



## Reducing Health Inequalities Through Dance

### Background and Approaches of DAZL

Established in 2000 and funded by the NHS. Initially the project provided an alternative physical activity option for young girls in deprived areas of South Leeds who were not engaging in more traditional sports or school PE. In 2002 DAZL was recognised as an innovation in Public Health by the Chief Medical Officer, In 2004 DAZL became a Registered Charity supported by NHS & Leeds City Council. DAZL's programme of work towards the goals of Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2021 and is particularly focused on the government's Childhood Obesity Strategy - A Plan For Action (2016) and the (2011) Healthy Lives, Healthy People – Tackling Obesity.

Targeting young people who lack access to positive physical activities or who are at risk of sedentary lifestyles. DAZL works within youth culture, starting with what young people enjoy which then manifests itself in popular dance styles. These will continue evolving to reflect trends in youth culture and the differences in the various communities. Through principles of community development to underpin the DAZL model, local need is at the heart of DAZL's work. DAZL attracts large numbers of young people of all shapes and sizes and have involved more than 20,000 young people since the charity began in 2000. A key aspect of this development work lies in a commitment to training local people to deliver dance programmes in their own communities, an innovative approach to sustainability that enables and encourages ownership and entrepreneurship. With the support of the DAZL team local people and artists are enabled to develop on to formal dance vocational training. Parental involvement is a key feature of DAZL's work such as celebration events and dance showcases where audiences of family and friends come to see the performers showcase their work. DAZL engages with local and national social media and social marketing mental and physical health campaigns that mirror and become an extension our of program through digital technologies.

### The DAZL Model - Reducing inequalities and tackling inactivity through asset base community development and dance.

- 1. Participation** – Engaging inactive or children and young people not achieving a healthy weight children through high quality dance as physical activity.
- 2. Community Leadership** – Engaging and empowering local people/ communities.
- 3. Partnerships** – Supporting and delivering the wider health/ social care agenda.
- 4. Artistic Development & Progression Support** – Developing and nurturing new & existing local talent through the arts.
- 5. Celebrating Communities & Performance Opportunities** – bringing the whole community together and championing positive achievements.

### DAZL Aims

**Primary**– 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. **Secondary** – 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 DAZL dance programmes

Engagement in DAZL's activity improves mental, physical health and wellbeing for young people facing the highest inequalities. DAZL's work doesn't focus solely on obesity but on wider health issues, offering fun and positive dance experiences which engage young people, particularly young girls who otherwise opt out of physical activity. Dance builds physical fitness and improves coordination, strength and flexibility. Team work skills are developed through dance exercises, creative games and thematic work. Young people build transferrable skills such as confidence, a sense of self-worth and positive body image. For the young people DAZL targets this activity can be a first step towards a healthier lifestyle. With an emphasis on multiple entry and exit points as well as long term, mass participation, DAZL offers activity that fits into young people's lives, culturally, geographically and structurally. We trap statistics on number of sessions / participants / locality as well as testimonial evidence. Individual strands of work are evaluated on an program by program basis in line with specific aims & objectives. DAZL prides itself on being an innovator in dance and health related work.

### Awards

DAZL's work has been recognised by many people which has resulted in the organisation winning awards. In 2008 DAZL were awarded "Highly Commended" at the Health Service Journal Awards. In 2010 DAZL won "community organisations of the year" at 2010 Community Awards supported by FlyBy.com. In 2014 DAZL won Best Overall Contribution to Child Friendly Leeds at The Child Friendly Leeds Awards and Received an Excellence in Public Health Award 2016. DAZL received the Achievement in Culture Award 2017 at the Leeds City Council Outer South Community Committee Awards. Outstanding Contribution to Culture Award at the 2017 Leeds City Council Compassionate City Awards.

### Five Core Programs

#### DAZL Ignite Program

This is part of an innovative project working in partnership with NHS children's weight management programme - Watch It, funded by Leeds Public Health. The project uses the appeal of dance to attract young people aged 5-12yrs. Many of these young people are not achieving a healthy weight or suffering from health issues predominantly from top NCMP areas. This gives them opportunities to take part in a 4-6 week programme that focuses on positive healthy activities such as dance and healthy eating, raising confidence and self-esteem. (Overweight for this projects is defined as above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile) Young people can then progress onto other dance/physical activity and healthy lifestyle programs and session.

#### DAZL Active 4 Life School Program & DAZL Xplode Community Program

Supported by Leeds City Council – Public Health since 2006, These programs involve after school clubs & community dance/ healthy eating provision for young people 5-19 years. Working in top 10% IMD areas, targeting inactive/ sedentary young people across Leeds and encouraging them to participate in dance as physical activity and performances. DAZL implements after school programmes from 6 – 36 weeks per school each year and a year round community program designed to improve health and wellbeing as well as building relationships with families, encouraging them to be actively involved and support their children throughout. This is supported by working closely with range of partner organisations & professionals.

#### DAZL SILC & Inclusive Dance Program

The Inclusive Dance Program is aimed at delivering dance to young people 5 - 25 years with disabilities & high support needs. Based in the Special Inclusive Learning Centres and community. The aim is to improve the physical and mental health of the participants involved. Learners have overcome shyness, improved concentration & movement memory. The young people's response to cheerdance has been remarkable, they have become more confident through events and performances and sharings to staff & parents.

#### DAZL Intensive program (DAZL Competitive Dance Teams & Youth Companies)

DAZL runs a championship winning Cheerdance / Hip-Hop program. Using community development approaches to deliver work across deprived Leeds bringing different communities together. The DAZL Youth Companies create artistic work which explore health related topics, this work is toured across Leeds and Yorkshire as health education/ promotional work and tied in to social marketing campaigns. The programs are extremely popular attracting over 250+ young people each week and winning major championships/ awards since September 2004. The groups strive to work with young people who would not ordinarily have the opportunity to be involved in this work and or who wish to do a more intensive dance as physical activity program.

#### Youth Dance Leaders (YDL) & Accreditation Program

The YDL program is a key strand of DAZL's work and involves local DAZL young people being trained to deliver and support classes back to their communities. The project has successfully trained local people to run dance groups across Leeds. These groups meet regularly at the various community showcases & events that celebrate their achievements through leadership and dance.

*"Rather than always using direct health-based messages DAZL promotes physical activity and healthy eating in a form that young people and their families at high risk want to share. When DAZL puts on a performance it's an opportunity for families to be proud of their children. Tapping into a parent's desire for their child to have a good time and create a positive family memory will be much more effective in achieving behavior change than telling people to be active for an hour a day."*

*Janice Burberry, Public Health, Leeds City Council*

#### Research

DAZL have worked with Leeds Beckett University and Leeds City Council Public Health Department on various research projects to contribute to the national evidence base concerning community dance and health. Visit the DAZL website research page <http://www.dazl.org.uk/dance-health-research/>.

We have an ambition to undertake more research to show the impact of the DAZL core programs against the core programs which underpins the five stage DAZL model.



[www.youtube.com/dazldiamonds](http://www.youtube.com/dazldiamonds)



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We are proud to be a  
Child Friendly Leeds Ambassador

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