



ANNUAL REPORT

12 MONTH PERIOD
1 SEPTEMBER 2024 - 31 AUGUST 2025

Charity Number 1202883

CONTENTS



Rachel Cherry

PAGE

01 Administration

02 Governance Structure

03 Policies

04 Purpose

05 Executive Summary

06 Financial Summary

07 Staff Structure

08 Key Projects Delivered

14 Our Direct Reach

15 Impact and Outcomes

16 Future Goals and
Acknowledgements

ADMINISTRATION

CHARITY NAME: DANCE NETWORK ASSOCIATION (DNA)

CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: 1202883

REGISTERED OFFICE: DANCE NETWORK ASSOCIATION, SUNSPOT,
JAYWICK SANDS, ESSEX CO15 2JG

TRUSTEES:

ELSA URMSTON CHAIR
LYANN KENNEDY SECRETARY
FRANCES MAYNARD

MANAGEMENT:

GEMMA WRIGHT CEO
KAREN PRATT PROGRAMME MANAGER DANCING FOR JOY JOB
SHARE
STEPHANIE TOWNSEND FREELANCE PROJECT MANAGER
EDUCATION
FIONA BOOL PROGRAMME MANAGER JOB SHARE DANCING FOR
JOY

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS: PETER WATTERS, MCPHERSONS
23 ST LEONARDS ROAD, EAST SUSSEX TN40 1HH

BANKERS: HSBC, 26 HIGH STREET, COLCHESTER CO1 1DQ



Rachel Cherry

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



1. Background

- After eight years as a Community Interest Company, DNA transitioned to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 28th April 2023.
- The transition aims to strengthen DNA's financial stability, broaden its reach, and better serve diverse communities.

2. Governing Document

- DNA operates under the CIO constitution, dated 19th April 2023.
- The constitution outlines the charity's objects, powers, and governance framework.

3. Charity Trustees

- Minimum Requirement: DNA must have at least three Charity Trustees at all times.
- Appointment Process:
 - All trustees (excluding the first set) are appointed through resolutions passed at properly convened trustee meetings.
 - Appointments consider the skills, knowledge, and experience required for effective administration.
- Responsibilities:
 - Trustees meet quarterly to set and review strategic goals.
 - Trustees are responsible for policy-making and implementation.

4. CEO and Daily Management

- Daily operations are managed by the CEO, who works under a 'Conflict of Interest' policy.
- Other trustees do not receive remuneration, benefits, or expenses for their roles.

GOVERNANCE & POLICIES



5. Risk Management

- Trustees are responsible for identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks to ensure the Charity's objectives are achieved sustainably and responsibly.
- Risk is reviewed quarterly during trustee meetings to address financial, operational, reputational, and compliance risks. The CEO ensures that day-to-day activities align with the risk management policies, and any significant risks are promptly reported to the trustees.

6. Induction and Training

- New trustees participate in induction programmes to understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Trustees are encouraged to attend training events provided by organisations such as the National Centre for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).
- Training and resources help trustees remain updated on policy-making, legislative changes, risk management, and best practices.

This governance structure ensures DNA's activities align with its charitable objectives while maintaining transparency, accountability, and effective risk management.

POLICIES

All DNA policies are available at:

<https://www.dancenetworkassociation.org.uk/policies>.

All policies undergo review annually in our Summer or Autumn Board meeting.

PURPOSE

Purpose:

The organisation was founded in 2015 as a Community Interest Company and converted into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) charity number 1202883 registered in England and Wales. The governing document is its constitution, dated 19th April 2023, which sets out the organisation's following charitable objectives: To advance education for the public benefit by the promotion of the art of dance and movement, in particular, but not exclusively, in Essex and its neighbouring counties.

Our vision:

Dance Network Association (DNA) is a dance organisation that enables people to live more connected, joyful, and aspirational lives through dance.

Our mission:

Dancing with DNA provides opportunities for people to improve their confidence and physical wellbeing nurtures creativity and independent thinking and enhances friendships through social interaction.

Our objectives are reviewed annually in our end-of-year meeting. During this time, all management participate in appraisals to contribute to our reflections on our objectives. Budgets and business planning are then refocused on the year ahead and beyond, considering staff, participants, and other public data to ensure we are still working towards the charities objectives.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This has been a year of creativity, compassion, and change for Dance Network Association (DNA).

Between September 2024 and August 2025, we have continued to connect communities through dance, delivering 289 sessions across 29 projects, engaging 5,327 people directly and reaching a further 1,388 participants online and contracting 40 freelance artists for work.

We have celebrated powerful stories of transformation from people living with dementia, Parkinson's, and other conditions; seen friendships blossom; and witnessed renewed confidence through creative movement and connection.

Yet, this has also been a year of transition. Several multi-year funding periods have come to an end, leading us to review and restructure our staffing model to ensure we remain sustainable and future-focused. As part of this, our Dancing for Joy and Education Manager roles concluded in August 2025. We are deeply grateful to Karen Pratt, Fiona Bool, and Steph Townsend for their invaluable contributions. Their creativity, professionalism, and care have shaped DNA's impact immeasurably, and we carry their legacy forward into a new structure designed to strengthen delivery, collaboration, and leadership in the year ahead.

Despite economic pressures on the arts, DNA has remained resilient. With continued support from funders, partners, and our community, we move confidently toward our 10th Anniversary in November 2025, a milestone that will celebrate a decade of movement, connection, and collective joy.

Gemma Wright

Chief Executive Officer, Dance Network Association

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Reporting Period 12 months: 1 September 2024 – 31 August 2025

£165,666

Income

£164,565

Expenditure

£32,994

Committed Project
Costs

£24,143

Expected Income
(debtors)

£37,481

Current Bank
Balance

£1486.89

Reserves

NOTEWORTHY UPDATES

Multi-Year Grant Success: Funding from Eastlight Community Homes, Braintree District Council, and The Jean and Peter Davey Fund (via Essex Community Foundation) supports monthly Dancing with Dementia sessions in Braintree and Halstead.

- Corporate Support: £10,000 donated by Grove End Housing to sustain our creative health programmes.
- McCarthy Stone Foundation: £7,494 awarded to develop Dancing with Dementia Clacton.
- Awards: CEO Gemma Wright named Compassionate Community Champion for Colchester (Jan 2025).
- Publications & Media: Features in Arts & Health Journal, Chelmsford City Radio, and Braintree & Witham Times.



STAFF STRUCTURE

This year, DNA brought in new staffing to make one full time post for the Dancing for Joy Programme Manager role – structure changes started to be looked at from January 2025.

2024-2025 Staffing in place:

- Gemma Wright: CEO (working three days per week)
- Karen Pratt: Dancing for Joy Programme Manager (working two days per week)
- Fiona Bool, Dancing for Joy Programme Manager (working two days per week) (November 2024 – August 2025)
- Steph Townsend: Freelance Project Manager Education and Social Communications Officer (working 1.5 days per week, contract ends 31 August 2025)
- Freelance artists contracted on projects 595 sessions (40 individuals)

Note: Dancing for Joy Programme Manager and Education Manager have both been made redundant or contracts ended 15 August 2025.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS



BESPOKE PROGRAMMES

This year, DNA was commissioned to deliver a range of bespoke creative health programmes designed to meet the unique needs of care providers, local authorities, and educational partners. These tailored projects demonstrate our adaptability as a charity and our ability to co-create meaningful, impactful experiences through dance. Highlights included collaborations with Runwood Care Homes, Care UK, and Anchor Hanover Group, where DNA artists delivered themed reminiscence sessions and staff wellbeing workshops focused on movement for mental health, communication through creativity, and using music to enhance care practice. Each session combined physical warm-ups, gentle choreography, and creative storytelling, leaving staff with practical tools and confidence to continue activities independently.

We also worked in partnership with the University of Essex and Strolll to explore how technology, such as augmented reality, can support balance and coordination for people living with Parkinson's. Additional bespoke commissions with Essex County Council, Namaste Care International, and Orchestras Live provided opportunities to share best practice, deliver artist CPD, and embed creative health principles in new settings.

“You can tell this class is made for us – it fits exactly what we need.”

These commissions continue to strengthen DNA's reputation as a leader in creative health, training, and person-centred dance practice, ensuring that every session – whether in a care home, theatre, or community hall – brings people together through movement, music, and memory.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITY & FOOD PROGRAMME

DNA organised two major holiday programmes (HAF) funded by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham:

Winter School (December 2024)
Easter School (April 2025)

DNA once again partnered and funded by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham to deliver our Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, offering children and young people a safe, creative and nourishing space during the school holidays.

Across the Winter 2024 and Spring 2025 programmes, over 40 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.

MASS DANCE | SWANS TAKE FLIGHT

In partnership with Matthew Bourne's New Adventures, our Mass Dance project united 1,270 young dancers across Essex and London, with over 1,000 audience members engaging through live and online showcases.

This large-scale celebration of dance connected schools, artists, and communities through movement, imagination, and teamwork.

DANCING WITH DEMENTIA

DNA's Dancing with Dementia programme is a compassionate and innovative initiative designed to support individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. These inclusive dance sessions combine movement, 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 therapeutic benefits of dance.

The sessions also support 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.

Our monthly sessions in Braintree, Halstead, and weekly sessions in Colchester reached over 180 regular participants.

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.

“Before I came here, I hadn't been out for two years. Now I love coming – it's the best thing I do!”



Mikaela Jade Photography

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, movement, 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.

With sessions in Wivenhoe and piloted this year in Chelmsford, this programme combines creative choreography, mobility work, and rhythm exercises to support balance, coordination, and mental wellbeing.

We piloted augmented reality (AR) dance games in collaboration with Stroll and University of Essex, with overwhelmingly positive participant response.

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



Rachel Cherry

GOOD GRADUATE COMPANY

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

This year, the GGC programme reached over 46 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.

Alongside the sessions, DNA provided training for care staff and artists, developing skills in creative facilitation, inclusive practice, and dementia awareness. Partnerships with organisations such as Brentwood Borough Council, Rochford District Council, Essex County Council, and independent care homes have been key in sustaining and expanding this work.

The programme's success was reflected in the stories shared – from participants remembering long-forgotten songs and dances, to carers expressing how the sessions strengthened their relationships. GGC continues to embody DNA's belief that everyone deserves the joy and connection of dance, regardless of age or ability.



Rachel Cherry

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 movement for everyone.

What began as a 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.



OUR DIRECT REACH



TOTAL PARTICIPATION

8976

Direct Participants

5327

Online Participants

1388

Providers/staff
present

252

Total
Volunteers

38

Audience
Members

1376

Total Professionals
Involved

595

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

- Adults over 50: 1,919
- Children and young people (6–19): 1,862
- People with lived conditions (dementia/Parkinson's): 694
- Carers/Companions: 524
- Participants with a declared disability: 848
- BAME participants: 178
- Gender balance: 61% female / 37% male / 2% other| undisclosed



Mikaela Jade Photography

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- 92% of participants reported improved mood after sessions
- 81% demonstrated greater confidence or engagement over time
- 70% showed improved coordination or range of movement
- 100% of staff reported better connection with residents after taking part

“Two participants said they’ve become best friends — it brings out good feeling in you.”

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

- Social Media: 3,001 total followers (+4%)
- Newsletter Subscribers: 893 (+42%)
- Email open rate: avg. 50%
- New website subscribers: 563 over the year
- Media coverage: local radio, press, and academic publication features

FUTURE GOALS



DNA aims to achieve the following goals for 2025-2026:

- Launch a new organisational structure to support long-term sustainability.
- Recruit a new board of trustees.
- Host a Creative Health Conference (November 2025) sharing practice and supporting our profile.
- Expand Dancing with Dementia and Good Graduate Company to new localities.
- Celebrate 10 years of dance through our conference and socials.
- Long-term core funding stability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



With heartfelt thanks to our funders, trustees, artists, staff, participants, and volunteers.

We are especially grateful to Lucy Gill at Brentwood Borough Council, National Lottery Awards for All, Essex Community Foundation, Eastlight Community Homes, Braintree District Council, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, Grove End Housing, and Orchestras Live for their belief in our mission.

DNA Contact Information

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