

# DanceSyndrome

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**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*

## CASE FOR SUPPORT



**DanceSyndrome**  
Dancer Led, Disability Inspired

Registered Charity No: 1152664



# WHY DANCESYNDROME?

Jen Blackwell has Down's syndrome but that has never stopped her living the life of her choosing. She went to mainstream school and whilst there she realised how much she loved to dance and decided that she wanted to become a community dance worker.

After leaving school in 1999, Jen found herself in the frustrating position of not being able to fulfil her ambition because there was no suitable dance training for a person with a learning disability.

After 10 years of unsuccessfully searching for training that was appropriate and inclusive it became clear that many other people with learning disabilities were in the same situation. Something needed to change and Jen and her parents took matters into their own hands. They formed DanceSyndrome in 2009 and it was registered as a charity in 2013.

## Supporting people with learning disabilities

We support people with learning disabilities and their families, improving **mental and physical health**, addressing **social inclusion** and **challenging perceptions of disability**. We do this by providing inclusive weekly dance workshops, dance leadership training with accreditation, dance choreography and performance opportunities (including prestigious events such as the Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and community dance outreach.

## We are truly inclusive

Uniquely our workshops are **co-designed** and **co-delivered** by a team of two dance leaders, one who has a learning disability and one who doesn't. Our dance leaders complete an in-depth **inclusive dance leadership training** programme to receive their **qualification** accredited by Sports Leaders UK. We now have 58 trained Dance Leaders.

As well as a **unique** understanding as '**experts by experience**' of how to design and deliver truly inclusive dance workshops, our dance leaders are **role models** who demonstrate that 'people like us' can progress to leadership roles. Our dance leaders start their journey with us as workshop participants and progress on to 'give-back' through **volunteering** their services. Some develop their skills even further and train to deliver our Dance Leader training programme.

We have over 40 **dedicated** and **passionate** volunteers working in a wide variety of roles.

There is significant demand for our services and we are **creative** with our offering, achieving a lot on a small budget.

**As a small charity our only real limitation is financial.**



# LEARNING DISABILITY & HEALTH INEQUALITY

A learning disability impacts on the way individuals develop in all core areas, and ultimately how they live their lives and access health care.

## 1.2 M

An estimated 1.2 million people in England have a learning disability.

Only 189,000 of those people are known to learning disability services - the majority live their lives without support from specialist services.



Half of all adults with a learning disability live in the family home.



Positive imagery of people with learning disabilities is often missing from mainstream media and public campaigns.

## HEALTH INEQUALITIES

People with learning disabilities in the UK are:

- less likely to engage in physical activity
- more likely to have at least 1 significant health problem
- more likely to have psychiatric illness
- have higher rates of dementia
- more likely to have a visual and/or hearing impairment
- are at increased risk of early death and have a shorter life expectancy

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SHORTER LIFE EXPECTANCY



Problems in advance health & care planning

Dependence on others for mobility & feeding



Carers' concerns not being listened to



Social inequalities impacting

health including employment, housing, education, social stigma, harassment and social isolation.

# FIGHTING INEQUALITY

Have you ever felt **excluded**, unable to make decisions that affect your own life, been unable to take part in activities that everyone else seems to engage in effortlessly? Have you been **frustrated** that no one is listening to you? Have you given up, **lost confidence** in yourself and in society to be able to live your life the way you want to, indeed are entitled to?

If you've ever felt like this, imagine the life of a person with learning disabilities, who faces **barriers** in doing everyday things we all take for granted.

**Help us to help them to a better life by supporting DanceSyndrome.**

DanceSyndrome:

- provides **practical and emotional support** to people with learning disabilities and their families
- benefits whole **families**, not just participants
- provides **opportunities** for people with learning disabilities to be **visible citizens** through dance leadership
- **challenges perceptions of disability** through high-profile performance work
- provides **regular physical activity** to help with health inequalities (physical and mental health)
- is **fully inclusive and accessible** to participants and audiences - EVERYONE can be involved
- promotes **co-production** giving people with learning disabilities a chance to have their voice heard
- is **user led** - we listen and respond to our participants and their families/carers
- provide public speaking opportunities to people with learning disabilities to challenge common misconceptions and encourage Society to **address inequalities**

Your donation will help to create happiness, friendships and careers for people often excluded from mainstream dance.

**DanceSyndrome is a small developing charity. Major funding has helped us to achieve so much in such a short time, but it has now ended and we are reliant on donations to meet demand for our services.**

**Without your support we will be unable to continue to offer these vital opportunities for inclusion.**



# THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF DANCING

Dance involves the body, emotion and mind: it is both a physical activity and a means of expression and communication.

Dance has been shown to impact mental wellbeing:



- improve quality of life.

- have a meaningful influence on mood



- improve cognitive performance

- aid stress reduction

- support identity



- develop social interaction

- provide a significant social context and connections



- reduce symptoms of depression

- be well received as an enjoyable activity that can reduce depression, even when not designed to specifically address this



Dance has been shown to impact physical wellbeing:

- improve balance and bodily awareness

- improve dynamic balance

- encourage and enable physical activity



- increase people's physical

fitness, strength and abilities, often more effectively than other forms of exercise

- develop muscle strength



At DanceSyndrome we believe there is beauty and value in everyone's movements.

People with learning disabilities face barriers to joining in with mainstream dance. DanceSyndrome removes those barriers and empowers people to take part in an inclusive way and experience the many benefits of dancing.

**Everyone can dance!**





## PROVEN SUCCESS

We are very proud that the impact of our work has been recognised by the following awards, including The Queen's Award for Voluntary Services:

- Dance Leader Team included on Learning Disability and Autism Leaders List 2019 (Sports, Arts and Entertainment category)
- Founder Jen Blackwell included on Shaw Trust Disability Power List 2019
- Finalist – SELNET Awards 2019
- Jen Blackwell included on Lucozade Mover's List 2019
- Winner - People's Award at the National Learning Disabilities and Autism Awards 2019
- The Queen's Award for Voluntary Services 2019
- High Commended in the She-Inspires Awards 2019
- Dance Leader & Ambassador Becky Rich included on Learning Disability and Autism Leaders List 2019 (Sports, Arts and Entertainment category)
- Points of Light Award from the Prime Minister October 2018
- Shaw Trust Disability Power List 2018
- Winner - E3 North West Business Awards 2018
- Finalist – Barclays North West Women in Business Awards 2018
- Finalists – The Bibas North West Business Awards 2018
- Shortlisted - Charity Film Awards 2018
- Winner - Not-For-Profit Award at the Red Rose Awards 2017
- Winner - The Sporting Chance Award at The National Learning Disability and Autism Awards 2016
- Jen Blackwell won Inspirational Woman of the Year at the EVA Awards 2015



## CASE STUDY: JEN BLACKWELL

Jen Blackwell is Founder and Director of DanceSyndrome. Jen has Down's syndrome but at no point has that got in the way of her aspiration and determination.

In 2009 DanceSyndrome was started by Jen with help from her parents. 10 years on she is living a fulfilled life, immersed in her passion for dance - leading two of her own weekly workshops, participating in inclusive technique classes dancing, working with the performance team and speaking at high profile events and conferences. Jen has performed at the Edinburgh Fringe twice, the House of Lords and several major awards ceremonies. She was also thrilled to be given the opportunity to meet her hero Alexandra Burke at the prestigious Pineapple Studios in London as part of the National Lottery's Big Surprise TV show.

As a Dance Leader Jen is now a well recognised and respected role model and this has been acknowledged through a number of awards.

In September 2015 Jen was honored to win "Inspirational Woman of the Year" at the Enterprise Vision Awards. Jen has gone on to be included in the Shaw Trust Power 100 in 2018 & 2019, was chosen as the recipient of the Prime Minister's Point of Light Award in October 2018 and was included in the Lucozade Sport Movers List 2019.

Perhaps most importantly, Jen's involvement with DanceSyndrome has empowered her to live independently for the first time in her life and to feel a sense of belonging.

*"I hadn't discovered friendship before DanceSyndrome but now I have friends in my life - people who value me for who I am - it's the most amazing experience ever!"*

# HOW YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE



£5

will provide one DS lesson for a new participant



£20

will provide annual membership for one participant



£100

will pay for a community dance venue for one month



£1000

will fund one trainee to complete "Dance By Example" - our flagship leadership training



£15k

will provide a weekly community dance session for 12 months



£90k

will pay staff salaries for one year and allow them to focus on expanding our business.

## How Your Donation Helps

The money you donate has a **significant impact** on our work. As a small not-for-profit organisation, every penny you donate directly impacts our business.

Previously, business sponsorship and charitable donations have paid for:

- trips to the Edinburgh Fringe in both 2017 and 2018 - a life changing opportunity for the whole team which empowered us to believe we can achieve anything!
- uniforms for our dancers - creating a sense of belonging and inclusion and adding value to our brand
- venue hire to enable our weekly workshops to continue
- leadership training to enable participants to complete Dance By Example and become visible leaders
- High profile conference appearances for our inspiring speakers

Your donation allows us to take the **pioneering, innovative** approach that if you include people of all abilities and **empower** them to take part in a way that means something to them, then they will start to believe in themselves and achieve things that they never thought possible.

You aren't just funding dance, you are **unlocking potential** - the skills that people learn in our sessions can be transferred to many other aspects of life beyond the arts. Together we are **enabling** people with learning disabilities to become visible, active members of society who are changing accepted beliefs about what people with learning disabilities are **ABLE** to do.

People are empowered for life after taking part in our sessions and there isn't any other provision like it in the North West, or further afield. We want to be able to continue this provision and even expand it, but to do that we need your help. In the current economic climate we are faced with increased pressure on our resources. Competition for funding is fierce and the major funding that we have had in recent years is coming to an end. We are now relying on the generous support of individuals and businesses to carry out our vital work. If you appreciate the work that we do and want to see more of it, please support us in any way that you can.

**Please help us to make the world a better, more inclusive place for people with learning disabilities.**



# WITH YOUR HELP WE HAVE...



## PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES

- 8159 people engaged through outreach
- 116 regular weekly participants
- 41 regular volunteers
- 8 dancers gained a Level 1 qualification



## INVESTED IN HAPPINESS



- felt happier since joining
- felt better about their future since joining
- enjoyed their involvement
- felt a sense of belonging

- 99% were satisfied with their lives
- 99% feel the things they do in life are worthwhile
- 85% said their confidence had increased
- 85% said their self-esteem had increased



## IMPROVED SKILLS

- 100% gained team working skills
- 94% gained skills to use at home, work or college
- 76% gained self-management skills



## INSPIRED PEOPLE

- 86% were inspired by our learning disabled leaders/role models

// ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND MOVING PIECES OF THEATRE I HAVE SEEN. TELLS AN AMAZING STORY AND SHOWS THE 'SOUL' OF ALL WHO TAKE PART - WOULD BE LOVELY FOR EVERYONE TO SEE IT!! //



## CONTRIBUTED TO COMMUNITIES

// BRILLIANT, SOCIETY NEEDS MORE THINGS LIKE THIS, THIS IS WHAT MAKES SOCIETY BETTER. LOVED IT SO MUCH. //

- 76% are more involved in their community
- 19% took on a voluntary role elsewhere
- 5% gained a new job or promotion



## CHALLENGED PERCEPTIONS

- 38% of audiences had never seen disabled performers
- 79% had a more positive view of people with disabilities after seeing us perform

// A STUNNING PERFORMANCE!!! REALLY BEAUTIFUL AN EYE OPENER THAT ANYONE CAN DO ANYTHING!!! WILL CERTAINLY SEE A DANCESYNDROME SHOW AGAIN!!! //



CHANGING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES THROUGH DANCE



**DanceSyndrome**  
Dancer Led, Disability Inspired

Registered Charity No:1152664

# How to Support Us

There are lots of ways that you can support our work.

## IN PERSON

You can hand your donations to a member of the DanceSyndrome team.

## ONLINE

You can donate via our website:  
[www.dancesyndrome.co.uk/donate](http://www.dancesyndrome.co.uk/donate)



## By Post

You can send a cheque made payable to DanceSyndrome to:  
DanceSyndrome, C/O Pathways Associates,  
Suite 2, Waterside, St James Court West,  
Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 1NA

## JUST GIVING

You can make a donation or fundraise for DanceSyndrome at:  
[www.justgiving.com/dance-syndrome](http://www.justgiving.com/dance-syndrome)

## TEXT MESSAGE DONATION

To donate £1, text DANCE to 70201  
To donate £3, text DANCE to 70331  
To donate £5, text DANCE to 70970  
To donate £10, text DANCE to 70191  
To donate £20, text DANCE20 to 70191

## FACEBOOK

You can make a donation or set up a fundraiser via Facebook - [www.facebook.com/dancerleddisabilityinspired](http://www.facebook.com/dancerleddisabilityinspired)

## SPONSORSHIP

Talk to a member of our team about the benefits of sponsoring one of our workshops or events.

[info@dancesyndrome.co.uk](mailto:info@dancesyndrome.co.uk)

[www.dancesyndrome.co.uk](http://www.dancesyndrome.co.uk)

Tel: 07597 942494

Tel: 07875 128015



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