



Mikaela Jade Photography

IMPACT REPORT 2025

Dear Funders and Supporters,

As we draw to a close for 2025 we wanted to take a moment to say thank you for your continued support of Dance Network Association (DNA). Your investment throughout 2025 has enabled a year of creativity, connection, and meaningful change for communities across Essex and beyond.

With your support, our small but dedicated team delivered in 2025

290 sessions across 30 projects, engaging 5,183 people in person, alongside 1,287 participants online, and working with 496 artists and professionals.

These programmes have mainly supported people living with dementia and Parkinson's, individuals with other long-term conditions, young people experiencing holiday hunger, and adults seeking connection, wellbeing, and creative expression. Across all our work, we have seen friendships grow, confidence return, and moments of joy and belonging flourish.

This year also marked an important period of transition for DNA. As several multi-year funding programmes came to an end, we undertook a thorough organisational review to ensure we remain sustainable, resilient, and future-focused. This included restructuring our team, concluding two staff roles, and developing new freelance-led approaches to project management, delivery, and partnership working. These changes are already strengthening our foundations and positioning us well for the years ahead.

We are deeply grateful for the trust placed in us by new funders, including Parkinson's UK, ACT, Eastlight Community Homes and the Jean & Peter Davey Fund. Their support has enabled new 'Dancing with Dementia' programmes to reach new communities in Essex and continue making a meaningful difference and sustaining our Dancing with Parkinsons' programme. This year, we took part in our first Big Give Christmas Challenge and you helped us raise over £5K! which will go towards all of our Dancing for Joy programmes for adults. Major core funds from Suffolk Community Foundation and the National Lottery to ensure all our work has infrastructure required to deliver these programmes.

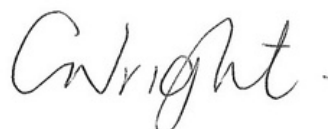
We look forward to sharing more wonderful updates with you in 2026.

In 2026, DNA will expand its Dancing with Dementia programme into Tendring with support from the McCarthy Stone Foundation, increasing access to creative, dementia-friendly activity in a new area of Essex. Alongside programme growth, we will continue to strengthen partnerships, invest in artist development, and enhance evaluation and governance to ensure high-quality delivery and long-term sustainability.

None of this would be possible without your generosity and belief in our mission. Your support has allowed thousands of people to experience improved well-being, creativity, and connection through dance this year.

As we celebrated DNA's 10th anniversary in November 2025, we thank you for being part of our journey so far and look forward to building the next decade of impact together.

With sincere thanks,



Gemma Wright
Chief Executive Officer

HOW YOU HAVE SHAPED US TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2025

All programmes proudly funded & supported by:



MASS DANCE | SWANS TAKE FLIGHT

Mass Dance 2025: Swans Take Flight marked a landmark year for Dance Network Association (DNA), coinciding with our 10th anniversary and Matthew Bourne's New Adventures' (MBNA) 30th anniversary of Swan Lake. Thanks to MBNA's support, this year's programme brought an extraordinary reimagining of Swan Lake to schools and community groups across Barking, Dagenham and Greater Essex, offering thousands of young people and community groups a joyful, high-quality dance experience that many would not otherwise have access to.

This year also demonstrated the strength of partnership working. Dagenham Park School generously hosted teacher training; MBNA provided artistic leadership and production support; Blank Space Creative documented the final performance; and Essex Music Services supplied PA systems customised to the needs of large outdoor dance rehearsals and performances. These relationships enriched the programme's professional quality and ensured that young people experienced dance at its very best.

The programme engaged 11 school groups, 2 nursery settings, and 5 community groups of mature dancers, with DNA directly working with 1,610 participants, including dancers, teachers, volunteers and artists. Collectively, these participants undertook an estimated 16,100 hours of dance activity over the spring and summer terms in preparation for the final performances—an extraordinary testament to the scale, energy and enthusiasm generated by the programme.

Two major performance events celebrated the culmination of the work

Please see the links to the online videos:

[Documentation of the Jim Peters Stadium Performance](#)

[Digital Intergenerational Performance](#)



OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT

What took place?

2014

People reached in total over two Mass Dance Events

- A live Mass Dance performance at Jim Peters Stadium on 4 July 2025,
- A large-scale digital performance on 21 July 2025

How many people?

340

Young People danced Live

1270

Performers of all ages in the digital performance



36

School /community teachers learnt the work and taught it to their groups



404

audience members



16100

Hours of dancing took place

FEEDBACK CAPTURED



73% enjoyed learning the choreography
66% said dancing makes them feel happy
79% felt proud to be part of the programme
62% would like to take part again
91% were first-time participants demonstrating the programme's ongoing ability to attract and inspire new young dancers

(Mass Dance report 2025)

Proudly funded & supported by:

NEW/ADVENTURES

DANCING WITH DEMENTIA

DNA's Dancing with Dementia programme is a compassionate and innovative initiative designed to support individuals living with dementia and their companions and caregivers. These inclusive dance sessions combine dance, music, and connection to create moments of joy, enhance well-being, and stimulate memory and creativity.

The programme is tailored to meet the needs of participants, whether they prefer to engage seated or standing, ensuring accessibility for all abilities. It provides a welcoming, safe space where participants can express themselves freely, connect with others, and enjoy the holistic benefits of dance.

The sessions also support companions/caregivers, offering them a chance to connect, relax, and share meaningful experiences alongside their loved ones. By focusing on creativity, interaction, and community, the programme helps to combat isolation and fosters a sense of belonging for everyone involved. Participants reported improvements in mood, mobility, and social interaction.

We have delivered monthly sessions in Braintree, Halstead, and weekly sessions in Colchester.

Themes such as Tea Dance, Big Band, Swan Lake, and Around the World sparked joy and reminiscence, with measurable improvements in movement, mood, and memory.

Positive outcomes for DNA:

Support from Anglian Community Trust (ACT) has helped spark new conversations and partnerships. A networking group held at the start of our ACT-funded activity created a new relationship between DNA and Colchester Borough Homes and led to the development of 'Winter Warmers', an new online seated dance session and seated dance at Elfreda House both supporting wellbeing and social connection for older adults

Proudly funded & supported by:

Colchester
Programme:

Grove End
Housing



Braintree
Programme:



Braintree
District Council



Jean and Peter
Davey Fund

Thanks also go to Colne View Care Home and Braintree Mews Care Homes for their support of space in kind

OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT COLCHESTER PROGRAMMES

About our weekly classes

82%

over 65 years old

18

new people joined our sessions

8

participants left due to bereavement or personal reasons

Carers + Companions

2

average number of carers joined our sessions

245

number of tea & coffee served (**estimate!)



30

Unique participants on our registers



6

average class size



34

Sessions delivered in Colchester

GOOD NEWS STORY!



Photo: Rachel Cherry

One of our most impactful moments this year came from an older adult participant who usually arrives quiet and withdrawn due to limited mobility and low confidence. Over the weeks, they slowly began to engage more, smiling during warm-ups and joining group sequences with growing ease. After one session, they looked up and said simply: "I feel great it's made me so happy." Their carer later told us this was the most animated and communicative they had been in months, and that the positive effect continued long after the session ended. This small but powerful moment captures how our dance programmes boost wellbeing, connection, and joy for people who often have few other opportunities to express themselves or feel part of a community.

OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT BRAINTREE PROGRAMMES

About our monthly classes

82%

over 65 years old

168 new people joined
our sessions

22 participants left due
to bereavement or
personal reasons

Carers + Companions

3

average number of carers
joined our sessions

425

number of tea & coffee served
(**estimate!)



36

Unique participants on our
registers



19

average class size



20

Sessions delivered across
Braintree + Halstead

"I love dancing to all kinds of music, I'm 82 and I can still dance."

*"I used to dance up to 4 hours a night, I never thought I'd
be dancing again."*



DANCING WITH PARKINSON'S

DNA's Dancing with Parkinson's programme is an essential part of the Dance Network Association's offerings, designed to support individuals living with Parkinson's through dance and social engagement.

These sessions focus on gentle movement and dance, tailored to the physical and cognitive needs of those living with Parkinson's. Participants work on improving mobility, balance, and coordination while enjoying a supportive space for social interaction and emotional well-being. Artists have also incorporated rhythmical and vocal exercises to address common symptoms like reduced vocal projection, helping participants feel more confident using their voices.

Participants reported feeling more energised and stronger after attending, with many noting improvements in mood, movement, and strength. One participant shared how the programme boosted their confidence and energy levels, while others highlighted its positive impact on overall well-being.

Positive outcomes for DNA:

In partnership with the University of Essex, DNA piloted innovative augmented reality (AR) dance games in collaboration with Strolll, receiving overwhelmingly positive responses from participants. Alongside this, we have supported Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy students from the University to explore how our dance programmes benefit people living with Parkinson's. Students have attended our weekly sessions as part of their placement learning, gaining practical insight into creative, movement-based approaches to wellbeing. This collaboration is helping to inform their future professional practice and has the potential to inspire the development of further Dancing for Parkinson's programmes.

"I've noticed I walk more confidently after class — it's changed how I move day-to-day."

Proudly funded and support by:



WIVSOC

OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT

About our classes

81%

over 65 years old

12

new people joined our sessions

3

participants left due to bereavement or personal reasons

Carers + Companions

3

average number of carers joined our sessions each week

376

number of tea & coffee served (**estimate!)



34

Unique participants on our registers



10

average class size



35

Sessions delivered in Wivenhoe

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



Photo: Rachel Cherry

"I always leave these sessions feeling better than when I arrived. The movement is gentle but powerful I've noticed I feel stronger, more coordinated, and more confident in my body, even with existing aches and injuries. What I love most is that there's no pressure to get it 'right'; you're encouraged to adapt the movement in a way that works for you. Beyond the physical benefits, the class gives me energy for the rest of the week and lifts my mood. It's also the sense of community that keeps me coming back it's warm, welcoming, and supportive in a way that's rare to find. Being part of a group where we move, laugh and connect together has made a real difference to my wellbeing".



Photo: Rachel Cherry

GOOD GRADUATE COMPANY

The Good Graduate Company continues to be one of DNA's most impactful programmes this year, blending dance, reminiscence, theatre, music, and social connection to support people living with dementia and their companions/carers. Delivered across two locations Rayleigh and Brentwood the sessions offer a consistent and creative space where participants move, sing, and share memories.

In 2025, the Good Graduate programme reached over 39 participants living with dementia, alongside their carers and companions, with each bespoke block tailored to the abilities and personalities of the group. Artists designed sessions to encourage mobility, coordination, and confidence, while nurturing moments of laughter, reflection, and emotional release.

Originally developed as 'The Good Company' led by Brentwood Borough Council and delivered through a partnership between three main arts organisations - Orchestra's Live, Arts Exchange and Green Candle Dance Company the programme has since evolved, with Dance Network Association now acting as the lead organisation responsible for programme development, delivery, evaluation, and funding. The collaborative values established through this early partnership continue to shape the programme's ethos and approach.

Alongside weekly sessions, DNA provided training for care staff through our Dancing for Joy conference, as well as peer support and mentoring for artists, strengthening skills in creative facilitation, inclusive practice, and dementia awareness.

"its something we can both do together which caters to us both and we both feel valued"

Proudly funded and supported by:

Brentwood
Programme:



Funded by
UK Government



ORCHESTRAS *Live*

Rayleigh
Programme



Castle Point &
Rochford Health and
Wellbeing Board



Essex Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust



OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT

About our classes

87%

over 65 years old

4 new people joined our sessions

4 participants left due to bereavement or personal reasons

Carers + Companions

6

average number of carers joined our sessions each week

526

number of tea & coffee served (**estimate!)



39

Unique participants on our GGC registers



11

average class size



48

Sessions delivered across Rayleigh + Brentwood

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



Photo: Rachel Cherry

“Coming to this session makes a real difference to my week. It’s often the highlight we leave in high spirits, laughing, chatting, and feeling genuinely connected. The music lifts something in you; I’ve seen people who usually move very little suddenly move more freely and with confidence. One week my partner wasn’t keen at all, and now he laughs all the way through and joins in fully. We sing parts of the class to each other at home because it starts the day off well. What I love most is the happiness in the room people stay behind to talk, sit in the sun together, share stories about family and life. It doesn’t just feel like a class; it feels like belonging. We’d come every week if we could”.



Photo: Rachel Cherry

DANCE FOR OLDER ADULTS/ SEATED DANCE FOR ADULTS

DNA's Dance for Older Adults' retitled Seated Dance for Adults in December 2025 is a key part of Dance Network Association's inclusive creative dance offer, designed to support adults who wish or need to dance while seated. The programme provides accessible, creative dance sessions that prioritise mobility, confidence, and social connection in a welcoming community setting.

These sessions focus on gentle, adaptable movement and creative dance, ensuring everyone can take part regardless of physical ability or health condition. Using props to extend range of movement, participants explore dance in ways that support flexibility, coordination, brain function, and memory, while nurturing creativity and self-expression.

Participants reported feeling more mobile, uplifted, and mentally stimulated after attending sessions. Many highlighted the positive impact on both body and mind, as well as the value of having a relaxed, sociable space where they feel included and supported.

Each session lasts between 45–60 minutes and concludes with refreshments, creating opportunities for conversation, connection, and friendship. Carers and loved ones are always welcome, reinforcing a strong sense of community and shared experience.

"I didn't think dance was something I could still do — now it's the highlight of my week."

Proudly funded and supported in kind by:



OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT

About our classes

89%

over 65 years old

6 new people joined our sessions

6 participants left due to bereavement or personal reasons

Positive outcomes

85%

reported improved mood

70%

increased physical confidence or mobility



12

Unique participants on our Seated Dance Class



9

Average class size



32

Sessions delivered in Colchester

"The class is a laugh its great humour and even me trying to do the things your telling us to do. its certainly a good laugh and laughing is the best medicine".



DANCING FOR JOY CONFERENCE

The Dancing for Joy Conference brought together a total of 27 artists, care professionals, and sector partners to explore the role of dance and creativity in supporting the wellbeing of people living with dementia and other long-term conditions. The conference provided a valuable platform for shared learning, practical skill development, and cross-sector connection.

Through practical workshops, discussions, and resources, participants deepened their understanding of inclusive, older adult-aware practice, creative facilitation, and the benefits of movement for physical, emotional, and social wellbeing. The event also strengthened professional networks, supported peer learning, and helped build confidence among practitioners working in care, community, and health settings.

By investing in workforce development and knowledge exchange, the Dancing for Joy Conference contributed to higher-quality creative provision across the sector and will support the sustainability of dance-based wellbeing programmes beyond DNA's own delivery.

"I cannot wait for the next conference this one has been invaluable!"



COFFEE AND CHOREOGRAPHY

Coffee & Choreography is DNA's newest class and concept for 2024/25 was born from the national 'Let's Dance' movement championed by Angela Rippon, which inspired us to create a welcoming, social space that celebrates dance and movement is for everyone.

What began as a self funded pilot has quickly taken off, attracting a growing community of adults who come together each week to move, connect, and share a coffee.

The sessions combine gentle dance with creative expression and conversation, supporting confidence, mobility, and wellbeing in a relaxed, uplifting environment. It's proof that a simple idea dancing, chatting, and sharing joy can create something truly powerful.



10

Unique participants on our register



9

average class size



16

Sessions delivered



65%

ongoing engagement rate from March taster session



HOLIDAY ACTIVITY & FOOD PROGRAMME

DNA organised a holiday programme (HAF) funded by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Easter School (April 2025)

This programme offered children and young people a safe, creative and nourishing space during the school holidays.

Across the Spring 2025 programme, over 20 children took part in four days of dance, creative movement, crafts, music, wellbeing, and nutrition sessions. Each day balanced structured activity with free play and outdoor time, ensuring young people could express themselves while staying active and connected.

Participants' confidence, teamwork, and wellbeing grew throughout the week – culminating in a joyful sharing performance for family and friends. Supported by nutritious meals from BDTP Catering, and wellbeing sessions with Kathryn Peters, the HAF programme once again showcased DNA's commitment to creativity, community and care for every child.



Photo: Rachel Cherry

Proudly funded and supported by:

**Barking &
Dagenham**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Charity Name: Dance Network Association (DNA)

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Registered office: Dance Network Association, Sunspot, Jaywick Sands,
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Megan Gasson

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Gemma Wright CEO/Founder

Fiona Bool Executive Assistant

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