We will deliver a three-year participatory programme of dance activity for all age groups that aims to improve health and wellbeing.

3. We will commission and produce high quality performances that address and explore health issues and promote the 5 ways to wellbeing.

4. We will develop a healthy dance ecology in Liverpool City Region by supporting artists though training, mentoring, and offering performance opportunities

5. We will partner established national and international choreographers with community groups and professional artists to create work that drives the development of the art from on all levels.

6. We will work with dance artists to provide CPD in the field of dance and health, share good practice and new research and ensure sure they are looking after their own health and wellbeing
7. We will develop a ‘toolkit’ of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods that will enable us to measure the impact of our participatory work on health and wellbeing and disseminate this research through appropriate channels.

8. We will build and develop partnerships with Local Authorities in the Liverpool City Region aiming to deliver dance and health work across all six boroughs.

9. We will work in partnership with other arts organisations and artists to produce high quality dance focused projects promoting the 5 ways to wellbeing and encouraging a wider interest in arts and culture.

10. We will strive to make the MDI working environment a healthy and well one for the board, staff and volunteers.

Key Deliverables:

- Publish Dance and Health Strategy – April 2012
- Publish intentions for linked 3 year programme of activity – April 2012
- Raise adequate funds to deliver the programme – Spring 2012
- Secure partnerships for all proposed projects (2012 / 13) – Spring 2012
- Set up steering group for three year programme – Summer 2012
- Deliver projects as outlined in the three-year programme – end 2015
- Appoint evaluator for the three-year programme – Spring 2012
- Develop viable Exit strategy – mid 2015
- Ensure project sustainability wherever possible – end 2015
- Disseminate / publish key findings from each year – Yearly basis
- Disseminate / Publish project findings – end 2015

Indications of Success:

MDI assesses its performance through three key principles:

- **Quality** (work with a clear sense of purpose and integrity that has the potential or already is reaching the highest artistic standards of practice)
- **Innovation** (work that is challenging and advancing the art form in new and interesting ways)
- **Engagement** (Work that has the ability to interact and captivate audiences)

Assessment and evaluation models have been devised and are encouraged by all staff, with external assessment, peer assessment, quality assurance strategies and feedback from all stakeholders and partners.
• £300,000 or more raised over 3 years to enable the delivery of the programme
• Over 3 years we will engage 100,000 people in health focused dance activity.
• 25% of project participants will be from harder to reach or BME communities.
• We will publish quantitative and qualitative evidence showing that taking part in dance activity has improved people’s health and or wellbeing
• We will work with partners to secure the sustainability of 50% of the regular dance provision included in the programme before the end of 2014
• MDI will be recognised by the Foundation for Community Dance, national and regional dance agencies and other key stakeholders as a centre of excellence for dance and health practice.
• MDI will host quarterly artist forums focused on dance and health practice to support the vibrant community of dance artists delivering health focused activity.
• MDI will develop a quarterly e-bulletin to inform artists and arts organisations of dance and health activity across the region and in the UK
• MDI will develop an active website pages for internal dance and health activity with links to external dance and health activity delivered by partner artists and organisations.

Breakdown of how we will deliver main objectives:

1 - We will form a steering group that will ensure we link with our stakeholders and partners health based priorities and tie in with local, regional and national arts and health networks, strategies and government policies where possible.

The Move on Up Steering group will include representatives from: Liverpool City Region NHS Community Care, Hospital partners, Liverpool City Council, Neighbourhood Managers, Major Arts Partners, Funders, Artists, MDI team & Freelance Researcher / Evaluator.

Group will meet every 4 months to review programme and discuss future events, research, outcomes etc.

Through the steering group MDI will develop our links to regional and national arts forums including the London Arts Health Forum and North West Arts and Health Network

2 - We will deliver a three-year participatory programme of dance activity for all age groups that aims to improve health and wellbeing.
Delivery and outcomes of community and participatory activity in the Move on Up programme will be replicable across geographic and demographic groups.

Priorities for our Community Programme can be divided into the following areas:

**Children, Young People and Mental Health**

*Early Years*

Main partners: Sure Start, Pre Schools and Nurseries

Sessions will use developmental play to encourage cognitive growth, improve coordination and balance, promote shared physical activity for parent / guardian and child and nurture freedom of expression through dance for the under fives. Session plans will link to the priorities set out in the 2003 document *Every Child Matters* and will support parents / guardians in building strong foundations for their children enabling them to grow into healthy and confident young people.

- We will provide early years sessions in Studio 24 based on developmental play
- We will expand this provision to include 1 x regular outreach group
- We will deliver 6 – 12 week projects in partner venues across Liverpool City Region when additional funds become available.

*Young People*

Main partners: Local Authority Youth Services, independent youth groups, Probation Services, Schools.

The focus of this work will be to encourage creative development through dance, promote a healthy lifestyle, develop confidence, encourage appreciation and understanding of difference and to link in with the priorities set out in the *Every Child Matters* document to help enable young people to develop into healthy and confident adults.

- We will provide sessions for young people in Studio 24 and annual ‘Summer School’ activity based on the successful African and Caribbean Summer School model of the past 9 years.
- We will develop the MDI Youth Dance Company which provides high quality dance training and performance opportunities for young people aged 12 – 19

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We will establish a network of satellite youth groups across the Liverpool City Region.

We will deliver 6 – 12 week issue-based projects in partner venues across Liverpool City Region when funding is available. Projects will focus on building confidence and self esteem, healthy lifestyles and increasing fitness.

We will provide performance opportunities for these groups as appropriate including Community Showcases, end-of-project performances and sharing of work.

We will deliver workshops promoting the 5 ways to wellbeing in schools and to youth groups across the region when funding is available.

**Boys and Men**

**Boys**

Main Partners: Local Authorities, Youth Services, Independent Youth Groups, Probation Services, Schools.

The focus of this work will be to establish a positive image of dance and encourage boys / young men to take part in dance activity. Dance work will tackle issues such as self esteem, peer pressure, bullying and issues specific to neighborhood area agreements.

- We will use existing partners and contacts to work towards establishing a boys dance group for the Liverpool City Region.
- We will develop 2 boys performance projects through new and existing partners
- We will develop bespoke projects for boys groups / schools if and when additional funds are available.

**Men**

Potential Partners include charity organizations such as: CALM, Spider Project (Action on Addiction), Refugee Action & SOLAR and dance company Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, Homotopia.

The focus of this work will be on engaging adult males in dance activity for enjoyment, self-expression and creativity. Where appropriate issues such as cultural identity, healthy lifestyles, community cohesion and community engagement will be introduced to the work.

- We will produce 2 x performance projects where at least 40% of the group
are adult males.

- We will explore the role of dance in the lives of male refugees in Liverpool through participatory workshop sessions

**Boys and Men**

Potential Partners include: Local Authorities Children and Family Services, Spider Project (Action on Addiction), Granby Care Home.

This work encourages men of different generations to dance together promoting cross-generational bonds through non-competitive physical activity. Where appropriate issues such as cultural identity, healthy lifestyles, community cohesion and community engagement will be introduced to the work.

- We will pilot our Lads, Dads and Grandads project through delivery of workshops, taster sessions and 6 – 12 week projects with optional performance opportunities.

**People with a disability**

Potential Partners include: DADA, Fittings, Active City / Lifestyles Gym, Schools, Local Authorities Children and Family Services, the Bluecoat (Blue Room), Tate Liverpool (In the Frame), Lisa Simpson.

The focus of this work will be to develop the participation opportunities for people with disabilities in the Liverpool City Region, to encourage integrated work at all levels and to provide more performance opportunities for dancers with disabilities. In addition to this we aim to raise the profile of dance by artists with a disability and work in partnership to develop audiences for this work.

- We will provide sessions for adults with Learning difficulties in Studio 24
- We will develop a regular outreach group for children with a physical disability through a partnership with Lifestyles Gyms / Active City.
- We will develop a regular outreach group for adults with a physical disability through a partnership with Lifestyles Gyms / Active City.
- We will promote and encourage integrated working through these groups
- We will offer performance opportunities where appropriate
- We will produce 3 choreographic workshops for young people with a disability introducing them to the choreographic process.
- We will seek to programme high quality professional dance work created by artists with a disability into festivals and events where possible
Older People

Over 50s

Potential Partners: Liverpool PCT, English National Ballet (Dance for Parkinson’s), Independent social clubs and groups, MerseyCare.

This work is low-level intervention / primary prevention level work. Sessions concentrate on improving cardio-vascular fitness, core strength and flexibility. Sessions also provide vital social interaction which in turn combat loneliness and depression. This provision sets out to reduce individual’s dependency on health and social care services after the age of 50.

- We will provide regular dance sessions for over 50s at Studio 24
- We will develop satellite groups providing regular sessions for the over 50s across Liverpool City Region
- We will provide performance opportunities where appropriate
- We will aim to provide sessions for diverse communities and where appropriate / necessary sessions will be tailored for specific cultural needs
- Lead 1 reminiscence project with a group of African and Caribbean over 50s.

Dementia Care

Potential Partners: PSS, Liverpool PCT, Alzheimer’s Society, independent homes, Local Authorities, MerseyCare.

This work will focus on improving the wellbeing or quality of life of participants and will link in with the National Dementia Strategy and the Liverpool PCT Dementia Strategy.

We aim to make a strong link between our work with older people and our African People’s Dance strategy ensuring that work is culturally appropriate.

- We will set up 1 regular group for adults with dementia in partnership with a care home / residential home
- We will deliver bespoke 10 week projects in care homes and to groups of older people with dementia across the Liverpool City Region
- We will aim to provide sessions for diverse communities and where appropriate / necessary sessions will be tailored for specific cultural needs
Work in Health Settings

Hospitals

Main Partners / Potential Partners: Alder Hey Hospital, Aintree Hospital Trust, Royal Liverpool Hospital, Mersey Care

The focus of this work will be to measure and establish the benefit of dance work to both long and short term patients in these hospitals (project specific) and to create high quality dance work for public performance highlighting specific health issues.

- We will work with Alder Hey Children’s Hospital as a Cultural Champion
- We will deliver a 12-month project in the Dewi Jones ward to measure the impact of dance on the wellbeing of the patients on this ward
- We will deliver sessions at Aintree Hospital in line with MDi and hospital priorities and projects.
- We will design and deliver a participatory project at the Royal Liverpool Hospital
- We will set up relevant training for hospital staff linked to projects and provision in each hospital venue.
- We will explore the possibility of developing research and performance projects in partnership with Liverpool hospitals.

3 - We will commission and produce high quality performances that address and explore health issues and promote the 5 ways to wellbeing.

Potential Partners / Funders: Esmee Fairburn Trust, Wellcome Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery.

This work will focus on producing high quality dance performances that will engage and inspire audiences. These projects will contribute to the progression of artists in the region by building an expertise in the field as well as leading to a development of the art form through encouraging exchange and creativity and the production of new work. Working with different communities on participatory projects will contribute to the building of capacity within the organisation and the advancement of our research.

Proposed Performance projects include:

- Fevered Sleep - An Infinite Line professional / community project using the quality of light on the Merseyside Coast as a starting point. Project will promote 5 Ways to Wellbeing
- Taciturn – Piper Rhythms – research and performance project looking at
how the primitive piper rhythms affect our brains and how dance, music & rhythm can be used to stimulate those with Dementia / Locked in syndrome to experience more external stimuli. This would link to our community and outreach provision for people living with dementia.

- Dance Doctor Schools Tour – primary school dance and workshop programme promoting the 5 ways to wellbeing – linked to a resource pack for use by teachers.
- Of(f) the Streets – Community Participation and Performance Projects – linked to specific neighborhood objectives

4 - We will develop a healthy dance ecology in Merseyside by supporting artists though training, mentoring, and offering performance opportunities

As stated in our business plan ‘MDI will provide opportunities for the dance sector to thrive through: nurturing artists, supporting promoters and developing audiences across Merseyside and beyond.’ We will do this via a number of existing structures, events and projects including:

- Dance Intensives – professional level training for dancers focused on health practice and the advancement of individual’s dance skills and technique
- Artist Support – formal and informal support offered to artists including advice and signposting, office space, networking and studio space.
- Mentoring – One to one support developed on an individual basis to suit artists needs
- Performance Opportunities – for local and regional artists offering advice in the development of work and a feedback framework
- Artist forums – regular meetings for local and regional artists encouraging sharing and exchange of ideas, practice and experiences.
- Staff training and development

5 - We will partner established national and international choreographers with community groups and professional artists to create work that drives the development of the art from on all levels.

When appropriate, MDI will bring established choreographers into the region to work with and alongside local professional artists, emerging artists, students and community groups through projects, performances and skills sharing.

In this way, MDI will ensure local talent is continuously developed at all levels and will encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas and working practices between professional artists which will develop the dance ecology in the region. MDI will actively produce and promote work by artists with diverse backgrounds as a reflection of the communities, artists and organizations we work with.
6 - We will work with dance artists to provide CPD in the field of dance and health, share good practice and new research and ensure sure they are looking after their own health and wellbeing.

MDI will consult local and regional dance artists to identify training and development needs in the field of dance and health practice. We will also research current initiatives from local and regional and national authorities to identify any additional priority areas for capacity building.

This consultation process will enable MDI to develop a CPD offer that is both strategic and developmental for the organisation and artists in the region. This offer will comprise:

- Freelancer training – Elders, Early Years, Good Practice in Community Dance, Work in a Hospital setting
- Sharing best practice in the field through practice and conversation
- Signpost to other organisations and artists working in the field
- Organising networking events / seminars as forums for discussion
- Dissemination of information generated through discussions and research

7 - We will develop a ‘toolkit’ of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods that will enable us to measure the impact of our participatory work on health and wellbeing and disseminate this research through appropriate channels.

Through research and partnerships we will identify a range of evaluation tools appropriate for use with participants on practical projects. We will build on our existing evaluation methods which include:

- WEMWEBS³ and other appropriate scales of measurement
- Dementia Care Mapping and variations
- Interviews - written, recorded and filmed as appropriate.
- Personal Testimonies
- Observations
- Benchmarking

We will ensure that dance artists, evaluators and administration staff are confident using all methods and will provide training if necessary.

We will work with an external evaluator throughout the three year programme to produce annual reports on activity and impact as well as a final report.

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In addition to this we will schedule 3 seminar events where we will share our findings from research we are undertaking during the programme.

Results, findings and feedback will be shared at the quarterly steering group meetings and this will inform the direction and content of the programme where appropriate.

8 - We will build and develop partnerships with Local Authorities in the Liverpool City Region aiming to deliver dance and health work across all six boroughs.

Using our existing contacts with Arts Officers in the boroughs of Liverpool City Region we will develop wider contacts and plan to deliver dance activity in all of these boroughs.

MDI will use these contacts and projects to test, develop and refine a North West Dance Manifesto – A proposal and programme of sub-regional dance activity and provision to be delivered in partnership with each Local Authority and offered to the general public alongside current health and fitness provision.

9 - We will work in partnership with other arts organisations and artists to produce high quality dance focused projects promoting the 5 ways to wellbeing and encouraging a wider interest in arts and culture.

MDI have a long history of working in successful partnerships with other arts organisations and many projects outlined in our three-year programme are to be delivered in partnership with other organizations.

MDI are members of Creative Organisations of Liverpool (COoL) and members of their arts and health steering group, through these and other partnerships we will link with other arts organisations and deliver health-focused projects with a clear aim and artistic integrity.

Through these projects and partnerships we will develop individuals access and interest in arts and culture by introducing participants to other art forms, artists and organizations locally and by signposting participants to other events and groups where appropriate.

10 - We will strive to make the MDI working environment a healthy and well one for the board, all staff and volunteers.

MDI are committed to making the organisation a healthy place to work.

We will work with the guidelines in Liverpool's Workplace Wellbeing charter to
ensure that standards of health and safety are high and that the physical and emotional health of all employees and volunteers is prioritised when planning and delivering events and making changes to the organization or workplace.

We will also strive to offer the following:
- Staff development and training
- Advice on Human Resource issues

Evidence of Need: Case Study Examples:

Minibeasts
In 2009 / 10 MDI developed and delivered a participatory performance project and resource pack for early years involving workshops, crafts and a performance.

This project aimed to engage children under 5 years with their parents, teachers and assistants through a movement programme, produced and performed by local artists.

The project was commissioned by Cheshire Rural Touring and toured 18 nurseries and primary schools in rural Cheshire in 2009, Wirral in 2010 and St. Helens in 2011 leaving each centre with a resource pack detailing activity and movement sessions that teachers and group leaders with little or no dance experience could run for under fives.

Quotes (Taken from feedback from Cheshire Rural Touring evaluation):
‘Providing the children with a fun enjoyable creative activity.’

‘I thought it wonderful having it in the children’s setting to make them feel more comfortable.’

‘This has been a very useful informative day. We always welcome such events coming into school as they provide wonderful opportunities for children to get involved. Thank you.’

Redholme Memory Care
In 2010, MDI began to work with adults with dementia. We ran a pilot project with residents and day care service users at Redholme Memory Care in Liverpool, aiming to monitor individual’s levels of engagement during the session to see if participating in dance activity would improve engagement. Wendy Thomas, who lead the sessions used her improvisation skills to adapt to the needs of the group and individuals as necessary.
We found that the group grew more comfortable with each other and the structure of the sessions as the project progressed. Individuals began to initiate activities themselves and appeared to remember elements of the sessions. We also gathered anecdotal evidence that the general mood of individuals improved and remained heightened after the end of the sessions.

MDI produced a documentary film as a result of the project showing the dance artist’s journey through the sessions. It addresses some questions around memory of the activity and the impact of the sessions on participants. (Rogers, 2011)

“We noticed that when Mum had been dancing in the day, she would come home in a very good mood and continue to sing and dance for the rest of the afternoon and evening.’ Suzanne Quinney, Daughter of participant – Redholme project 2010

**Hector Peterson Court**

In 2010 Maxine Brown, MDI’s African People’s Dance Worker, led weekly dance sessions in Hector Peterson Court in Liverpool 8 with participants from Caribbean backgrounds, many of whom are first generation immigrants who arrived in the UK in the 1950s and 60s.

This project aimed to improve the mental wellbeing of participants by providing the group with an opportunity to connect with each other through movement, touch, cultural links (to each other and to the Caribbean) sharing time and stories. These elements combine to address the serious problem of loneliness and depression often faced by older people. These problems can be magnified for BME groups who are physically disconnected from their home and may also be disengaged from their community due to health problems or decreased mobility. These communities can be smaller, more disparate and less connected, giving less opportunity for interaction.

As an organisation, we have become even more aware of how little culturally specific dance is available especially for older people and it reinforced that this age group find it even more important to connect with their heritage at this stage in their lives. We have a clearer understanding of how to structure this type of activity and are even more determined that future projects will be either longer term or continuous. (Rogers 2 – 2011)

‘Cybil began by complaining about her knees – after a few sessions she forgot about her knees and danced She went from saying “I can’t…” to “I can…”’ Maxine Brown, Dance Artist leading the Hector Peterson project

**Mary Seacole House / Caribbean Centre** – MDI led weekly sessions for clients from Mary Seacole House at the Caribbean centre. Sessions focused on each of
the 5 ways and linked in with other 2010, wellbeing events, e.g. World Mental Health day. These sessions will continue in 2011 and we are actively seeking funds to develop an additional outreach group for adults with learning difficulties.

‘One man who has been regularly attending the sessions with Mary Seacole House has recently started to attend our Adult African dance class, this is a big leap for him and a real progression. The sessions have helped him make his own independent connections to dance.’ Maxine Brown, Dance Artist leading the Mary Seacole Project

**Alder Hey Hospital** – MDI led sessions at the hospital during Black History Month, each focusing on the 5 ways and promoting the YOHW. MDI remains a cultural champion and delivered dance and movement sessions during of 2011. In addition to this we will return to work in the hospital in autumn 2012 to research the impact of dance on the wellbeing of children on the Dewi Jones ward (who suffer from various mental health issues).

‘...a patient age 7 with Asthma [needed] to stay on his bed for a few days very out of breath [while] doctors waited to see if he was well enough for discharge …the dance workshop enabled him to move about freely without focusing on his poor breathing or the cannula in his hand... His breathing became less erratic while he started to relax into the dance activity and his confidence grew, this was observed by staff on the ward... The patient was referred by the Asthma Nurse Specialist and went home that night...The dance workshop enabled the ward staff to make a final decision in preparing the patient for home and the dance session contributed fully to the child's recovery...’ Play Specialist, Alder Hey Hospital

**References:**


Rogers, Rachel – 2011 – Our Dancing Days are (not) Done – Animated, the community dance magazine, Spring 2011 – London pp21

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Merseyside Dance initiative would like to thank the following organisations for their continuing support of MDI and our dance and health projects.

Rachel Rogers would like to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for awarding her a travel Grant and Fellowship to enable her to travel to the USA in autumn 2012 to conduct research into (dance) performance for with and by Older People. This research is expected to feed back into MDI’s dance and health strategy and programme for Older People from 2013.