



ACTIVATE

Name of Organisation

ACTIVATE

Title of project/programme

Dance Generations

Dates of project/programme

2006 -2009

Summary

Dance Generations Project provided dance activities for 265 people in residential care homes, day care centres, special schools and pre-schools.

The Dance Generations project, a partnership between Activate, Dorset's Theatre and Dance Development Agency and Dorset County Council, was designed specifically to provide opportunities for dance and movement for those who do not usually have access to it, due to age, health conditions, access requirements and financial circumstances.

The project used professional dance artists to deliver dance sessions for service users, to deliver training to care staff and teachers to increase skills and capacity, and to deliver training to local artists to develop the skill pool. The training was facilitated by a toolkit created by dance artists Sally Ann Donaldson and Carly Annable-Coop, who delivered the initial training. Local dance placements Annabel Canavan and Christella Mavris worked alongside Carly and Sally to receive further training and mentoring in delivering dance. Christella and Annabel developed skills enough to lead on the last part of the training programme.

Dance artists Louise Katerega, Thomas Clark and Annabel Canavan worked with filmmaker Sergio Cruz and his assistant Silvia Alexandra during a 4 day residency to create the Dance Generations film. This constituted the performance outcome of the project.

'Gets all your bits working you don't normally use...I needed encouraging to join in but happy I did' (Service User)

Overview

Dance Generations, a partnership between Activate and Dorset County Council, was a project to provide dance and movement opportunities for those who do not usually have access to it due to age, health conditions, access requirements and financial limitations.

Aims and Objectives of the project were to:

- Use dance to deliver health and well-being promotion in care settings and promoting the concept of arts and health work to deliver care.
- Use professional dance artists - to deliver dance sessions for service users; to deliver training to care staff and teachers to increase skills and knowledge; to deliver training to local artists to develop the skill pool.
- Create a performance piece of dance, offering opportunities of exchange between the different generations involved in the project.
- Research the benefits of dance and health.
- Through a seminar - share good practice; highlight the health outcomes of the project; advocate for the benefits of dance and health work.
- Embed the concept of using the arts within the health, social care and arts and education sectors

http://activateperformingarts.org.uk/assets/0000/0084/dance_gen_brochure.pdf

A main focus for the Dance generations project was to create a level of sustainability, ensuring that dance became part of a programme of care delivery in the centres. To enable this to happen the first part of the project involved training the staff (referred to as 'mentees') at the centres to be able to deliver dance to their own clients.

These sessions provided mentees with an opportunity to put into practice their training in a supported and mentored environment. It was also an opportunity for participants from each centre to have a short programme of dance workshops. Dance Generations centres in Weymouth each received 3 workshops, led by Carly and Sally alongside the mentees. Before each session artists and mentees discussed the session plan, roles and responsibilities, observation or delivery tasks. After each session there was feedback, advice support and suggestions for further planning.

Due to funding constraints Dance Generations centres in East Dorset and West Dorset received a slightly shorter programme of mentoring sessions, but following the same format of planning, delivery and feedback. This was delivered by the dance placements Annabel and Christella, putting in to practice the skill and training they had received in the programme.

Dance Generations training team Dance Artists Sally-Anne Donaldson and Carly Annable-Coop created the toolkit and delivered the initial training. Local dance placements Annabel Canavan and Christella Mavris worked alongside Carly and Sally to receive further training and mentoring in delivering dance. Christella and Annabel developed enough skills to lead on the last part of the training programme.

Dance Generations residency team Dance artists Louise Katerega, Thomas Clark and Annabel Canavan worked with filmmaker Sergio Cruz and his assistant Silvia Alexandra during a 4-day residency to create the Dance Generations film. This constituted the performance outcome of the project.

A toolkit was created to be used with the training. Each toolkit had a workbook that the mentee could use to review the training or to plan future sessions. The toolkit also contained information on dance workshops and ideas for creative exercises.

A four-day Residency programme allowed participants to concentrate on developing their creativity and to work with dance artists and a filmmaker. Participants were encouraged to explore their personal movement abilities, their characters and personalities.

Mentoring and participatory sessions were held where Mentees could put their training into practice in these sessions. Participants from each centre also attended dance workshops. Three workshops were held in each Dance Generations centre in Weymouth; these were led by the dance artists and mentees.

Health researcher Arts and Health Consultant Alex Coulter was commissioned to carry out an evaluation that examined the health benefits of participating in Dance Generations, specifically the health benefits for older people.

Dance Generations centres were:

Early Years: The Mulberry Children's Centre, Weymouth; Bridport Surestart; TOPS Nursery, Wimborne.

Children with Disabilities: Wyvern Special School, Weymouth; Mountjoy School, Bridport;

Beaucroft Foundation School, Wimborne.

Adults with Disabilities: Southill Day Centre, Weymouth; Verwood Opportunities Centre, Verwood; Stourcastle Centre, Sturminster Newton Blandford Community Service

Older People: Anglebury Court, Wareham; Sidney Gale House, Bridport; Fishermans Arms Day Centre, Bridport;The Lawns Care Home, Weymouth;The Acorns Day Centre, Weymouth.

Innovation

The project was innovative in:

- Creating a toolkit. Dance artists Sally-Anne Donaldson and Carly Annable-Coop created the concept and structure of the toolkit. This will work to extend and share practice in the future. The toolkit is not a stand-alone resource, but is a workbook that, in combination with the intensive session, provides information on a dance workshop structure, ideas for creative exercises, duty of care, resources etc. The sessions were a mixture of practical tasks, discussion, break-out groups and viewing video footage of best practice. Working through the chapters of the toolkit, artists and mentees were able to share existing practices and discuss areas of concern and development. The toolkit has given each mentee a workbook that can be revisited and continually updated – a great resource for future planning and revisiting the training sessions.
- Delivering training to care staff so that they can continue practice with service users.

Participation

The programme had:

- 33 training sessions
- 35 mentees
- 12 other centre staff members
- 266 service users participating in artist-led sessions.

The residency programme had:

- 39 service users
- 12 staff members
- 7 centres
- 6 community members.

Mentoring and Participatory Sessions provided mentees with an opportunity to put their training into practice in a supported and mentored environment. They were also an opportunity for participants from each centre to have a short programme of dance workshops. Dance Generations centres in Weymouth each received 3 workshops, led by Carly and Sally alongside the mentees. Before each session artists and mentees discussed the session plan, roles and responsibilities, observation or delivery tasks.

The Residency was an opportunity for the service users to develop their creativity further. Dance artists Louisa Katerega and Thomas Clark, supported by Annabel Canavan, worked with film maker Sergio Cruz to create a concept for the residency that involved participants being encouraged to explore their own personal movement abilities, their characters and personalities, showing off their personalities. All Dance Generation centres were offered the opportunity to participate on the last day in an open workshop for community dancers and students.

Outcomes

The evaluation focused on work within one residential home for older people and was based on:

- A mentoring and delivery session led by dance practitioners at the centre
- Three sessions led by the Activity Officers with the residents at the centre

The evaluation looked for evidence of:

- Improved mood and raised self-esteem
- Effect on social interaction and engagement
- Increased flexibility and confidence in movement
- The effectiveness of the training and mentoring provided by Activate
- The impact on sustained delivery of dance/movement sessions in an elderly residential home

This was evaluated through:

- Observation of a ½-day refresher course for all mentees
- Participation in 1 session in the centre led by dance practitioners
- Observation of 3 sessions in the centre led by Activity Officers
- Interviews with participants before the first session and after the last session
- Interviews with Activity Officers after the third session
- Interview with the centre manager after the third session

Mood and self-esteem

There was evidence from participants and Activity Officers that the dance sessions had a positive effect on mood. The creative dimension of dance and the particular structure of these sessions encouraged individuals to think and express themselves and this was seen as a distinctive feature of the dance sessions in comparison to exercise or other physical activity classes which are more about following instructions.

Social interaction and engagement

The dynamic in the group was good with plenty of communication and laughter. The themes used in the dance sessions provided a topic of conversation and encouraged use of memory and imagination. Participants shared and interacted. However dance sessions do not have a significantly greater impact on social interaction and engagement than other group activities. Any group activity can generate communication and interaction.

Increased flexibility and confidence in movement

The Activity Officers were careful not to push participants more than they felt comfortable. The dance sessions were generally perceived as gentle exercise and a good thing for residents to do; however three sessions were not considered enough to see measurable differences and there was no way of providing hard evidence that the sessions did actually make a

difference. Staff agreed that over time the dance sessions would be likely to improve flexibility. There was evidence of increased confidence from one session to the next and this was seen as the result of familiarity with what was expected.

The effectiveness of the training and mentoring provided by Activate

The staff were very positive about the training, which they had enjoyed and found very useful. They clearly used the training in delivering sessions to the residents and had been given a clear way of structuring sessions, which was very effective. They were confident that they had been given adequate training in safe practice. The centre manager also thought the training was well organised and that her staff had got a lot from it. They would have benefited from more in-depth training specific to their residents' needs and might benefit from a refresher course at some point.

The impact on sustained delivery of dance/movement sessions in an elderly residential home

The structure of this project was an effective way of encouraging sustained delivery. The Activity Officers bring knowledge and understanding of the participants' background and physical limitations. They are integrated into the life of the residential home and understand the practical and resource issues in delivering activities. It was a cost-effective way of encouraging more dance and movement sessions to be provided in a large number of settings. The Activity Officers were confident that they would continue to deliver dance/movement sessions although some barriers were identified. The number of participants (a sign of the success of the project) meant that both Activity Officers needed to be present to deliver the sessions. As they are only there together for one morning a week this is likely to affect the frequency of sessions they can deliver. Support from the centre manager was an important factor in the success of the project enabling staff to take time out for the training. She believed in the value of providing a range of activities and that it was important for residents' quality of life.

Learning

It was found that:

- The structure and training was an effective way of transferring knowledge and skills to enable Activity Officers in a residential home to deliver dance sessions in a creative, imaginative and enthusiastic manner.
- There were clear benefits for the participants who derived pleasure, gentle exercise and the enjoyment of interacting with their fellow residents.
- The particular qualities of dance which differentiate it from other group activities were to do with the creative dimension it brings to both physical movement and social interaction.

- The sessions encouraged individual expression and explored memories, metaphors and sensory experience as well as a creative exploration of movement.
- The training was limited by time and resources and Activity Officers would no doubt benefit from a more in-depth focus on the needs and potential for developing dance movement sessions with their particular participant group.
- A refresher session after six months would provide additional feedback on the benefits and challenges.
- There is evidence to suggest that the programme could be effectively rolled out to other centres where there is support for Activity Officers and adequate time and resources could be provided.

Critical success factors

'The project has achieved a high profile within the County Council and has proved once again that dance can bring lasting benefits to participants from a wide variety of backgrounds. The encouragement and professional support offered to those participating and leading sessions in numerous venues around Dorset has been of the highest order and has encouraged an on-going commitment to developing the work further. The County Council will be actively seeking ways in which individuals - both those who took part in the project and other service users - can be encouraged to take up the huge opportunities offered by such work and how we can make this a sustained and developing programme of engagement for all who would benefit.' (Mike Hoskin, Arts Development Manager, Dorset County Council).

Funding and Resources

The project was funded by: Arts Council England South West, National Lottery, Dorset County Council, Activate, East Dorset Health Gain Group and the Borough of Poole.

Contact details for further information

Activate

7-9 The Little Keep, The Barracks, Bridport Road, DORCHESTER,
Dorset DT1 1SQ

Tel: 01305 260954 Fax: 01305 268752

Email: info@activateperformingarts.org.uk

Web: www.activateperformingarts.org.uk

Information for this Case Study has been taken from:

- The Dance Generations Final Report April 2011. Dorset County Council.
http://activateperformingarts.org.uk/assets/0000/0084/dance_gen_brochure.pdf
- <http://www.idea.gov.uk>