



danceactive

Dance Active is a four day training course delivered by PAN West Midlands on behalf of The Department of Health and DanceXchange in partnership with Youth Dance England. The course is aimed at providing professional dance artists and commissioning health professionals with the knowledge and skills to effectively work together to deliver specific health outcomes through the use of dance.

In response to Youth Dance England's aims to work closely with the health sector, the YDSM arranged a networking event between:

- DanceXchange, The National Dance Agency for Birmingham and the West Midlands
- The Strategic Health Authority West Midlands
- Department of Health West Midlands
- The Physical Activity Network, West Midlands
- Birmingham Children's Hospital

There had been several dance & health projects happening in the West Midlands but provision was patchy. Both dance artists and health professionals saw a real opportunity for dance organisations and the health sector to work together, but dance artists and health professionals were unaware of how to do this effectively.

A three-stage process was agreed for the West Midlands: 1) Raising Awareness of Dance & Health benefits, 2) Training and networking (Dance Active) leading to, 3) Projects commissioned by PCTs.

The Department of Health West Midlands offered strategic funds of 23K to deliver the course and undertake a dance & health conference which was held at Birmingham Hippodrome in 2009. This was the second highest attended conference put on by The Physical Activity Network West Midlands. It raised awareness, generated a wider interest in dance & health work and twice the number of applications expected for the Dance Active training course.

The course outline was developed to cover national and regional strategic health priorities, consider best practice through the use of case studies and develop a clear understanding of the commissioning process from both dance artist and health professional perspectives. The aims of the programme were to deliver training that would provide dance artists with the knowledge, skills and competencies to deliver specific health outcomes through the use of dance and up skill PCT staff in how to effectively commission dance programmes for health and well being.

The programme also included a practical day where dance artists participated in several dance & health related workshops and developed creative tools and dance workshop plans that are appropriate to creatively delivering specific health outcomes.

A half day was also planned specifically for commissioning health professionals, to debate and discuss the use of dance in delivering health outcomes, understand how to select the most appropriate dance artist for their projects and how to work in partnership when developing a project brief.

Finally a networking event was also planned where the newly trained artists and health professional could meet and discuss ideas and future projects.

Course tutors from the NHS, Birmingham Children's Hospital, Laban and national and regional dance agencies were then approached to develop the content and deliver the Dance Active course alongside the following learning outcomes.

- Dance Artists understanding current health sector priorities
- Dance Artists understanding good practice in dance & health
- Dance Artists able to develop creative approaches using dance to address health priorities
- Dance Artists understanding the commissioning process and how to work in partnership with health professionals
- Health professionals understanding good practice in Dance & Health
- Health professionals understanding how to select dance artists and how to work in partnership to deliver projects
- Health professionals able to commission artists to deliver their priorities and targets
- An improved networking, brokering and commissioning process for dance & health projects.

The Dance Active training course ran throughout March 2010 with a total of 15 health professionals and 24 artists being trained. The programme was extremely successful in reaching a large group of regionally based dance artists and skilling them up to work more effectively in health settings. It is clear that the artists attending the course have taken away a great deal from it and that their confidence and knowledge has been increased significantly. It also raised awareness within the health sector of the benefits of dance in relation to their priorities.

"The presentations were full of so much information that is relevant which will help us develop as individual artists. I have found that the health sector terminology is so useful which will help develop proposals to adhere to strategy and policy which will in turn benefit public health and well being." Dance Active Participant

"I have gained a huge amount of insight and understanding about PCTs, how I would go about approaching them, who is the appropriate person to talk to and the language to use." Dance Active Participant

A series of next steps were developed during the final networking day in order to address some of the gaps in dance knowledge identified by the health professionals during their half-day training session. PAN WM and the YSDM will begin to address these. The YSDM is now currently working with regional PCTs to broker dance & health projects for 2011-2011.

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