

Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL) Case Study



Background & Outline



Dance Action Zone Leeds, or DAZL as it is widely known, was originally commissioned in 2000 to reduce health inequalities in adolescent girls from deprived areas of South Leeds where high levels of teenage pregnancy, drug misuse and sedentary lifestyles were an issue. The programme uses community development approaches training local young people and adults as community dance leaders to support and run the dance programmes in their local community. High quality artistic dance projects, holiday provision, competitive dance squads and large-scale performances and celebration events.

DAZL was recognised by the Chief Medical Officer as an innovation in public health in 2002 and won a Health Service Journal Award for reducing health inequalities in 2008. DAZL is currently commissioned by Leeds City Council Public Health and the programme forms part of the Childhood Obesity Strategy implementation plan for Leeds. In 2014 DAZL won the Child Friendly Leeds Award for its contribution to children's lives in the city and 2016 received Outstanding Contribution to Public Health Award. DAZL received Outstanding Contribution to Culture Award at the 2017 Leeds City Council Compassionate City Awards.

Mission & Aims - DAZL starts where children and young people are at, responding to the need of the local communities. By offering fun, relevant and accessible high quality dance opportunities.

DAZL Primary Aim - To improve the mental and physical health of children and young people aged 3 – 19 years, particularly girls, through dance as physical activity in disadvantaged communities of Leeds. **DAZL Secondary Aim** – To reduce health inequalities, improving the health and wellbeing of children, young adults with disabilities up to 25 years, families and the wider community throughout Yorkshire through asset-based community dance and wider dance opportunities.



Benefits of Dance

Dance builds physical fitness and improves coordination, strength and flexibility. Teamwork skills and discipline are developed through the practice needed to master dance routines. Cooperation, trust and sensitivity are developed through creative dance, lifts and partner work. Performing is key to the process and builds confidence, self-worth and a sense of aspiration. For the young people DAZL targets dance can motivate them to live a healthier lifestyle and progress onto further and higher education.

Website: www.dazl.org.uk

The DAZL Model

The DAZL Model - Reducing inequalities and tackling inactivity through asset base community development and dance. Below is a five-stage model underpinning all DAZL's activity!

1. Participation - Engaging inactive children and young people through high quality dance as physical activity

DAZL targets children and young people, in particular girls who lack access to physical activity and are at risk of sedentary lifestyles. DAZL works in the top 10% most deprived Super Output Areas of Leeds with communities that experience the greatest health inequalities in the city. The organisation now employs three staff and a team of community dance leaders and professional artists. The current programme includes:

- Regular after-school and in school curriculum dance sessions in Primary and Secondary Schools,
- Regular inclusive dance sessions in Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres and community settings.
- Extensive Community based dance groups and sessions.
- Half term and intensive holiday programmes to maintain levels of physical activity and healthy eating in the school holidays.
- Many performance opportunities throughout the year including local shows and galas
- Competitive Dance Teams (Sports Dance) and Youth Dance Companies (Artistic Dance work)

The DAZL programme attracts large numbers of young people of all shapes and sizes and has engaged more than 20,000 children and young people since the project began in 2000.



In the past three years DAZL has engaged with 12497 children and young people in regular dance activity. Of these 59% were inactive (defined as doing no more than one/ two hours organised physical activity per week beyond school) which amounts to 7395 children. 79% of the children and young people engaged by DAZL were girls doing a minimum of 12 week dance intervention.

2. Community Leadership - Engaging and empowering local people and communities

DAZL's approach lies in a commitment to training and developing local people to support the delivery of high quality dance programmes in their own communities. This includes volunteering and community dance leadership programmes plus innovative approaches that enable and encourage ownership and entrepreneurship by local young adults and provide sustainable activity.



The Community Youth Dance Leaders accredited course is a key strand of DAZL's work and involves training young people to gain a qualification and then supports them to deliver dance sessions back to their community. As the Community Youth Dance Leaders skills increase then so does their responsibility as appropriate. Over 50 young people have achieved the Community Youth Dance Leaders qualification; all have volunteered or worked for DAZL in some capacity over the last 10 years. 8 of these young people are still working for DAZL today, 2 of which are employed. The current Director, Ian Rodley, also came up through the community dance leader's programme. In 2018, 90% of the organisations staffing team are from the local communities which reflects the ethos of our model and the people DAZL works with.

Local people and families are engaged through volunteering which support DAZL activities, such as fundraising, charity events, chaperones, supporting the various DAZL programs.

Chrisie's Journey



"I got involved myself by joining the DAZL Mums Dance team. I also volunteer for the many community dance sessions, helping with fundraising events and assisting at sessions. I have gained so much not only knowing how proud my girls are of me but also, I feel proud to be a part of something so special. In 2014 I achieved my Community Dance Leaders Level 2 qualification and then went on to gain further qualification in dance, health and wellbeing. I helped deliver and support dance sessions and developed skills in delivering disability dance to groups which is a real passion of mine. In 2017 I gained an employed position at DAZL as Administration and Community Facilitator working with community groups across Leeds. I am so grateful for everything DAZL has given me and can't wait to see what happens next"

Chrissie Emmonds (Parent, Volunteer, DAZL Admin & Community Facilitator)

3. Partnerships - Supporting and delivering the wider health and social care agenda

DAZL works holistically with children and young people around their health and wellbeing and is committed to partnership working approaches:

- DAZL builds strong partnerships with health, education and social care attending multiagency meetings in the locality and signposting young people into services
- The DAZL programme provides an engagement tool for wider health partners enabling them to access hard to reach communities, through the appeal of dance.
- Evidence shows that to achieve lifestyle changes "swapping is more effective than stopping". Moving away from "problem focussed" work DAZL provides positive solution focussed activities for children and families in partnership with other organisations.
- Healthy lifestyle behaviour is embedded in DAZL's policies such as parents are informed to provide water rather than sugary drinks for their children attending classes.
- Dance coaches and leaders are trained around healthy lifestyles and wellbeing to give brief support and advice.
- DAZL engages in health education and promotion, working with public health raising the profile of National Campaigns such as the Change4Life campaign through performances, local events and issue based artistic work.

4. Artistic Development & Progression Support - Developing and nurturing new & existing talent

DAZL continues to invest in local artists and nurture new talent, developing choreographic skills and listening and responding to the voice of local young people. Pathways are also in place to offer progression into vocational dance and artistic dance programmes through partnerships with the dance sector such as the Leeds City of Dance partners and Regional Dance Network. As young people progress through DAZL they experience a wide range of cultural and artistic experiences including diverse dance styles and choreography workshops. DAZL engages with high quality performance opportunities in Leeds and beyond. Exceptional DAZL students access elite training at the Centre for Advanced Training at Northern Ballet and Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD). DAZL also encourages young people to progress onto formal dance vocational training and University encouraging aspirations and feelings of self-worth.



5. Celebrating Communities & Performance Opportunities – Bringing the whole community together and championing positive achievements

Parental involvement supporting celebration events such as dance showcases, local galas, and fundraising is a key feature of DAZL's work. Performing dance is an essential part of the dance experience for most children, just as a football match is to football training. DAZL stages many local and large scale shows and performance opportunities and competition events each year. With over 10000 community members from across the city viewing many events and shows each year. These events bring communities together to celebrate the achievements of children and young people and they provide a positive focus for disadvantaged communities where often the attention is on problems. Championing the achievements of the young people encourages the families to invest not only time but positive engagement in these activities building relationships. This leads to support and volunteering at these events which enables DAZL to grow as an organisation.



DAZL Research – what is the evidence?

DAZL is undergoing research in partnership with Leeds Beckett University, as part of this work we have done some initial pilot projects which also includes mapping the provision and impact of DAZL across the city of Leeds. We hope to develop this work with a large-scale research project which includes a 1 year randomised control trial plus a mixed methods approach looking at all aspects of the DAZL model.

Leeds Beckett University Research on the DAZL programme

by Dr Beccy Watson, Dr Brett Lashua and Dr Pip Trevorrow

Summary of research findings

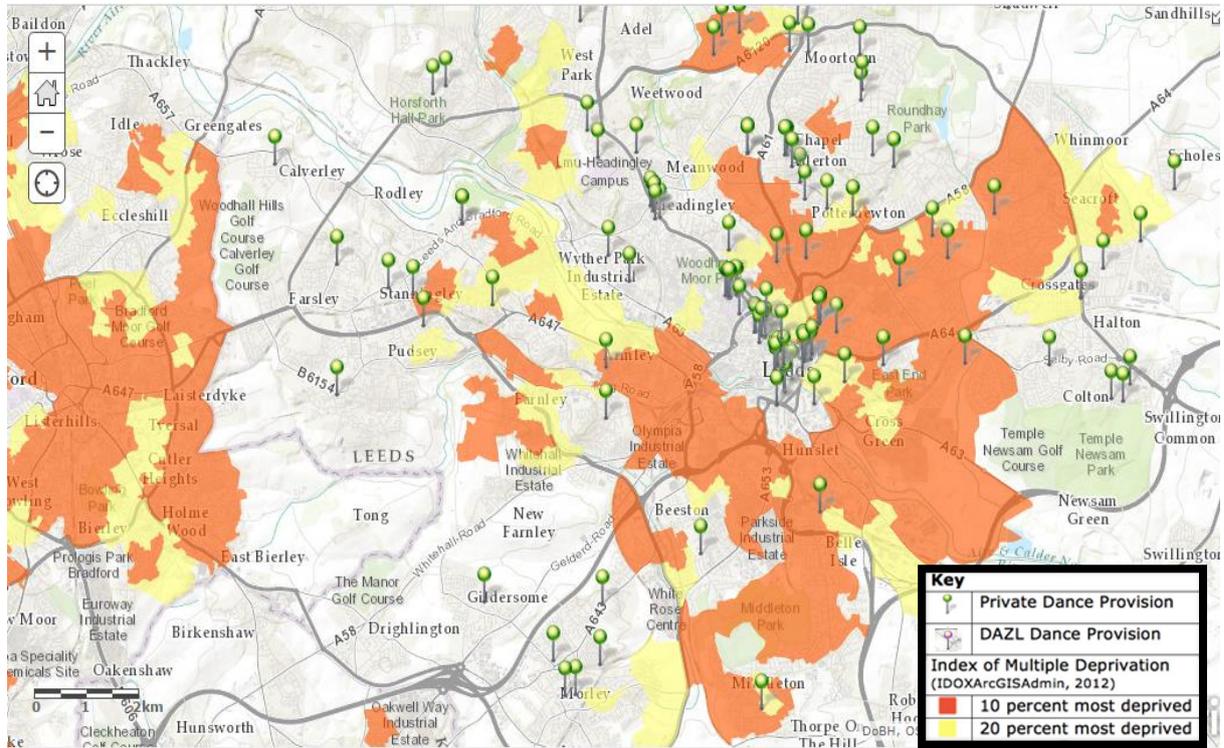
Our preliminary study demonstrates that DAZL does make a positive difference to health and wellbeing for young people from disadvantaged communities in Leeds. It indicates that for the 16 teenage girls in particular dance provided by DAZL is an established, embodied and embedded aspect of their lives. Our data enables us to trace the significance of key aspects of the five features of the DAZL model. The girls participate frequently in physical activity as a feature and consequence of their involvement with DAZL (at least twice a week, often more than this and are generally 'active' outside of DAZL provision). This is evidenced through our mapping and monitoring data as well as through participant perceptions (initial questionnaires, focus groups and observations). Through their engagement in performance projects the girls are recipients and in some cases active 'producers' of health and wellbeing messages that reflect DAZL's partnership ethos (observation data). This links with opportunities for artistic development and progression that the girls engage in (through hand drawn maps and focus group data) and in relation to this some already implicitly embody and enact community leadership (observation and focus group data). These DAZL Diamond and DAZL Goldstar girls are active, dynamic constituents across DAZL's celebrating communities in numerous ways - performances and celebrations (and competitions) are arguably fundamental expressions of DAZL's contribution to wellbeing that is meaningful and sustainable.

Findings on DAZL reducing inequalities in dance provision in Leeds

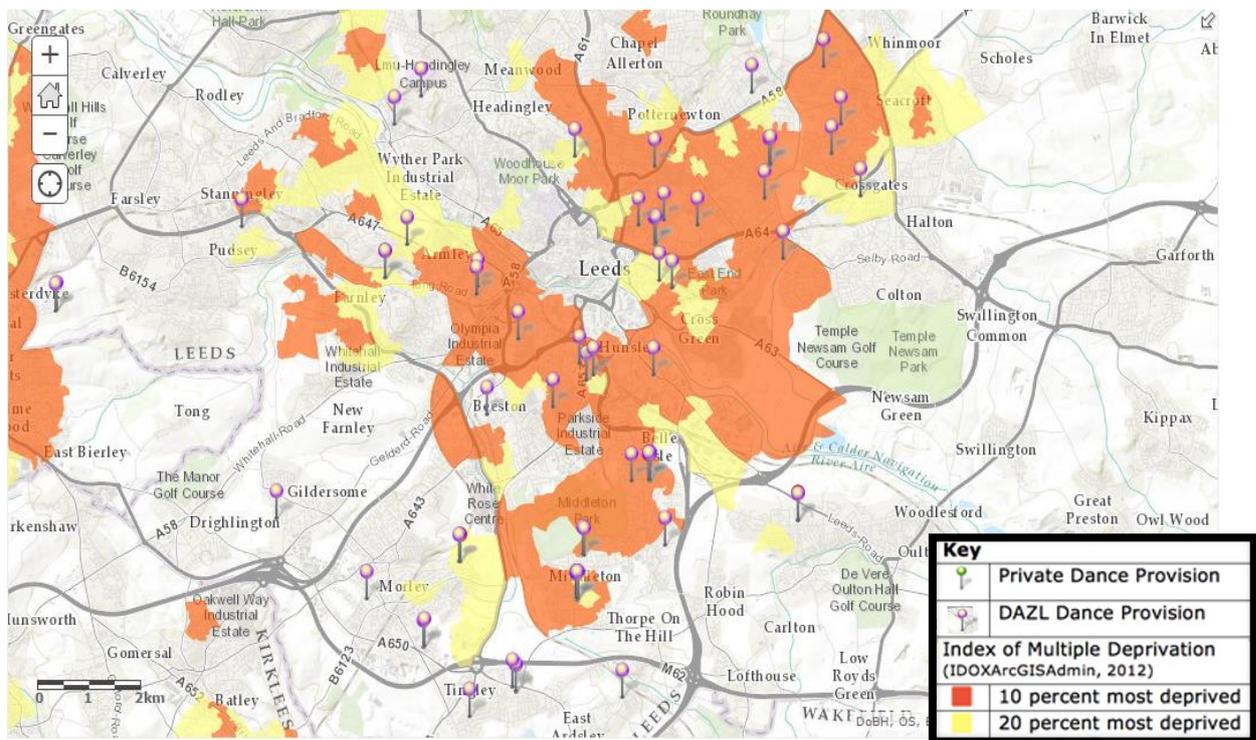
The ArcGIS Online map shows government statistical data for areas of multiple deprivation vis-à-vis the plotting of dance provision. The juxtaposition of these layers offers a compelling illustration of the difference between *where* dance provision is offered and *what kind* of provision (commercial or community) is in place. Private commercial provision is overwhelmingly delivered in less deprived areas of Leeds (primarily north, northwest and west), and DAZL provision is predominantly delivered in the most deprived areas (primarily south, southeast, and east). Evidently, DAZL is highly effective at offering provision in deprived areas and they recruit and retain substantial numbers of participants, evidence of achieving their commitment to participation as a key pillar of the DAZL model.

MAPS

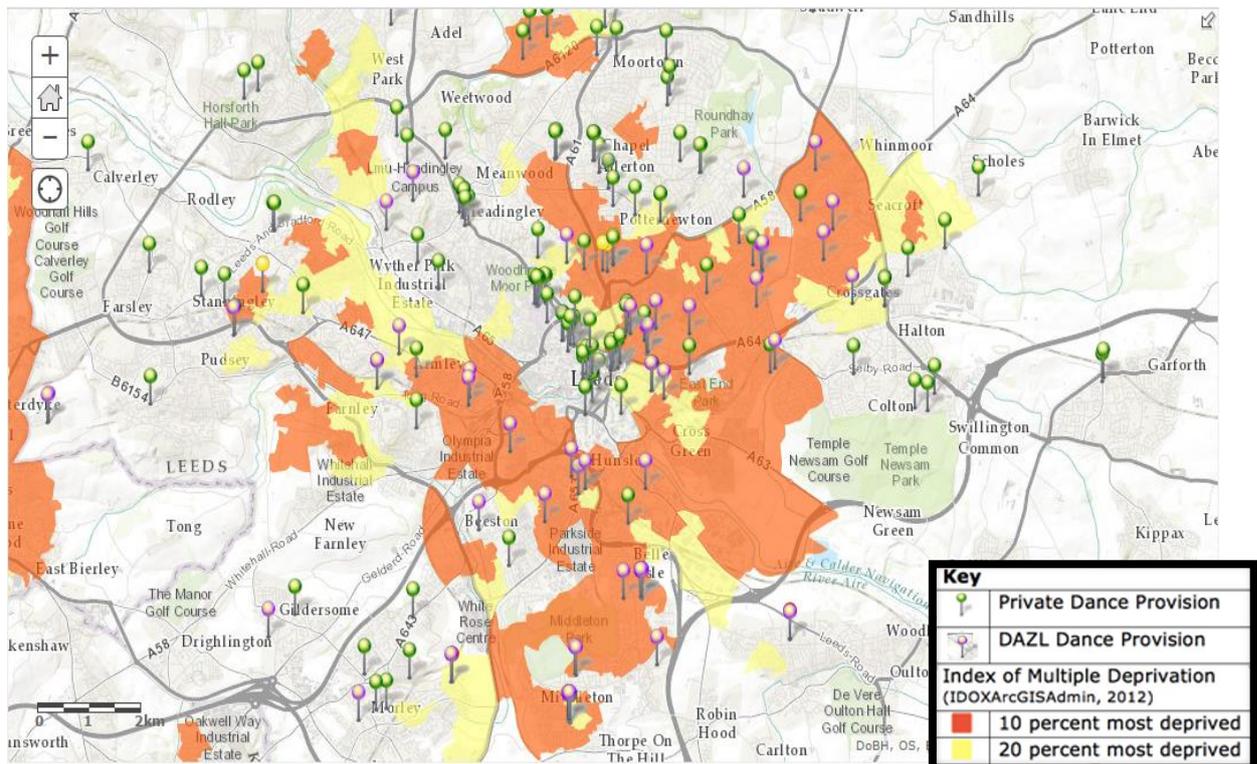
Privet dance provision in Leeds (IMD Areas)



DAZL Provision across Leeds (IMD Areas)



Dance provision in Leeds including DAZL & privet provision (IMD Areas)



Case Studies

Below are four case studies highlighting the impact of the DAZL Model.

Ian Rodley – DAZL Director



I grew up on the Belle Isle Housing Estate in South Leeds and attended the first ever DAZL projects. I started dance when I was 12 years old with Jan Burkhardt, which ignited my interest in DAZL program. I trained through the DAZL Youth Dance Leadership course at 16yrs and was supported by DAZL to set up my own youth dance project, Escape Youth Dance, which ran successfully in the area for 8 years. I then worked for DAZL as Dance Facilitator and whilst in this role I created and founded the Championship winning Cheerdance strand for DAZL. I was also responsible for developing the DAZL Boys which engages boys of all ages in cheerdance and this innovative work gained worldwide recognition. In 2011 I became the Director and have has the opportunity successfully lead the organisation since then. The trust I build up through my dance work has allowed me to engage and support many hard to reach young people. Alongside the dance sessions I provide informal support for DAZL members including signposting them to counselling, sexual health and education advice. As the first person in my family to go to university I have encouraged the DAZL young people and even my own mother into further education!

DAZL Members

All three of the DAZL Community Dance Leaders or Practitioners below come from Inner South Leeds, which is in one of 3% most deprived areas in the UK. They started out as young people attending DAZL sessions and progressed to volunteers and then dance leaders. They are all the first members of their families to attend further or higher education and one has now progressed through the organisation and become an employed member of staff



Stephanie Dobson – (Community Dance Practitioner) *“I started out in DAZL when I was 13 years old, this was the first dance group I got involved with. Back then I was getting into trouble and this resulted in me getting arrested but as dancing became my passion Ian inspired me to do well and succeed in something positive. He pushed me to go to college and take BTEC dance. I then became pregnant at 17 and decided to have a couple years out but DAZL gave me the chance to gain further qualifications as a Youth Dance Leader and that is when I started giving back to my community. I found that teaching at DAZL meant so much to me as I come through the program which then encouraged me to go back and do a degree in dance at university. I am still currently teaching and running the competition dance teams for DAZL at 27 years old. I feel if it wasn't for DAZL I wouldn't be where I am at this present time. To watch the children I inspire, grow and progress not only as dancers but as people inspires me every day to push myself that little bit harder in my day to day practice and training”*



Harvey Pratt (Young Dance Leaders program) - grew up in Belle Isle and started with DAZL as 7-year-old participant in after school dance clubs. DAZL has become a way for him to stay out of trouble with the police and prevent permanent exclusion from school. Harvey now works with DAZL 4 days per week as a mentor/apprentice, his role is now working/ supporting with the DAZL Boys Cheerdance and hip-hop academy and other community groups. Harvey gained a place at Leeds City Collage to study dance and is looking to develop this further and go to university. He is the first person in his family to peruse the arts and education beyond school.



Amy Smith – (Dance Facilitator) *“From being a participant at a DAZL session to delivering sessions for the company I have been able to develop from dancers to my previous role as Dance Leader/ Freelance artist and now to the DAZL Dance Facilitator. DAZL has inspired and driven me to follow a career I would have never have dreamt of pursuing. Having the opportunity to develop young people the way Ian Rodley and Jan Burkhardt inspired me in my first dance class is amazing and extremely rewarding. I have gained my qualifications in dance and have a wonderful career, if I can inspire these young people like DAZL has inspired me then in the next few years we will have lots of young people at collages and university for the first time ever”*