

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

THE DANCE NETWORK ASSOCIATION CIC



Website: www.dancenetworkassociation.org.uk

Office Number: 07490 37 47 17

Instagram and Facebook: [dancenetworkassociation](#)

Twitter: [DanceNetEssex](#)

c/o The Mercury Theatre, Balcerne Gate, Colchester CO1 1PT

THE DANCE NETWORK ASSOCIATION CIC

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

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.



Directors:

Gemma Wright: Chief Executive Officer and Founder

Lyann Kennedy: Operations Director

Paul Convelly: Director

Newly appointed board from 6 August 2021 in the lead up to the CIO change over

Elsa Urmston

Mark Smith and

Gemma Wright

THE NEW REVIEW

From Gemma Wright CEO and Founder of the Dance Network Association

This year has been a real test of our strength due to COVID-19. Staff, unfortunately, had to furlough for the early part of our financial year where very limited activity could take place until we were given a lifeline from the Culture Recovery Grant and Essex Community Foundation in order for us to reopen.

While the recent pandemic has been a difficult period for the organisation, dna remains in a strong position to go forward with confidence thanks to the resilience of its experienced team.

But also, considering the current pandemic, isolation and issues in Care Homes of which we work the most, dna, is well-positioned to deliver key programmes and partner with other health services to meet much-needed gaps in community support.

Due to a going pandemic, the organisation has had to quickly pivot services to online platforms and find other ways to stay connected with our communities, for instance through sending out personal prop bags and follow along DVDs to use at home.

We anticipate that some of these new methods of delivery will continue post-COVID-19 to ensure we carry on leading the dance for health conversation in Essex.

During COVID we had time to really consider our next steps as an organisation, where we want to go, what are our true values and this has cemented a true vision moving out of COVID and beyond.



Dance Network Association (dna) was formed in 2015 to facilitate the gap between community dance delivery and partnership working with professionals in the health sector in the East of England to support our practice. Over the past six years, dna has received various county and district council funding awards in arts and health which has had a positive impact on our geographical reach. We now deliver both within Essex and the wider East of England region.

The organisation has also been nominated nationally in the One Dance UK awards for the People's Choice in 2018 and Gemma Wright nominated as a solo director in 2019 and recently in 2021 for the Dance Advocacy Award.

dna currently operates under a small part time executive team who between them have over 30 years' experience in arts management and are well respected by educational and cultural partners for their specialism and the strategic role in the county. Gemma Wright (CEO) and Lyann Kennedy (Operations Director).

In October 2020 we were able to expand our team coming out of furlough employing Karen Pratt (Dance Development Officer) and a rolling freelance Communications Officer Stephanie Townsend joined us in March 2021; alongside a team of freelance practitioners for specific projects. All our team currently operating in part-time roles our vision is for us all to be offered full-time positions by the end of the next financial year.

The organisation aims to offer high-quality, affordable dance experiences to as many people as possible to help keep people of all ages in the East of England physically and mentally well. This is reflected in our strapline #creatingdanceforall.

“Dance can reduce mental health problems including improving self-esteem, confidence, body image and interpersonal skills. It can be an effective way to tackle social exclusion and engage some of the most vulnerable groups. Dance programmes have worked successfully with young offenders, gypsies and travellers, mental health service users and other vulnerable groups”. (Berkhart and Rhodes, 2012)

We know from scientific research that dance can have very many positive outcomes for people of all ages in the community. Over the past 5 years, DNA has used this information to develop its practice and to connect people to and through participatory dance to benefit both mental and physical well-being.

“Numerous studies emphasise the positive physiological and psychological impacts of physical activity on reducing illness (Allender et al., 2007), disease (Baumann et al., 2002), improving mental wellbeing (Biddle, Fox and Boutcher, 2002) and social interaction (NICE, 2009)”.

The Dance Network Association has built inclusive dance communities and provided access to those most underserved, including people on a low income, older adults, school-aged, people living in rural locations, and more generally people in need of support of physical and mental health and wellbeing. For example, our innovative early year's programme in Barking and Dagenham (areas of multiple deprivation), delivers dance to teachers and families; our Dancing with Parkinson's provides access to movement classes for people with this health issue; our Youth Dance Companies enable those at the start of their dancing careers to develop their talent and perform. Alongside community and participative activities, we help to train the next generation of dance teachers and freelance artists.

Over the next 5 years dna, will move forwards to increase health and well-being through dance in East of England.

As part of the five-year vision, our first significant step is to change our organisational structure from a Community Interest Company (CIC) to a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO). As a CIC, project-funded organisation we are reliant on projects to cover core costs. This change over has begun and in the beginning of this document, we welcome our newly created board. We are hopeful that this board will help us achieve wider growth and the further development of our services. The change will offer us more financial stability, as well as receive charitable donations (to attract Gift Aid).

As part of our vision we will be looking for a more robust financial management cycle and look to the National Lottery and the Arts Council England to fund long-term core support funding which will inevitably help us to enhance our support for project grants from other trusts and foundations and build on our strong strategic position nationally.

As we have already begun this year we will continue to expand our workforce by recruiting new, on-the-ground coordinators in different districts across the county who can connect with their local communities. This will increase our engagement and ultimately the well-being of the people of Essex.

We have expressed in our five-year activity plan that we will focus and engage with one area of Essex county per year, and from year on year develop and build on these relations increasing participation numbers in dance across the whole of the county and moving to represent the East of England as a whole.

dna believes its projects are ambitious and valued, at the forefront of innovation and collaboration, and generate a creative and cultural environment. There is no other organisation such as ours delivering this kind of work in Essex. Essex is a cold spot for dance, although does have a history of operating a county dance organisation Essex Dance and later the merger of Essex and Herts Dance to become DanceDigital. Since 2015 and the closure of the 'county' dance agency, The Dance Network Association filled this provision especially offering those that are older and/or suffer isolation and/or poor health dance experiences.

The organisation offers an array of dance programmes reaching people of all ages and abilities. dna this year alone have connected with people 24022 people across Essex and our neighbouring counties. Which in a year of upheaval and uncertainty should be celebrated!

We are by far the leader of the market share for dance for health and wellbeing delivery in the county.



PROGRAMME 2020/21

DANCE FOR HEALTH

Active Monday's
Dance and Stretch
Collective Identity Project
Dancing with Dementia
Dancing with Parkinson's
Positivi-TEA
RE:Generation Colchester
Take a Seat
Welcome to the World

DANCE FOR THE COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION

Artist Tea
Adult Contemporary
BE:Spoke Schools Projects
Dance Clubs
Essex ActiVate
Learn, Share, MOVE!
Let's Go, TOKYO!
Youth Dance



HIGHLIGHTS IN NARRATIVE

Our projects over 2020/21 had to be about connecting to our participants out in the community as well as serving a new online community. Here's a snapshot of some of the things we have offered:

Props packages and DVDs – As restrictions were slightly lifted in late 2020, we arranged 'Doorstep Dancing'. Two of our freelance artists Karen Pratt and Beth Fisher created a piece of choreography to show our dancers how to make the best use of their props. They have been dancing on our 'dancers' doorsteps to hand out these packages. A little video clip of Doorstep Dancing can be viewed [HERE](#)

New dna staff! Karen Pratt was given further security as we created a post for her as our Dance Development Officer. With thanks to Colchester Voluntary Welfare Grant and Stephanie Townsend has been contracted as our Communications Officer supporting us with our social engagement and marketing 2 days a week for the foreseeable.

Dancing through... lockdown resource book – We created a resource book that includes 3 class plans, winter resilience exercises supporting people with short tasks to stay physical through the colder months, and many helpful hints and tips for those living with ailments or caring for older loved ones. It was sent far and wide and we hope that every GP and Link worker now has access to this to pass on. This is free to download from our website [HERE](#)

Winter Resilience – We have created an online bank of short 3 minute videos for people to keep safe in their environments through the winter. Created initially for older adults to support the prevention of falls in a facemask, we took this idea and thought about everyday tasks and then linked that to a movement/dance task that people could complete. The videos have all been created by Karen Pratt. Each day throughout November 2020 these were released. [See them on our website](#)

Dancing through... lockdown 2.0

Now we were connecting at home with our current dancers we decided to give YouTube a whirl to increase our engagement with the dancing world.

During the second lockdown, two classes were open making it as easy as possible for people to engage. All our classes were delivered live through YouTube. This also meant that for people who have never danced before they can come and have a go in the comfort of their own environments without feeling self-conscious.

We just want people to enjoy dancing and feel its positive benefits on their own well-being.

Dancing through... lockdown 3.0

We missed connecting with people! In January 2021 classes moved onto Zoom and we listened to everyone's feedback and offered 'live' and 'on demand' classes which meant those that couldn't make it to a live session could catch up online. We continued doorstep dancing, delivering prop packages, and sending out our at-home DVD's and written resource books, we've had teacher meet-ups, bespoke schools programmes and had time for lots of connections with our friends.

"We are currently using the book you sent us and are holding twice-weekly exercise sessions. These are all chair based as it is easier for our residents"
from Activities Team at Freda Gunton Lodge Residential Home Colchester

Classes throughout the pandemic have been for all people from dance for early years and young people; to dance for adults: new mums, adults wishing to safely socialise/keep fit, adults living in care homes/shelter housing, adults unable to move about or are disabled, adults living with Parkinson's or Dementia.

"You are doing so much, and it all looks great and your generosity to share all your school materials with your network is amazing. What a joy you are - so creative and such brilliant outreach/connection ideas - well done and thank you for making my day" DNA Subscriber

Let's Go, TOKYO!

To support education and community groups we released all of our past mass dance project resources and made them available on our website: this included Dance Rio, Bard to Bollywood, The Great War Centenary and World Cup Fever. We went full steam ahead post-October to get our mass dance back up and running with a celebration in Summer in the lead up to the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

With thanks to funders London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Essex 2020 and Arts Council England we finally made it to the finish line with our Let's Go, TOKYO! project and celebrated in a virtual style with 1500 dancers from across Essex and Barking and Dagenham. See the final films on our [video library page](#)

School BE:Spoke programmes have still been taking place where possible within schools but otherwise via Zoom. Or for those students struggling with technology films have been created and sent to the school for viewing during curriculum time, lunch times or sent home for viewing.

Dancing out of lockdowns...

So as we started to reach the summer term 2021 some of our classes started to be tested out in the community, many continuing online. We formed a new partnership delivery programme with the Mercury offering dance for young people aged 11 - 19 years in the newly built dance studio. Active Essex approached us to deliver our largest summer activity programme ActiVate as we supported low income families with physical activity programmes and met with over 420 young people and children aged 5-19 years across 64 sessions in Mid and North Essex.

In terms of our own community classes, we hope by the Autumn Season we will be fully back in the community with a new approach offering in-person and online sessions for all.

Launch of a new brand and a new kind of organisation in January 2021 we announced our new branding guidelines along with a new refreshed and considered logo which we hope will support the organisation to 'stand out' as a dance for health organisation. We are also going to be making more use of the shortened 'dna' as people come to understanding our new brand.

In August 2021 we announced that the organisation will be applying for its charitable status to become a Community Incorporated Organisation. This will help with further funding streams from trusts and foundations as the company continues to develop and grow.

Engagement

16 Volunteers

9492 Direct
Participants

24022 people
across Essex and
Barking and
Dagenham have
Danced with us

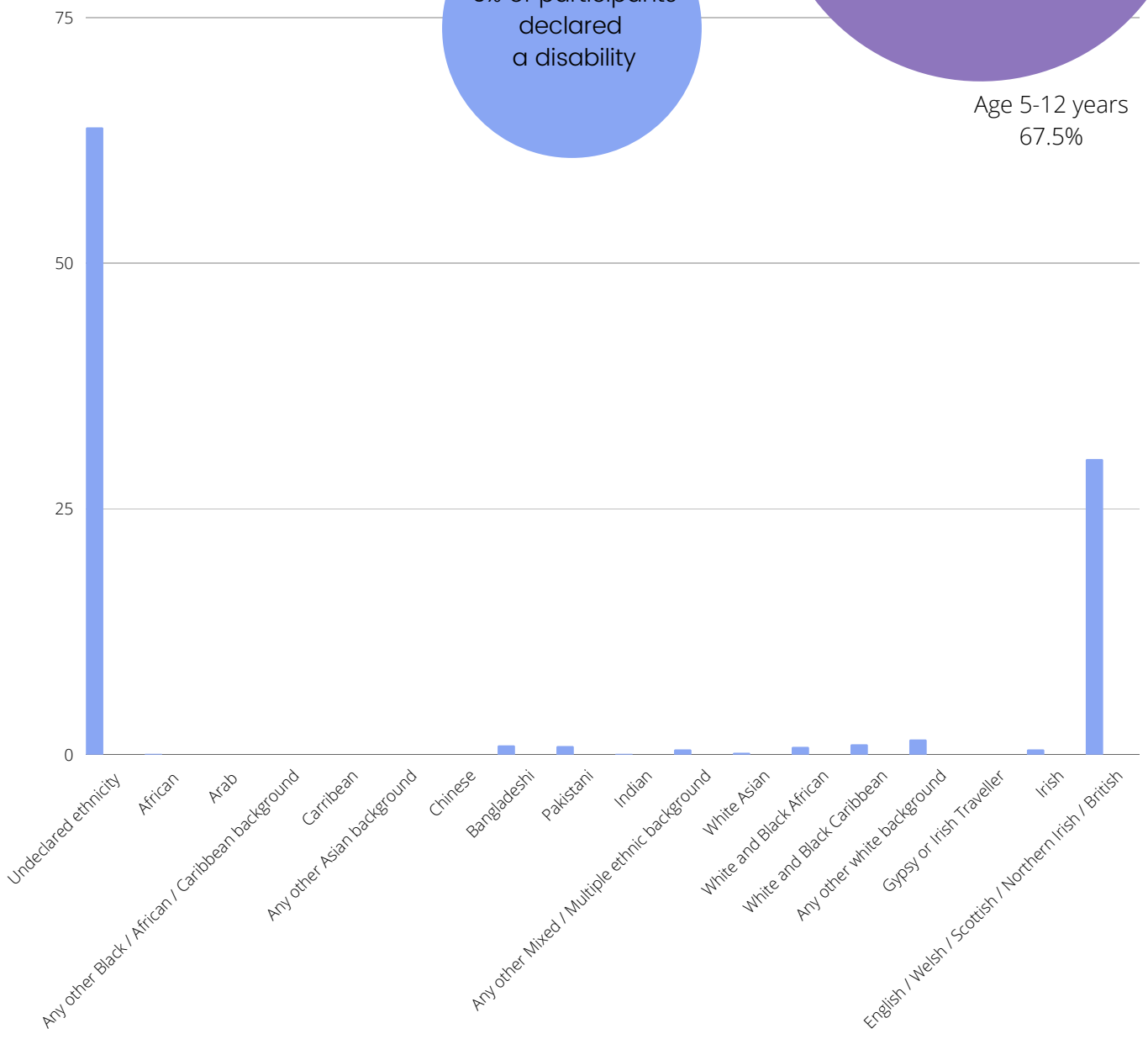
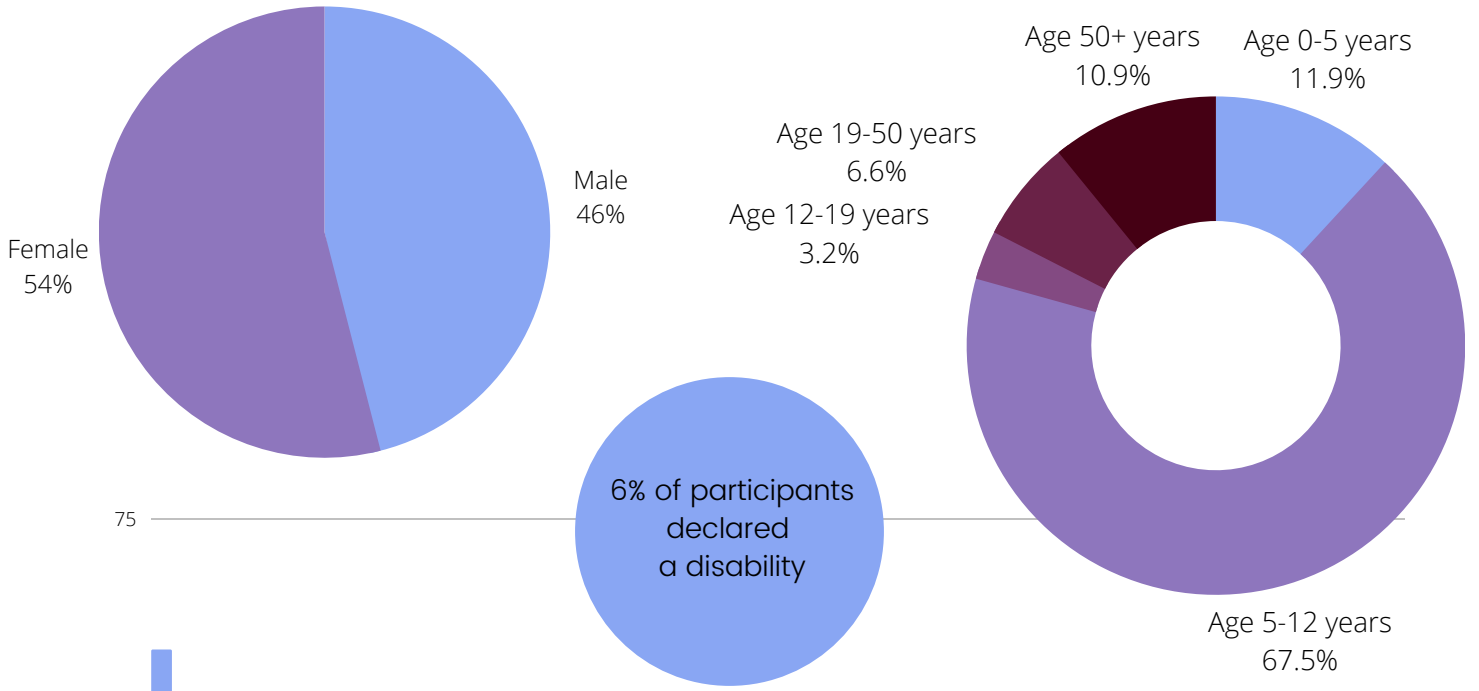
581 Freelance
Deliverers

84 Audience
Members

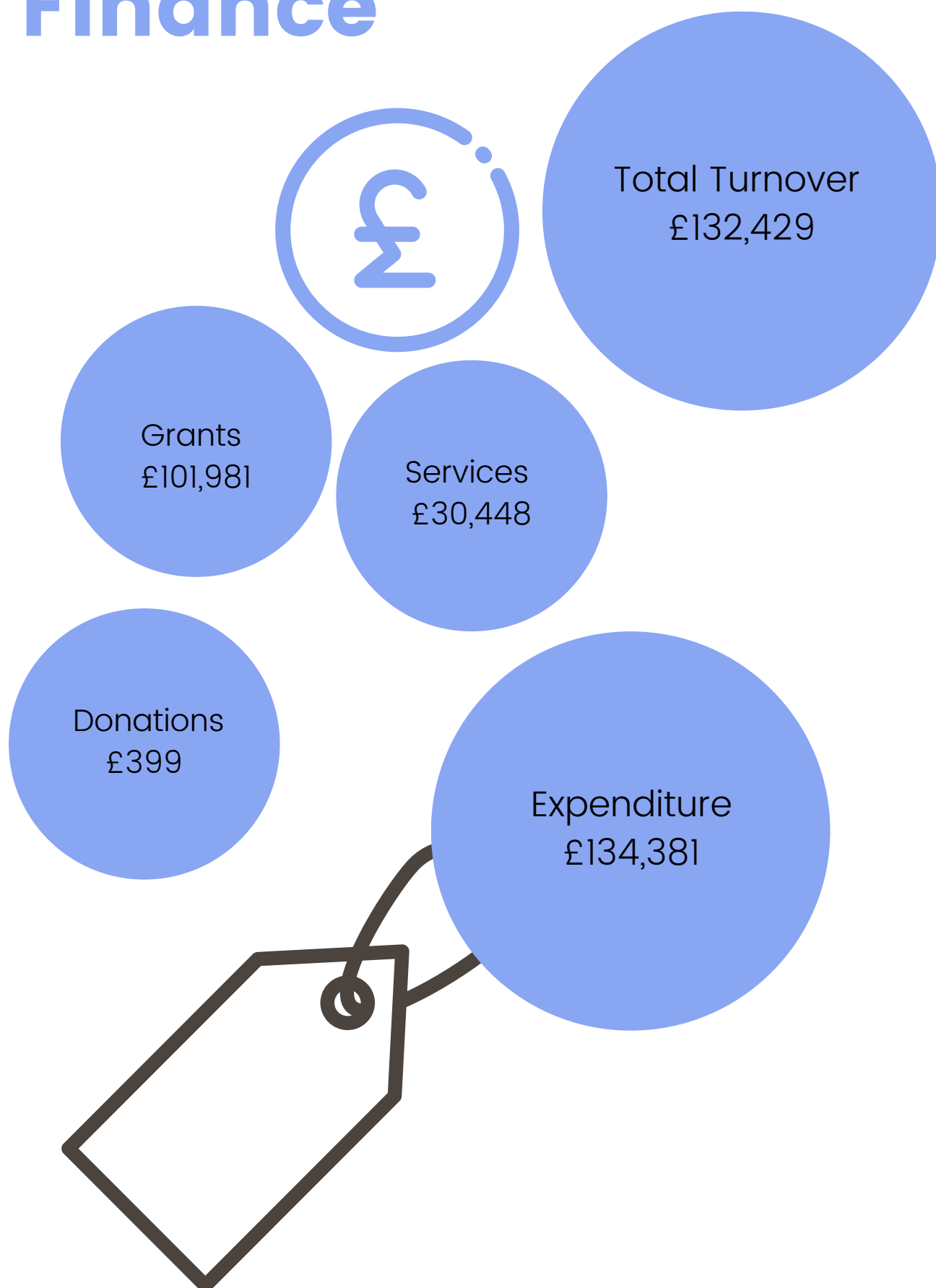
13849 online
engagement via
our website, Vimeo
and You Tube
Channels,
Facebook, Twitter
and Instagram



Engagement Breakdown



Finance



FEEDBACK

Your work brings people the opportunity to feel themselves again, to interact, find self-worth and new relationships. Your work allows people to unlock positive change and improve physical, psychological and social wellbeing, key to happy lives! I know this from witnessing it all first hand and having the opportunity to provide and work amongst it all! For some, it wouldn't be just losing your classes it would be losing a whole part of who they are and what they live for (Emma Meek)

Firstly, thanks for the package, it brought back memories of the great dances we did, using these props. I hope to join you on Zoom meetings, but meantime will endeavour to make use of the CD enclosed. I'm afraid my mobility has deteriorated during this period of enforced inaction, I have tried to keep fit, but without the leadership of one of the lovely and dedicated DNA young ladies and the social interaction with a group, it's hard to keep focus. I do take a walk every day, but that's no fun in the cold weather!

Congratulations on the award! Well deserve, I know you and your team have worked hard to keep DNA alive during this difficult time, keep it up.

Thinking of you all with much fondness.

Frances

From Foxburrow Grange -

"Residents love their 'dancing with dementia' sessions with dna. After some great sessions over Zoom because of coronavirus restrictions, these are now in person and residents have a great time. We love seeing you every week!"

DNA has been brilliant in supporting me in my new adventures into taking dance into care homes.

They've really helped to give me some great ideas and an insight into supporting elderly people that may have restricted or limited movement, giving them a chance to dance.

Lucy Brown dance artist

Absolutely loved the film - thank you all
I adore seeing our young people participating with so much
passion and am also very proud of the staff who have really
had to work at maintaining this programme against many odds
!
Well done all of you for sticking with us all ! A great end of term
Teaching staff from the Let's Go, TOKYO! Project

"I have watched my nan taking part in the online
Zoom classes, I have literally never seen her so
alive! She's like a different woman. The social
element is definitely something she has craved for
so long not just during this year but she was and
always has been very isolated. Its so great to see
her make friendships through dance and
technology!" Granddaughter of an online older adult
participant

Over the past five years, pupils at Valence
Primary School have taken part in the Mass
Dance, and it has been a wonderful activity
for them to be involved in. It has helped the
children to be fit and active, and it has also
enabled them to feel part of a bigger
movement across the LA. The collaboration
with others has been beneficial and a lot of
fun. The wider cultural aspects of the dances
have been exciting, and altogether, it has
been a memorable learning experience'.
Richard November, Headteacher, Valence
Primary School

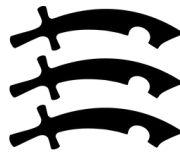
"Margaret, stood and chatted to us briefly
at her doorstep. She said her mobility
had decreased so she wasn't sure how
much she would be able to take part in,
(in terms of the resources we offered)
but was so grateful for our visit." –
Feedback from Dance Artist

SUPPORT

The following organisations have supported DNA to offer all our services in 2020/21



CHANGING 1 MILLION LIVES



Essex County Council

Funded By



**BRENTWOOD
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



Essex
Community
Foundation



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Colchester



Rotary
Club of Brentwood



**Barking &
Dagenham**



Additionally, we have provided services to local schools and received donations from local Councillors, participants and local residents and additional donations through the Essex lottery. Thank you to all.