

**AN EVALUATION OF  
LET'S DANCE WITH CHANGE4LIFE**

**The Mass Participation Dance Campaign in the South West during  
2010**

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I would also like to thank all those members of the public who gave of their time. The information these interviews yielded has provided important insights about dance participation and about how mass dance events can contribute to public health.

As a PhD student, I was initially refused ethical approval on the grounds that I knew the participants in my proposed research. While I would now be able to provide a sound rationale for why knowing participants can enhance a study, at the time, it seemed a difficult hurdle to negotiate. One way to appease the ethical committee was to form a research team. From this small group of fellow PhD students I began to understand how a research team approach might provide critical supportive input and a sounding board for developing theories for any study, not just a PhD. I also realised it makes research a much more creative, rewarding and enjoyable when we can share it with a few chosen, knowledgeable, and interested friends. This approach is one I continue to take. Throughout this project I have been fortunate to draw on the skills and expertise of my writing partner and good friend Dr David Carless, as well Dr Cassandra Phoenix and Kandis Ip. I hope the discussions that have been generated from this project inform your own lives and research and I thank each of you for your continued energy and interest in my work.

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Dr Kitrina Douglas  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010 funding was made available within the South West from the Department of Health-Change4life programme to support a mass participation dance campaign which would maximise the potential impact of dance for public health. Through creating effective partnerships each project funded was expected to increase interest and awareness of dance and health as well as leave a legacy to sustain and promote future participation in dance. This evaluation reports of four of these projects.

While the evaluation was not intended to quantify physical activity increases among those who participated in each project it was hoped that the evaluation would in some way identify if and how dance may have influenced or encouraged people to become more active through dance. It was clear by the way children and adults described their involvement in the project that their interest and imagination had been captivated to the extent that, new after school clubs were formed, increases in attendance at extra dance classes were noted, new adult groups were formed, and unprompted dance practice was observed in playgrounds, homes and in open spaces. It seems the dance project had given many people a reason to be physically active. An important lesson we can take from this is that if people have, “*something*” to practice and something to practice “*for*” there is a high probability that their physical activity will be increased – these two factors went hand in hand. The “something to practice” in this case, were dance routines that could be adapted to differing levels of ability, interest, age, preference, multicultural influence, and gender, but, each routine still required a set of, at times, complex moves to be learned and skills were developed by each participant. The something to practice “for” wasn’t *just any event*, but rather, a socially significant event – an event that was part of a national campaign, where the media had a presence, where large numbers of people were encouraged to watch and join in. Perhaps it is pertinent to consider, as we move towards 2012 and the Olympics, that the Olympic games are for only a very small number of highly skilled athletic bodies demonstrating feats that few of us can achieve. In contrast, mass participation dance events, like the ones described here, included large numbers of unskilled bodies that became activated by an event that was for everyone, not just the gifted, not just the able bodied, not just the skilful, and not just the young. While of course no one activity or intervention will engage all groups and individuals, these mass participation events seemed to have filled a unique hole in the physical activity landscape and inspired many people to dance.

### Exmouth Dance Project

- At Exmouth Town Centre on the 22 May children from 11 primary schools performed a Flash Mob Dance routine choreographed by students and lecturers from Exmouth College.
- Spectator counts show 400 people watched the 10am performance, 387 people watched the 12:00 o clock performance and 335 people watched the 2pm performance.
- Change4life was promoted at the event through huge signs, leaflet distribution and all the organisers, volunteers and children wore bright yellow tee shirts emblazoned with change4life. Additionally healthy eating was supported through distributing fruit kebabs to the crowd. Information about the dance tent at Exmouth festival was also given out at this time.
- 21 performances and tasters session were run at the Dance Tent, Exmouth Festival on the 29<sup>th</sup> May. Spectator counts throughout the day saw the numbers rise to over 188 people watching at times with over 200 people joining in taster sessions. Feedback shows taster sessions provided an opportunity to “*try something new*”.

- Questionnaires were completed by 56 people attending the dance tent. 57% had an Exmouth postcode, 30% were male, with 70% of people being aware of the Change4life Campaign. 30% of respondents self identified as “non dancers.” 73% gave “no time” as the reasons for not dancing with 41% reporting they “can’t dance.” Of those who self identified as a dancer, 33% were attending weekly classes more than once a week, 34% said they danced socially and 30% said they danced at home.
- Factors that suggested to parents that their children had enjoyed the dance event were; (a) children talked about dance continually and; (b) children had been practicing at home of their own volition, and without adult supervision.
- Feedback from teachers suggested that the dance event engaged hard to reach pupils, and provided a focus for the school. Due to the enthusiastic way children became involved one child would often teach another at break times, and as one teacher commented, “*there was spontaneous outbreaks of the dance in the playground.*”
- Feedback from children suggests the dance project provided them with an activity that was fun and exciting, was an activity they could participate in with friends, and that the event provided a reason to practice and – importantly – something worth practising for. Because children valued an opportunity to dance in public, they practised. This suggests that the project may have increased the level physical activity of those involved in the project.
- Parents and teachers suggested that the project improved the confidence of many children through the opportunity to perform in public spaces and have large number of people watch.
- Data collected showed that dance is predominantly a female activity
- There was little or no evidence to show the project had impacted inactive adults’ physical activity levels.
- There was little evidence to suggest parents became involved in dancing but they were happy to support and encourage their children to participate.
- The project did not visibly involve individuals with a disability either as participants in the dance, or leading or joining in taster sessions, and there was no evidence of the flash mob being performed by any individual with a physical disability

### **Plymouth Dance Explosion**

- On Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July across Plymouth over 7000 people danced simultaneously in a mass participation dance, this included 42 schools as well as eight community groups, and students.
- At the Town Centre location 163 people watched school children, “Heart Angels”, and female members of Plymouth dance groups performing the routine. The age range of participants at this venue was between 7 and 75 years of age.
- Change4life was promoted through huge flags, balloons, leaflet distribution and all the organisers, volunteers and children wore bright yellow tee shirts emblazoned with change4life message. The dance was also projected on the BBC big screen in the Piazza.

- Heart FM supported the town centre event with a promotional vehicle and their street marketing team the Heart Angels. The radio station also announced the event on news bulletins leading up to and following the event.
- Of the 43 spectators interviewed at the town centre, 65% were aware of the Change4life campaign. Evident in these interviews were insights into how positive health messages can have a negative or debilitating influence on some people's health behaviour, such that some people who are overweight or smoke feel they are stigmatised to the extent that they disengage from health messages.
- Interviews with parents suggested that parents believe their children enjoyed being involved in the project because; (a) children practised the dance at home and; (b) were always happy dancing.
- Feedback from adult participants at the town centre suggested there were two motives for attending the event; (a) a love of dance; (b) to support their dance teacher. All the participants interviewed were female and already members of a dance class.
- On line questionnaires were completed by 4 dance practitioners, all were female, aged between 26-28 and took daily exercise. Themes identified in this data suggested that; (a) being part of a national campaign added significance to the project; (b) practitioners had been excited about the enthusiasm of children; (c) the project attracted and included a wide range of ages, abilities and dance preferences and; (d) the reaction and recognition from teachers and schools was important validation for dance practitioners as it provided confirmation of what they had contributed to the school through the dance project.
- On line questionnaires were completed by 4 female teachers aged between 26 and 54 years of age. For some teachers the dance event provided nothing more than the "wake and shake" that was already running. For others the project had; (a) brought the whole school and wider community together; (b) involved children who are difficult to engage in dance.
- There were three areas where teachers were disappointed with an aspect of the project; (a) the availability of DVD was seen as too late to be useful for some teachers; (b) when the dance teacher who taught the routine was unavailable at the school for the dance event; and (c) poor radio coverage.
- Analysis of school web sites showed eight schools had information on the Dance Explosion in their news letters or websites with one school posting pictures of the day. In general, schools did not promote the achievement of children participating in the dance event as well as they promote achievement in sport and games.
- The three month feedback from schools showed that at schools with a full diary of events, or if the school is already involved in dance, the dance explosion made less of an impact. In contrast, at schools where there was little dance offered, or the physical education teacher was less skilled at teaching dance, the project made a significant impact. Factors identified were; (a) it brought the whole school together; (b) it provided a catalyst to start a dance club and; (c) it engaged hard to reach pupils.
- Feedback from teachers complemented the project team for the DVD which proved to be an effective tool for teachers and highlighted how important it is for teachers to have access to resources which facilitate dance education. The creation of the DVD provided a model that other organisations and dance projects might follow especially with regard to including less skilled children performing in the video.

- The events have brought attention of the Change4life campaign to some individuals who were not previously aware of the campaign but there was little or no evidence to show the project had made an impacted on inactive adults' physical activity levels.
- There was little evidence to show parents had learned the dance or joined in school performances at most schools.

### **Swindon Let's Dance**

- On the Saturday 17th July two 20 minute dance performances took place in Swindon town centre. Over 400 People watched each performance with 80 members of the public joining in a mass participation dance at the end of each performance.
- Video and photographic data collected at the town centre event showed that there were several groups of young people who did not enter the formal dance area but still danced along with the music.
- Change4life was promoted through flags and signs, balloons, leaflet distribution and all the organisers, volunteers and children wore bright yellow tee shirts emblazoned with change4life. The Swindon Change4life road show was also on site and the Healthy Schools officer addressed the audience linking the performances to the Change4life campaign.
- Five dance groups performed, these were; Crowdys Hill School (a secondary, special school), Underground (a dance group from a local youth centre), Drove Primary School (a multicultural school), Hot Steppers (a community dance group) and Caribbean Funk (an adult dance class with participants ranging in age from 20 years of age to 70+ years of age).
- Prior to the performance a rehearsal was held at Swindon dance to allow all groups to practise. 86 performers and 26 helpers/volunteer/teachers attended the practice.
- The drums, music, seating, big screen, media coverage and large crowd contributed to making the event a special occasion both for spectators as well as participants. Feedback from spectators suggested that many people had heard the drums and had come to investigate. Others had come to support friends, parents, children, the school or just been drawn in by the spectacle.
- The performance successfully engaged people from across the community in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, ability and skill level.
- 31 questionnaires were completed by members of the public during the interval, of these 29% were male, all respondents had Swindon post codes, 52% were aware of the Change4life campaign. Of those self identified as a non-dancer, "no time" was the most frequently cited reason for not dancing given by 38%. Of those who self identified as a dancer, 4% were taking weekly classes, 54% danced socially and 42% said they danced at home.
- Themes identified in the data relating to why the performance was meaningful to participants included; (a) it gave participants something to aim for; (b) that the artists teaching had taken a person centred approach which allowed children to be creative, autonomous, show feelings, have input into the dance style, and input into choice of music; (c) the ethos was inclusive making it possible for children from the special school to mix with and perform alongside children from other schools and dance clubs, as well bringing together dancers in their 70's performing alongside children as young as 7; (d) the way the sessions had been run had allowed participants to achieve success which increased confidence.

- 62 people joined in “taster sessions” of Caribbean, Jazz or Street dancing following the town centre performances. Of these, 35 were adults and 27 were children.
- Analysis of the data revealed that: (a) children attending the taster session received a high degree of parental support; (b) that proactive parents were enabling their children to make the most of “free” sessions; (c) many parents believe dance is a children’s activity; (d) reasons parents gave for not dancing was that they believe they have little time or can’t dance.

### **Bridgwater Dance Event**

- On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October 12 Dance groups showcased their work on the main stage at Blake Park in the centre of Bridgwater. Between 140 and 385 people were watching at the main stage at any one time.
- 500 adults and children joined in a final GumBoot Dance that had been performed by children from 5 primary schools in the penultimate performance.
- Taster sessions were held in two areas of the park, to the right of the main stage a street running team gave exhibitions and offered taster sessions. To the left of the main stage a second area provided Rock’n’Roll, Samba, Street dance, Cerlobeat taster sessions and a workshop given by Stopgap, (a contemporary dance company consisting of dancers with and without disabilities).
- Over 100 people joined in taster session which included individuals with special needs and able-bodied/disabled individuals.
- Feedback from participants suggested the taster sessions were fun and provided two things; (a) an opportunity to try dance styles that were new; (b) it prompted people to get back to dancing after letting the activity go years earlier.
- Feedback suggested that many people saw this as an inspirational day, both personally as well as for the town of Bridgwater.
- Interview data suggested that for some adults, it would be too emotionally challenging to attend dance classes because of the way other people respond to individuals who are overweight.
- Change4life was promoted through flags and signs, balloons, leaflet distribution and all the organisers, volunteers and children wore bright yellow tee shirts emblazoned with change4life. The Swindon Change4life road show was also on site with an information tent and a compere provided links between the performances and the change4life campaign and interviewed some of the participants.
- Dance classes in the local area were promoted at a number of tents and exhibition stands around the periphery of the park.
- Interviews with children in the week before the town centre performance revealed that children; (a) found the performance exciting; (b) that the dance event allowed children some autonomy over where, when and how they practised; (c) the event provided an activity that was valued.
- Data collected at schools showed that; (a) many boys do not want to dance and resist attempts to encourage them; (b) friendships can both *encourage* as well as *discourage* participation in dance.
- Several fathers we spoke to after the Gumboot dance said they had only joined in the dance *for* a child. Many also said their children had not been involved in dancing prior to the event but, such was their children’s passion and interest in dance they would now arrange participation for their child in regular dance classes.

- Interviews with Bridgwater College students revealed students valued the opportunity to work with children in schools. Data collected also showed that the health message associated with the lets dance with Change4life made the event and work seem more important for students.
- For teachers, the project had made an important contribution in three ways; (a) the project had brought together the whole school; (b) it motivated some children, who often disengage from sport and games, to become enthusiastically involved; and (c) it provided a catalyst for children to teach and learn from each other.

## **Overarching Legacy**

- At the completion of the project there is a better understanding between project partners of how and what each partner can contribute to mass participation dance events. The impetuious created through partnerships working now means those involved in the project are keen to build on “Let’s dance with Change4life” through established annual events and exploring additional ways that partnerships might support people to become more active through dance.
- Coverage in local papers, radio and television has brought attention to dance across the south west. This coverage makes an important contribution to raising the profile of dance, dance practitioners, and dance classes as well as making more obvious how dance contributes to physical activity and to health.
- New dance classes and clubs have been established since the completion of the project and some classes or clubs initiated for the project are being continued.
- More visible links have been established to signpost people interested in dance to classes, clubs or groups.
- School databases have been updated and teachers involved with the project have been identified. The project has created an interest in INSET dance days in both primary and secondary schools, and there is now some dance teacher training /CPD for school teachers to support their use of dance. There have also been improvements and additions to current dance and health initiatives within schools.
- For artists, dance teachers and practitioners involvement in the project has been an educational process by; (a) bringing greater awareness and understanding about how dance can help people attain the recommended levels of physical activity and (b); equipping practitioners to deliver dance projects that support healthy lifestyles.
- Plans are being considered to support individuals who attain the Dance Leaders Award.
- Due in no small part to the way the dance practitioners interacted with schools, children and teachers, there is now a great deal of good will between those involved in the project and local schools which should facilitate future projects.
- Many children have been introduced to an activity which they seem to be passionate about. As a result, many have become more physically active through attending organised sessions as well as through spontaneous dancing.

## DISCUSSION

The following highlights major themes in the data across the projects.

### **Evidence for increasing children's physical activity**

- *Feedback from parents* suggested that children were practicing the routine at home, often teaching the routine to siblings, inviting friends round to practice and finding outdoor spaces to practice in. This was outside school time, and without parental encouragement, coercion or supervision. Many parents also reported giving in to “badgering” by their children and will now enrol them in a dance class.
- *Interviews with children* suggested children very much enjoyed practicing and performing the dance routine. Many children described how they arranged to meet friends to practice some downloading the music from the internet on to computers or mobile phones. In this regard the project seems to have allowed children to take a degree of control and autonomy over their physical activity which some child developmental specialists suggest is important but often missing element in contemporary sport and games where there are high levels of adult supervision, rules and regulations.
- *Feedback from teachers* revealed the project had engaged some children who do not usually get involved with sport, physical activity or after school clubs. Teachers also reported a noticeable difference in physical fitness levels with some children who were unable to do 10 minutes dance at the start of the project now able to dance for the whole session.

### **Evidence for increasing the physical activity of adults**

- There were two adult groups for whom project may have increased physical activity levels; (a) people who already dance or take a dance class often wanted to try new, additional or different classes and as a result of enrolling in additional classes are increasing their physical activity; (b) some individuals, for whom children, work or other responsibilities had curtailed their free time during an earlier life phase, have been reintroduced to dance and have re-engaged with an enjoyed activity.

### **Evidence for increasing awareness of Change4life**

- Many people watching the dance had not planned to attend the event and some people had not heard of Change4life – these individuals have now witnessed the events described in this report. Feedback showed the loud music, colourful tee shirts, banners, balloons, and signs peaked people's curiosity such that they were motivated to investigate what was happening. We are reminded here that some peoples' lives are not always scheduled and planned, but, that serendipity plays a part. The dance events therefore seem to have played an important part in promoting Change4life and dance for health to those for whom other promotional strategies and advertising campaigns had failed to reach. It seems therefore that public events remain an important way of promoting particular messages to the general public.

### **Reasons people gave for not dancing**

- *Already Active*: Perhaps the most obvious reason and one of least concern in terms of health, were children and adults who were already involved in other types of physical activity and sport.

- *No Time*: Many parents with young children find work, organising children and managing the home fills all the available time within their day. Several mothers we interviewed suggested that while they believe that being more physically active would benefit their own health, during a particular phase of their life, life has to be moulded to the needs of their children, regardless of the personal consequences. Additional pressures to be more active, therefore, may only increase the guilt, tensions and frustration these individuals already feel being inactive.
- *Can't dance*: Many people reported that they “could not dance.” Such a stance we believe reflects a perception that in order to dance a person needs to have a degree of skill or competence. Our interest with this type of individual is *where* and *how* did this perception arise? Given that even in the playground some children also said they “couldn't dance” there is much that needs to be done by the exercise practitioner or health promoters to break down this fundamental barrier to dance participation. It seems that saying “*we are all in the same boat*” or “*just do it*” are not effective strategies to help these individuals participate.
- *Low self esteem/body image*: Negative body image, and not wanting to feel guilty about being “fat” among other slimmer exercisers were issues some people described which prohibited participation in any exercise class, not just dance.
- *Dance is for kids*: Many parents and adults saw the campaign as targeting children and also perceived dance to be a children's activity: Parents were happy to support their children, but in general did not want to participate themselves. This choice was not because parents don't want to dance, per se, but rather, “dance” doesn't seem relevant to their lives/identity. Given that there are huge numbers of parents sitting and watching children participate every day in dance classes around the country there seems to be an ideal opportunity for the creative and aware dance practitioner to get parents moving.

### **Dance & gender**

- Findings suggest that dance is still perceived by many people to be a *female activity*. We also noted some comments to suggest that activities such as playing football remain a *male domain*, with the use of “Tom boy” still being used to describe a girl who plays football.

### **Evidence of inclusion**

- It is perhaps an impossible task to include every excluded group within one project, the following therefore summarises how different events met their aim to be inclusive; (a) older and younger children danced together at schools, in playgrounds, school clubs and at home at all projects; (b) the DVD produced by Plymouth included the not so skilled as well as skilled dancers; (c) at the Piazza in Plymouth people aged from 7 to 70 danced together and at Swindon one adult dance group performing included women in their seventies; (d) special schools were included at Plymouth, Swindon and Bridgwater; (e) dance leaders with a disability lead taster sessions at Bridgwater; (f) schools from areas where health inequalities are high were included at Swindon; (g) children from a special school practiced and performed *with* all the other groups at Swindon.

### **The benefits of participating**

- The following summarises the benefits of participation; (a) increase in confidence - mentioned by teachers and parents when they described children's behaviour and by adults reflecting on their own behaviour; (b) increase in self (body) awareness - was mentioned by parents and teachers talking about children's movement; (c) recognition - was mentioned by dance practitioners talking about being involved in a national campaign and children talking about being watched by crowds in public spaces; (d) increase in self esteem - mentioned by children when they spoke about learning new moves, and by teachers talking about children who find curriculum subjects difficult increasing their self esteem through learning and then teaching and helping other students; (e) contributing to health of young people - mentioned by college students; (f) motivation – mentioned by teachers talking about wanting to start new school clubs, take classes, attend INSET, facilitate dance projects and performances.

### **Motivational orientation**

- It was clear from the data that there were a variety of things which motivate people to dance; the music, the event, being part of something, learning new moves, getting fit, parties and alcohol were all factors. However, one theme evident in the data that strongly supports other research and is important for health promoters to take on board is what we call a *relational orientation*<sup>1</sup>. A relational orientation describes actions and behaviour which are carried out to be *with* or *for* other people as opposed to for the self. Relational actions identified in the dance projects were; (a) fathers joining in dance *for* their children; (b) children dancing to be *with* their friends; (c) mothers giving up their physical activity *for* children and; (d) children not participating because a friend would not join in. Much could be written about this issue which is beyond the scope of this report, however, at the very least we feel it is important to reiterate the centrality of relationships in many people's lives such that relationships influence human action as well as inaction. Health promotions which only target self improvement and an individual's own health are likely to be ineffective with large portions of our society because many of us are oriented to "others" not "self."

### **Final reflections**

- Throughout the evaluation process we have had the pleasure of observing and interviewing a variety of dance practitioners. Their perspectives, philosophies, ethics, observations and insights, however, have not been tapped in this evaluation as the focus was the dance *events*, not *the practitioner*. It was obvious, however, that an important factor in these projects' success was the way dance was taught. We hope in the months that follow the publication of the report that there will be an opportunity to explore the input of dance practitioners to ensure key lessons are learned about the delivery of dance in both school and community settings. We believe this information will be useful not only to those who teach or promote dance but could also provide valuable insights to practitioners who teach sport and physical activity in community and school settings.

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<sup>1</sup>For more on Relational Orientation see; Carless, D and Douglas, K. (2010). *Sport and Physical Activity for mental health*. Wiley- Blackwell.

Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2009). Abandoning the performance narrative: Two women's stories of transition from professional golf. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. 21(2), 213-230.

Douglas, K. (2009). Storying my self: Negotiating a relational identity in professional sport. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*. 1(2), 176-190.

Gilligan, C., 1993. *In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been greater recognition that dance, as a form of physical activity, has enormous potential to engage large numbers of individuals and groups for whom sport or other types of physical activity promotion have been ineffective.

It is not insignificant that the systematic review of the Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games found that the 2012 Games (or any major sports event or sport franchise) “is not a magic bullet to raise participation in physical activity and sport, or to encourage positive health behaviours”<sup>2</sup>. The authors of the report also reaffirmed that, “what inspires some may have the opposite effect on others” and that “the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games should be promoted as a four year festival of community participation events rather than an elite sport competition.” This last point should be seen as encouraging to those who support and promote dance through festivals and community events.

While dance may have only recently figured on Sport England’s radar as a type of physical activity with mass appeal those who are passionate about dancing have remained enthusiastic regardless of the level of funding or recognition. However, in recent years dance organisations have begun to vociferously publicise the unique qualities that dance offers to improve health and physical activity levels.

It is against this backdrop that funding was made available within the South West from the Department of Health-Change4life programme to support a mass participation dance campaign to maximise their potential impact for public health.

There were three ways funding was seen as important,

- (a) To initiate projects that would bring organisations together with the aim of creating effective partnerships
- (b) To increase public and media interest and awareness of dance and health through creating mass participation events
- (c) To leave a legacy to sustain and promote future participation in dance.

In the South West a variety of agencies and organisations bid for funding in order to create a mass participation event. This evaluation reports on the four main projects.

## 2. AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

Each of the projects that received support outlined their aims in an initial bid to secure funding. The first purpose of this evaluation therefore is to provide a lens through which to assess whether each project has met these aims. Additionally, in order to facilitate future work the data collected was analysed to explore trends, processes, and other issues that influenced participation alongside the feasibility of different strategies and approaches. This information will provide a better understanding of what strategies are effective and why.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Health. (2009). *A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*. London: HMSO. Crown Copyright.

And also - Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2002). *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government’s sport and physical activity objectives*. London: Strategy Unit. Crown Copyright.

Department of Health (2004). *At Least Five a Week: A Report from the Chief Medical Officer*. London: HMSO. Crown Copyright.

### **3. DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS METHODS**

When applying for funding each project described in this report took a slightly different approach or emphasis. In order to respond to these differences it was important the data collection methods remained flexible and responsive recognising that each project team had invested a considerable amount of time and energy into their own project.

On May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 the lead evaluator contacted all project team leaders requesting a meeting in order to discuss the evaluation process. Some of the project teams replied immediately, sent invitations to join in dance sessions to observe their work first hand, sent invitations to meet students, to attend practices or rehearsals and to meet artists or teachers. Other projects did not. For example, the Exmouth project team felt that as contact was initiated only one week before the date of the dance event that it was too late to invite the evaluator to meet practitioners prior to the event. As it has been our intention to explore and support the work of the project team we have used these types of responses to help understand each project and the pressures each were working under. At times when there has been less communication we have learned about the pressures placed on some project leads. We have been committed to ensure that if there has been less data available at some projects via one data collection method, we have tried other ways of collecting data. Any research project, however, is likely to uncover some issues that may appear negative on first reading, and knowing how passionately each team has worked, we feel some issues mentioned here may be disappointing. It has been our aim when we have observed problematic issues to focus on the lessons that can be learned in order to improve dance provision, projects and partnership working in the future.

Table 1 (page 15) shows the types of data that was collected at each event and provides a point of comparison across events. As will be described in following sections, observational, photographic, video, interview and web based research strategies were used. The purpose of taking a multi-type strategy was to support our desire to understand the complexity of each project more fully.

As each project is situated within the larger “lets dance with change4life” and is also part of the “Change4life” campaign, a number similar questions have been asked via interviews or questionnaire across projects. For example, at each event we tried to explore if members of the public were aware of the change4life campaign, we looked to understand how children’s lives and schools had been impacted by the dance events and we looked to explore why people were not participating in dance as well as any form of physical activity. In this way we hope the findings contribute to and inform future dance project or interventions. Cognizant that; (a) partnership working; (b) mass participation dance and; (c) a planned legacy were integral to each project, data was collected where possible that shed light on each of these.

Typical social science analysis methods were used to explore the data, such as identifying themes in the data, linking themes with theoretical constructs and aims of the project, verifying emergent findings via multiple sources of data.

### **4. HOW THE REPORT IS ORGANISED**

Between May and October 2010 four funded mass participation dance events took place in the South West of England. In what follows each project is discussed independently in chronological order. After presenting this information the final section provides insight into some themes that have been evident across projects and why we feel the project has increased the physical activity of some groups.

Table 1.Data collection

Event	Exmouth	Plymouth	Swindon	Bridgwater
Data collected prior to or during events	Interviews with Overall project lead, Dance tent project lead, Lead Choreographer	Attended project planning meeting Interviews with Project lead and dance lead	Attended project planning meeting and met main artists responsible for each of the performances Interviews with Project lead and Assistant project lead	Interviews with project lead & 2 members of project team, representative from "Take Art" <i>Bridgwater College Practice Session</i> Observational data, Focus group interview with 12 students <i>Puritan Primary School: School Performance</i> Observed performance, interviews with teachers, parents and children <i>Segemoor Primary school: School Performance</i> Observed performance, interviews with teachers, parents and children
Data collected at the events	<i>Town Centre Performance</i> Interviews, focus groups, observational, video and photographic data at 10am, 12pm, and 2pm.	<i>Plymouth Dance Explosion</i> 9 am City Centre performance Interviews with participants and the public Observational, video and photographic data	<i>10am Final Rehearsal</i> Interviews & focus groups with participating dance groups, teachers, dance teachers, class assistance <i>Swindon Mass participation Dance</i> Observational, photographic and video data collected at 12 and 2pm performances Interviews and focus groups with members of public and workshop participants 32 questionnaires completed during the interval	<i>Town Centre Performance</i> Interviews with members of the public who joined in taster sessions and workshops Observational, video and photographic data
Data collected following event	Interview with Acting Executive Director Dance Devon Follow up interviews with respondents who provided contact details On line questionnaires completed	On line questionnaires Follow up interviews with respondents who provided contact details 42 schools contacted for their reflections on the event Analysis of information about the Dance Explosion from school Websites	On line questionnaires Follow up interviews with respondents who provided contact details	Follow up interview with project lead
Data collected at follow up-event	<i>Dance tent Exmouth Festival</i> Observational, video and photograph data collected. Interviews & focus groups with dancers, workshop participants, dance practitioners, members of the public watching. 56 completed questionnaires		<i>Taster day 5<sup>th</sup> September Swindon Dance</i> Interviews and focus groups with participants, parents, dance leaders, observational data	

## **5. EXMOUTH PROJECT**

The aim of the Exmouth project was for a choreographed flash-mob dance routine to be created that any individual, regardless of their age or ability, could learn. It was intended that Exmouth College Community students would teach this routine to primary school children, their parents and staff, other community college students and adult dance participants.

During May two events were to be scheduled. The first was the flash mob to be performed 2-3 times without advance notice to shoppers in the middle of Exmouth Town at the Magnolia Shopping Centre. Here school performers were to be joined by adult dancers from community groups. The brief submitted described how, following the performance, spectators would be invited to join in and be given information about free taster sessions and dance performances at the town's annual festival a week later.

The second event, a "Dance Tent" on Exmouth sea front, provided a space for public engagement with dance through a variety of taster sessions and dance performances. In order to convey a message that dance is something that everyone can enjoy the aim was to include in the performance all ages and skill levels as well as able-bodied and disabled individuals.

The project was to be linked with the national "Change4life" campaign through performers wearing branded t-shirts, banners and leaflet distribution.

### **5.1 Project team partners**

The Exmouth project saw collaboration between NHS Devon, Exmouth Community College, Exmouth Town Council, Dance in Devon, Exmouth Festival, Exmouth School Sport Co-ordinator and two representatives from Department of Health South West, who provided direction and links with the Department of Health and Strategic Health. The project was led by the Head of Health Improvement (East and Mid Devon) NHS Devon. Other partners contributed to developing, publicising or overseeing specific elements of the project.

One issue raised during interviews with some of the project team was that at initial meetings it wasn't clear that there were *two* very different projects being managed. Planning meetings therefore provided an arena for the project team to; (a) learn and explore how the first event would feed into and promote the second; (b) understand how different organisations might lead different parts of the project.

Negotiating these types of hurdles one member of the project team suggested improved communication between organisations whose goals overlap.

The project was also facilitated by 11 Primary Link Teachers from Marpool Primary School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Drake's Church of England Primary School, St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Exeter Road Community Primary School, The Beacon Church of England VA Primary School, Littleham Church of England Primary School, Withycombe Raleigh Church of England Primary School, Lympstone Church of England Primary School, and Woodbury Church of England Primary School.

Each Primary Link Teacher worked closely with the School Sport Co-ordinator and led the dance project within his or her own school. Incumbent on these individuals therefore was the responsibility of ensuring that clubs were initiated and that head-teachers remained informed about the project. These teachers were also responsible for ensuring that performances were showcased in each of the schools prior to the town centre and Exmouth Festival events.

## 5.2 Event One: Flash mob

Three town centre “Flash Mob” performances were held at 10am 12pm and 2pm on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The performances took place in a small concrete area in front of shops adjoining a triangle shaped patio with wooden benches and knee high raised plant/flower beds. In the centre of this space alongside a large clock “Change4life” flags were positioned. Unbeknown the event organisers there was a double booking for this space with the local radio station BAY FM who were also due to broadcast from exactly the same area. Taking the opportunity afforded by this “problem” the project lead negotiated with BAY FM and the DJ who agreed to play the music for the performance on their public address system. Each performance was therefore compered by the BAYFM DJ who asked the crowd after each (10am, 12pm & 2pm) performance, “that was over so quickly...wouldn’t you like to see it again?” which lead to a repeat performance. The actions of the DJ made it possible to lengthen the amount of time performers danced and the opportunity to dance again seemed to be appreciated by the children.

Prior to, during and following the performance photographic and video data was collected in order to calculate how many people had watched the dance. According to the original brief it was our intention to document and interview audience members who joined in at the end of the “official dance”. Following each performance face to face interviews were conducted with members of the public.

*Attendance & publicity:* Video and photographic data show the Magnolia Centre area to be relatively empty between 8:30 and 9:30am with 15 people within the triangle patio area and 13 people walking between the shops in the main pedestrian walkway.

Given the performance took place in a public space with access from three different directions calculating the number of people watching at any one moment was particularly difficult even with photographs and still frame video. Some people watched the beginning of the performance but left before the end, while other passers by were drawn to watch at some point after the start.

Despite some difficulties there remained a “core” group which could be counted. During the 10am performance these figures show 400 people watched. At the 12 0 clock performance 387 people watched and at the 2pm performance 335 people watched. These figures were based on people standing still, and looking towards where the dance was performed. People who glanced over but did not stop walking were not included in these figures.

Leaflets promoting C4L and/or encouraging the public to visit the dance tent at the Exmouth festival were distributed to passers by and those that watched. Additionally fruit kebabs were given out to the crowd and participants to support and encourage the healthy eating message.

*Feedback from parents:* The majority of those watching the performance turned out to be parents or relatives. Of the 38 parents and 6 relatives interviewed *all* responded positively saying that that their son/daughter/grandchild etc.. had enjoyed taking part in the dance event. When asked, “what makes you say this?” parents began to paint a picture which suggested that there were a number of elements which made the event meaningful to their children. Firstly, parents perceived that their children enjoyed the dance because of the frequency with which the dance project was discussed at home, the following responses on this issue are typical;

“She just likes dancing, and she’s always talking about dancing”

“He’s a bit nervous, but he’s been bugging me since 10 am this morning, he’s been dancing all over the place and all day nagging me “*how long? how long? Till we start?*””.

“She talks about it all the time at home, really *all* the time”

Secondly, children were not only talking but they had been motivated to practice for the public performance.

“I know he loves it because he’s been practising!”

“She’s been practicing in her bedroom, in front of the mirror”

“Oh, she’s been dancing round the house, she loves the music and she’s even downloaded it (the music) from the internet”

“I haven’t seen it yet, it’s a secret, but she’s got a full length mirror in her bedroom and she’s been practicing”

Two mothers “She’s been dancing in the kitchen, and the lounge, she loves it, loves it, she goes to dance every week”

Second mother “Yeah and a couple of her friends some round to mine to and practice”

As the previous quotes suggest, not only did children participate at school during the formal dance class, but, they had continued to practice the routine on their own, sometimes behind closed doors, and, perhaps importantly, *without* adult supervision, coercion or enticement. That is, parents were not encouraging their children to be more active, but rather, children had taken the initiative and danced, as the *dance routine* was something they “loved” doing.

*Feedback from children and teachers:* All the children we spoke with appeared to be really enthusiastic about the dance and appeared smiling and exuberant. When children were asked about the performance “*being with my friends*” appeared to be an important factor in their interest in this particular activity. We also spoke with several teachers present in the crowd who said they had come to “*support the children*” and school. Their feedback also suggested that the type of dance provided a catalyst for friends to be physically active *together*, regardless of their ability or skill level. Several teachers talked about how children would practice or perform the dance routine in the break time, and were also encouraging other children to join in. While feedback from parents suggested that many of the children who took part were already “dancers” (commonly a parent would talk about a daughter loving dance and attending ballet or tap classes), it was not only children with an interest in dance who were drawn into participating, as one head teacher commented,

“What has been so good, as a head teacher I look for things to engage the hard to reach pupils in primary school and this has been one of the initiatives that has done that, because of the nature of the activity, and the music, it’s drawn in quite a range of children - some who wouldn’t necessarily find themselves doing physical activity like this, there’s some there giving 100 per cent. It’s been an inspiration and motivation. Obviously it’s a change for life initiative but the way that the teachers and staff embraced it had really made it a success, I would say it has been an unqualified success.”

“As a school, having something like this to focus for, is really important, I dare say when we get back to school the children will say “*when’s the next one?*””

*Members of the public:* While parents, relatives, family friends and teachers came to support the children performing, it appeared passers-by were drawn to see “What was going on.” In this regard the music, yellow tee shirts and a group of excited children were each important factors in attracting the interest of passers by. Most people watching, regardless of whether they were related to the performers or not, were smiling, engaged and appeared to have enjoyed the performance.

*Adult participation:* While parents spoke of being delighted that their children were involved and supported their children’s involvement, there was little evidence to suggest that parents saw the dance event as targeting or influencing their own physical activity. Similarly, there was little evidence, in terms of the first public performance, of other adults being encouraged to increase their physical activity through dance. Therefore, while the project appears to have met its aim to increase the physical activity of children, no parents or members of the public joined in the first dance event and no parents we spoke with had been taught the dance, which was an original aim of the project. Initially the plan was that “*Audiences will be encouraged to join in and then given information about ....the town’s annual festival.*”

Reflecting on this point the project team suggested it was unsuitable to ask primary school children, who formed the majority of the participants in the town centre performance, to approach members of the crowd and ask adults to join in. It was possibly also the case that as plans for the Exmouth Festival Dance Tent began to take shape it became clearer that the dance tent would provide a much better environment in which to encourage audience participation. Although it could be said that the project failed to meet its original aim here, it could equally be argued that a better (more ethical and realistic) strategy had evolved.

### 5.3 Event two: Exmouth Festival Dance Tent

As well as providing primary schoolchildren with a motive to dance thus increasing their physical activity, the town centre “Flash Mob” became a “signpost” for the second event of the project, the Exmouth Festival Dance Tent. As with the town centre event, video, photographic and interview data were collected and this was supplemented by a questionnaire.

The event started at 12am and finished at 4pm. The table 2 provides an over view of the artists performing or taking taster sessions and the number of people watching or joining in sessions throughout the day.

Table 2

Approximate Times	Artists	Number Watching	Members of public participating/ dancing
11:45	Prior to start	46	
12:00	Woodbury primary school		
12:05	Dance Company x 12 'Fix', contemporary	127	
12:15	Floorplay	134	
	Interval music playing		12
12:50	“90 degrees” A2 choreography quartet by Janine Rowden	150	
	Taster session Dance Floorplay		45
1PM	Flamenco- Elena Brandwood	68	
	Taster session Flamenco	87	21
	Taster session		15
1:40	Duet - A2 choreography	75	
1:45	Duet, Sammie Mills & Chelsea Williams		
1:50	“Lyrical” street girls duet	124	
2pm	St Josephs School	134	
02:10	Taster session Salsa DX	188	39
02:45	Taster session		43
2:50	Girls street x 4	157	
2:55	Boys/Street x 5		
3PM	Just For Funk- Break Dance		
	Taster session Break Dance		38
3:45	Dance Company x 12 'Fix', Repeat performance contemporary piece	120	
3:45	Capoeira performance		

### 5.3.1 Demographic information from Dance Tent Questionnaire

*Gender:* 56 questionnaires were completed by people who came to the dance tent area of Exmouth Festival, of these, 30% (n17) were completed by males and 70% (n39) by females. The higher female response rate should not necessarily reflect that more females were present at the event. Our field notes suggests that if a male and female were approached together and asked to either fill in a questionnaire or give an interview, the common response of the male would be “*she’ll do it.*”

*Area of residence:* Of the 56 questionnaires completed post codes were noted on 53 questionnaires, 31 of these (57%) were completed by people with an Exmouth post code (EX8), other post codes were from individuals who reside in Budleigh EX9 (number 2), Exeter EX1 (n2), Cullompton EX15 (n1), Newton Abbot TQ13 (n2), Tiverton EX16 (n1), Yeovil BA22 (n2), Devizes SN10 (n2), Bridgwater TA6 (n1), Newcastle-under-Lym ST5 (n1), Cardiff CF7 (n2), Birkenhead CH43 (n2), and Liverpool L31 (n4).

*Change4Life:* 70% (n39) of people believed they were aware of what the Change4Life campaign was attempting to achieve, and of these 35 respondents were accurately described the campaign. These respondents had been made aware of the campaign through a variety of means, the most frequent being television advertisement mentioned by 43% of those completing the questionnaire (n15). Other methods mentioned were through school (n8), newspapers (n7) friends, family or teachers (n3), work (n2), with posters, tee shirts, events, and the internet also mentioned.

Of the 17 people who said they had been unaware of the Change4Life campaign, 29% (n5) of these were male and 71% (n12) were female, with 87% of the 17 (n13) being between the ages of 37 and 56.

*Reasons for coming to the event today:*

Reason given	Number of responses	%
Just walking past/driving past/ chance /on holiday	12	25%
Festival program	9	19%
Family or Friends	8	17%
Leaflet/flyer/ Advertisement	7	15%
School	4	8%
Instructor	4	8%
Internet	2	4%
Local	2	4%

*Lets Dance:* Of the 93% (n52), who responded to the question “have you heard of “lets dance with Change4life?” 75% (n39) were unaware of the dance campaign. Of the 13 people who said they were aware, 92% (n12) were from individuals who self identify as a dancer of some type with 38% (n5) of these were between 10 and 16yrs of age. The most frequently reported way of receiving information about the dance tent was through school, friends, dance teachers or because they were local.

*Non-dancers:* Of those who did not identify with dance, which was 30% (n17) of those completing the questionnaire, the most frequent reason given for *not dancing* was “no time” reported by 76% (n13) of respondents. Eliciting further information on this point three people mentioned difficulty finding child minders as factors. Forty one percent (n7) of this group ticked or wrote “can’t dance”. Other reasons people gave for not dancing were that dance classes were too expensive (mentioned by 5 people), that they didn’t know where classes were taking place (n4), not interested in dance (n3), too old and/or health problems (n2), and two other people wrote, “happy as I am”, and “too many other things to do.”

*Dancers:* Of those who self identified as being involved in some type of dancing, which was 70% of those completing the questionnaire, 33% (n19) were attending dance classes and 88% (n15) of these were taking weekly classes more than once a week. 34% (n20) indicated they “dance socially”, with 30% (n17) reporting they “dance at home”. 15 different types of dance classes were mentioned by this group which included: Modern (n6), Contemporary (n5), Hip-hop (n5), Ballet (n5), Disco (n4), Ballroom (n4), Salsa (n3), Tap (n3), Modern jive (n3), Break (n2), Musical theatre (n2), Tango (n1), Latin (n1), Zamba (n1), Folk (n1), and Street (n1).

*Motivation:* When asked why they dance, the most frequent reason given by 11 respondents was “the music.” Nine people wrote that dancing was “enjoyable” or “fun” and 7 people wrote they danced for exercise or to get fit. Other reasons included to be “social” and “to be close to my partner,” while one person wrote “parties” and another “alcohol.”

### **5.3.2 Workshop feedback**

While one aim of the tent event was to raise the profile and interest in dance, an important element was to engage members of the public in one of the workshops or taster session. Prior to being invited to participate and lead a class the dance class leaders had been vetted for their suitability, not just to lead a dance class, but to encourage participation.

*Number participating:* As table 2 shows, over 200 members of the public joined in taster sessions or danced (of their own volition) during intervals. The video footage shows that people who joined in taster sessions were attending to instructions, laughing and smiling. Many parents brought young children (aged approx between 2 and 4) to the dance floor saying, “they’re always dancing at home.” Some parents took part in workshops with children on their shoulders, or holding them and swaying to the music.

*Feedback from dance teachers:* While the sunny weather was not an element which could be controlled by the project team, the positioning of the tent, the grass area around the tent, the inclusion of dance in a music festival, the mix and variety of dance performances and interesting taster sessions appear to have created an unusual and supportive environment which facilitated participation. This point was picked through our field notes as well as being mentioned by several workshop leaders we spoke with, the following one example;

“To be honest, I’ve been taking workshops for years, and that’s the best response I’ve ever had, people joining in, clapping, the atmosphere, we try to make it fun, so we can take some of the credit, but people were up for it, they were up for it.”

*Feedback from participants:* Typically, when asked about their experience of the workshops people would mention how unusual this event was, that it was “fun” and the variety of types of dance meant there was something for every member of the family;

“My kids and I had a go at the flamenco, I’ve never done anything like this, not down here, and I loved it, it’s really really useful for people to see what it’s about and what’s involved and to take part yourself is really great, the variety (of dance) as well, and its not too long so you don’t lose concentration”

“We took part in the salsa, it was really good, because I don’t do any exercise, sort of aerobic that is, it’s something that I could see myself doing, and it got us (work colleagues) talking about it (doing a class). Really nice to see all the different schools joining in and the community college, also the range of things, youngsters doing street, there was something for everyone.”

Many people remarked that the short sessions suited the type of day and the variety of were workshops meant there were dance classes suitable for family participation as well as sessions

aimed more at adults or children. While it is impossible to say *all* workshop participants were dancers, those we spoke with appeared to be, in the main, already attending a dance class and the majority were female.

One of the issues raised by members of the public was that it wasn't clear from the whiteboard which events members of the public could participate in. Some people wanted to go for lunch, but weren't sure when they should come back. Others went for lunch and missed things that they hadn't realized they would be allowed to participate in. While Exmouth may be the only event where this is relevant, and although this was only mentioned by a small number of people, it is worth considering how information is displayed and how the public are informed if there are exhibitions, performances and workshops occurring on one programme.

Some people were also unable to find information on particular classes they were interested in attending, and while dance teachers provided understandable reasons for a lack of information (such as new class times not yet scheduled, venue change) it is important to consider how practitioners communicate with people who are interested to join in their classes.

*Non participants:* Panning across the spectators assembled at different times of the day it was hard to find an area where young children or prams were absent. At some performances it was common to see almost every member of the audience taking video's or photographs with cameras and mobile phones. Without making too many assumptions, it appeared to us that these were parents revelling in their children's performance.

In general, we observed fathers/husbands/males remaining in the background and while lots of men could be seen tapping their feet few made it on to the dance floor. Similarly, there appeared to be fewer boys at the event, though more young men appeared as the day went on or at particular times. Some young males we spoke with said they had come down to watch their (girl)friends and while not joining in tapped their feet as they watched.

It appeared that the festival organisers were able to encourage families through a variety of additional activities (sandcastles on the beach for example) and along with the weather this had created a particularly relaxed carnival feel which promoted 'outdoor living' and families who were happy, "chilling on grass with a picnic." Many people captured in video footage spent the afternoon watching the performances while sitting in the sunshine with their families. For some of these people perhaps there was nothing further to be gained by "joining in a workshop". One aim of the workshop leaders however, was to encourage participation, as one practitioner said,

"People want to do it, they want to have fun... so you've just got to get them to do it... make them realize that everyone is in the same boat.. you wouldn't expect to get in a car and be able to drive straight away so you shouldn't worry that you can't dance first time!"

Although we may agree with the sentiments, people *do* worry that they can't dance, as one young woman said;

"I would love to learn, but I'd make a fool of myself, so I won't even try"

## **5.4 Three month follow up**

Nineteen respondents provided their contact details and agreed to a three month follow up interview, of these we were able to contact nine by telephone. Additionally, completed on line questionnaires were received in September from 11 children and teachers.

*Responses from children;* Out of the eight children completing the on line questionnaire, 7 were female and one male, and they were aged 9 or 10 years of age. When responding to the question, “what did you like about the dance” the two most frequently mentioned factors were performing in public “*Having people looking at me*”, and the music “*the big crowd and the music*”. There was a sense in the responses that the dance had been fun and that “*watching other people dance*” was also important for some of these children. Some children mentioned “*different styles of dancing and different ranges of dances*” had contributed to making the event enjoyable and six children remembered a particular dance step, saying, “*There was a move called the chicken because it looked like a chicken head.*”

The only things children identified as not liking was that the performance space was too restrictive which meant there was little room to move.

From the responses children gave it appears the benefits of dance for health has been well articulated by teachers and through school public health strategies. When questioned on the health benefits of dancing we received both short responses like, “*Heart races faster*” to longer descriptions such as, “*pumping your blood around you body, exercise, heart beating faster, good for your heart.*”

*Responses from teachers :* While the number of teachers responding to the questionnaire was low, their feedback confirms what was said during events by those teachers we interviewed, that children of different ages and levels of ability took part and that it was an enjoyable form of activity which included some boys.

“The dance group was optional and we set it up as a lunchtime club. They enjoyed working together and learning a structured dance. It was nice for a mixture of children of different ages to have fun together!”

“Great to see high participation from pupils, those usually not involved in competitive sports, good fun.”

The only negative issues mentioned were reflected in comments like;

“The fact that the dance event was very short after lots of weeks of practice.”

“Not all the children turning up to the event...that it ended!”

*Feedback from public:* Three themes were consistent across interviews with parents and members of the public. Firstly, the event was a catalyst for increasing children’s physical activity, evidenced by some children (a) taking more dance classes, (b) dancing at home and including younger siblings. Secondly, it was also apparent that a huge percentage of adults believe they have little time, not just for dance, but for any self focussed activity and would rather focus their attention on their children’s physical activity, by putting their own health needs secondary. Thirdly, although some boys took part, dance is still overwhelmingly believed to be a female activity. The following extracts show how these issues interrelate;

“We try to go to the festival every year, my kids are 3 and 7. My seven year old is much more knowledgeable now about what dance is all about and much more confident. Since the event, they’ve been dancing round the house and both kids have really got into it, my daughter was shown how to do the moves and I’ve noticed she’s not so self conscious now, they were doing break dancing on their heads at the event coz the leader of the class showed them how and my daughter, it’s improved her confidence, she just dances now, whereas before she wouldn’t. She’s going through

that age when she's becoming more self aware, but it really did allow my kids to perform in public without them realising it, you know, just going off and joining in, they went down on the stage, my three year old tried to copy, and my daughter was really in to it as well." (Mother of 2)

"We don't get out now because of the children, our children are young, and we both work. Funnily enough as a kid I did ball room dancing and disco dancing, and I got quite good at all that stuff, and my mum liked dancing, but with my husband and I both working different times, I don't think he'd be too happy with me going off when he walks in the door. I think, when I wasn't working I was much fitter, you know, I was out walking a lot with the push chair and then when I went back to work I put on two stone, it's working that does it (laugh). Now, I don't have time. I work full time. But we have endless activities on our door step, that's why we moved here, maybe when the little one gets bigger, but we fly kites, the kids play on the beach, my husband rides a bike, we live where we do so we can make use of the outdoors, our kids are out all the time on the beach, were always out and about." (Mother of 2)

"I saw that the event is on and said to my daughter Annie "*lets go down,*" she was already doing ballet, after trying it down there now she's doing street too, it was a great day. But dance isn't accessible to everyone, my son wouldn't do it, he won't dance in public and dancing is a public thing, the people who need it most are the one's who won't do it. I don't want to dance, I do too many other things, I'm in the water every day." (Father of 3)

## 5.5 Legacy

While the original proposal did not identify how funding this project would impact the future of dance in the Exmouth area, there was an understanding or hope that future dance provision and partnership working would be impacted.

Reflecting on project meetings one team member suggested that for them, one of the lasting legacies of the project is that there is now a better understanding between the project partners of what each can contribute to the implementation of dance events (and indeed projects like these) as well as their limitations. There was also a sense that all members of the team believed this event had provided such an impetuous and awareness of dance provision that they were committed and excited about exploring how to maintain this momentum.

Feedback presented earlier in this report shows that there has been a great deal of good will and interest in dance generated through this project between parents, children, schools and dance originations and those involved are also keen to maintain this momentum, which should be seen as an important legacy.

The project team should also be commended for making use of their resources by "piggy backing" on an already successful event (the Exmouth festival). On the one hand, supporting the festival with a dance tent contributed an activity that was missing from the event, while on the other hand, making use of publicity and a festival organisational structure that was already in place minimised costs and maximised access to the public at an annual festival.

Additional points raised by the project team were that,

- Dance students from Exmouth College have pioneered dance clubs in some of the primary schools which have attracted children since the completion of the project

- There is now some dance teacher training /CPD for school teachers to support their use of dance.
- Partners have agreed to hold an annual Dance festival for primary schools, and are seeking an annual presence at the Exmouth festival in the summer
- In order to demonstrate that individuals who attain the Dance Leaders Award are valued plans are being considered to support these individuals by creating a conference and supporting their attendance.
- One dance teacher was funded to gain the tutor accreditation qualification who is now teaching the dance leader course. This means that it is now possible for the dance leader award to be timetabled into the curriculum and ensures a cohort of 16 new dance leaders will be trained each year. It is hoped that once qualified these students will support the clubs initiated in primary schools.
- Dance is now included in the activities targeted through the School Sport Partnership/Youth Sports Trust.

## **6. PLYMOUTH DANCE EXPLOSION**

The proposal put forward from Plymouth was for a mass participation dance event that would be performed simultaneously across the city. While the “core” target group were to be children and teachers at 70 primary schools, the proposal communicated a desire to involve as many people dancing at the same time as possible with the hope of breaking the world record.

In order to meet these aims it was hoped to draft in a team of dance practitioners who would take responsibility for contacting and liaising-with schools and then teach the routine to teachers and children. In order to facilitate this aim it was also decided to make an accompanying teaching DVD which would be made available to schools for use independently. Additionally, to support and encourage participation and continuation of dance at the completion of the project teachers were to be invited to a dance INSET day.

To facilitate a synchronised start it was agreed to approach the local radio station, Heart FM, to become partners. It was hoped the radio station would recognise the potential of becoming involved for increasing the numbers of listeners. In turn, it was hoped the radio station would promote the event via the morning programme and play the music chosen for the routine.

As a way to raise awareness and maximise publicity the project team decided that a performance should take place in Plymouth Town centre in an area known as the Piazza. While groups were invited to perform at this venue, the main ethos remained on schools and children/adults taking part wherever they were in the city at the start time.

### **6.1 Project team partners**

This project drew together The Barbican Theatre, The Creative Learning Department of the Theatre Royal, Attik Dance, Plymouth Dance, NHS Plymouth, Plymouth City Council, Heart FM, and two representatives from Department of Health South West, who provided direction and links with the Department of Health and Strategic Health and the project lead from Plymouth Dance.

As with other projects in this evaluation, once this project was under way a number of issues arose which caused the original aims outlined in the proposal to be altered. One of these was the aim to break the Guinness World Record for mass participation dance. While this was never a major focus of the project, it was dropped due to the regulations for the attempt requiring an official to attend at each site to verify the number of participants.

A second area which caused considerable problems, and possibly influenced the decision not to go for a world record, was a delay in signing off the design of the “promotional postcard”, which provided information and promotion of the event to school. The time delay meant the team responsible for contacting schools and teaching the dance could not begin their work sufficiently early. Given the aim was to enrol 70 schools the delay resulted in it being virtually impossible to reach the initial target. While the lead choreographer and project lead praised the investment and commitment of practitioners in attempting to contact and enrol schools (despite the shorter time scale), they also acknowledged that the delay had threatened the whole project, caused the project team and dance practitioners a great deal of added pressure and resulted in tension between project partners.

*Project DVD:* An important part of the project was the creation of a teaching DVD which the project team hoped would provide a resource for teachers. As a clear ethos of the overall project was to be inclusive, the making of the video provided an example of how difficult it is to attain this. Given videos commonly show excellence, they can promote a vision that it is

only competent dancers that dance. Seeking excellence however, is a move away from the projects aim to include everyone. The children selected for the video therefore represented a variety of skill levels, not just the most skilful. However, during the selection process some of the teachers, understandably, were keen to nominate “better performers” as it was assumed that “good dancers” would reflect more favourably on their school. It is to the credit of the dance lead that the children selected represent a diverse group and not solely skilled dancers.

Copies of the DVD were made available to schools and dance groups and were also used to promote the Dance Explosion.

## **6.2 Plymouth Dance Explosion**

On Thursday 8th July at over 56 different locations across Plymouth it was estimated that 7000 people performed a choreographed dance to Michael Jackson’s song Black & White. Groups within community settings that participated included; Woodlands Villas Residential Home, Camelia House Residential Home, Crossing tracks, Dance Fit (two groups), Dancercise, Devonport High school/dance leaders, and from the University of Plymouth a group of dentistry students performed.

Schools that participated were:

Austin Farm Primary School, Boringdon Primary School, Drake Primary School, Elburton Primary School, Glen Park Primary School, College Road Primary School, Lipson Vale Primary School, Pomphlett Primary School, Stoke Damerel Primary School, Stuart Road Primary School, Victoria Road Primary School, Wembury Primary School, Woodfield Primary School, Woodford Junior & Infant School, Old Priory Junior School, Plaistow Hill Infants, Laira Green Primary School, Prince Rock Primary School, Ernesettle Community School, High View Primary School, Mayflower Community School, Montpelier Primary School, Morice Town Primary School, Oakwood Primary School, Oreston Community Primary School, Plympton St Maurice Primary School, Salisbury Road Primary School, Shakespeare Community School, St Edward’s Church of England Primary School, St George’s Church of England Primary School, St Joseph’s Roman Catholic Primary School, St Peter’s Church of England Primary School, St Peter’s Roman Catholic Primary School, The Cathedral School of St Mary, Weston Mill Community Primary School, Whitleigh Community Primary School, Plympton St Marys Church of England Infant School, Riverside Community Primary, Malborough Primary School, Courtlands School, Downham Special School and Mill Ford Community Special School.

With a small research team it was not possible to attend all the dance locations therefore our team collected data at one location, the BBC Big Screen at The Piazza in Plymouth Town centre. In order to attempt to reflect the diversity of the project an online questionnaire was made available in the hope that teachers, children and dance teachers would be willing to provide feedback.

## **6.3 Town Centre**

Driving to Plymouth Town Centre from the major road routes there was signage promoting the event and at the Town centre balloons and change4life banners were displayed creating an indication that “something” was about to take place. Additionally, Heart FM supported the event with a promotional vehicle and their street marketing team, the “Heart Angels”. We interviewed 43 people prior to the dance explosion, many on their way to work/college, to gauge and understand their awareness of the change4life and the Dance Explosion. Following the event we interviewed 11 parents/adult family members as well as adult participants and spectators.

Heart FM promoted the event through their web site leading up to and following the day. They also included event information in news bulletins throughout the day and included one

interview in the programme. Other Websites and local papers promoted the event, with the Plymouth Herald featuring two event-related articles.

Prior to the agreed start time the lead choreographer assembled all the participants and conducted a warm up practice session which appeared helpful to those involved. Video footage and photos were taken between 7.47am and 9.30am and the spectator count between 9.30 and 9.35 was 162. Before the designated start time the Heart FM Disc Jockey made a short announcement on air and then started the music.

We detected a marked and positive shift in the atmosphere in the area between the hours of 7.45 and 9.30 in the build up to the performance and the performance itself. Watching the event, we observed lots of smiles and laughter from those taking part and a more generalised positive atmosphere among those who stopped to watch. There was a “sense of occasion” that we felt ourselves and observed in members of the public (demonstrated though, for example, smiles, stopping to watch, craning necks to see round other spectators, open interactions).

*Feedback from public:* Such was the interest in what was happening some of the people we interviewed said they wanted to alert friends or family in order that they could come down to watch. One Asian woman carrying two large shopping bags didn’t want to engage in questions about Change4life saying, “*I live round the corner, I’m going home to tell my mother to come and watch.*” We encountered large numbers of foreign students in the Town Centre who were on language courses in Plymouth. Understandably none of these were aware of either Change4life or the Dance explosion and although many stayed to watch the dance, none joined in.

Among the English speaking people we approached we received a variety of responses to our question “have you heard of change4life.” These went from, “*My dear, at 83 I couldn’t care less about anything!*” to those who appeared interested and engaged in the campaign saying, “*Oh yes, I’ve seen it on TV, I sent away for the stuff on healthy eating for my son*” and “*I’ve already signed up.*”

Of the 43 people we interviewed 28 (65%) were conscious of and able to accurately describe the health message of the change4life campaign. From these interviews we were aware that for some, strong and repeated health messages, particularly about smoking, not eating healthily, and obesity can have a de-motivating and disempowering effect on their physical activity. The following two examples from our fieldnotes provide some insight to this issue:

Teenage male: One teenage male on his way to school said initially he had not heard of C4L but then remembered he’d seen the “dancing food” ads on TV. He went on to say, “*I don’t dance – can’t do it. Get laughed at.*” He seemed to have some kind of interest in dance and health but appeared to have become resistant to doing anything about it because he perceived there to be “*no point.*” As he put it: “*I smoke, so I’m not healthy anyway.*” That is, his perception was, because he smokes he is already unhealthy.

Overweight female: Another woman who was aware C4L but was not aware the dance explosion was happening said: “*I wouldn’t dance cause of my size.*” She believed dance was a good way to improve health, but, for her, attitudes towards her as an overweight person discourage her from engaging. She suggested she would need a non-judgemental and accepting atmosphere (of her weight) in order for her to take part and that this was difficult to find.

*Feedback from parents:* When asking parents about their children’s experience of the dance event all comments were positive. Typically parents would talk about how much their child

loved dancing, and that children had been practicing of their own volition. The following extracts provide a flavour of these interviews.

“She loves dancing, and taking part in things, she always comes back from dance happy”  
“Oh she’s loved it! She loves dance and is very active, she been dancing at home”  
“She hasn’t stopped practicing at home.”  
“They love it! One of them, he loves Michael Jackson, that’s his favourite! He wants to go to dance school.”

Once again these types of comments suggest the dance event has provided; (a) a motive for children to become more active and; (b) allowed children autonomy to practice outside school time/environment, and of their own initiative.

*Feedback from adult participants:* While school children made up the majority of those dancing at the town centre location, other participants included the Heart Angels and members of local dance classes. Three women we spoke with, aged 66, 69 and 75, provided an indication of some of the complex motives that provoke an individual to attend this type of event. For these three women their dance teacher, and importantly their relationship with her, was pivotal. That is, it wasn’t just the activity (dance) that was important in motivating them to be active, as the following extract illustrates,

“Claire makes it fun, we meet, exercise, but we wouldn’t go if Claire wasn’t there, so we’re here today for her, to support what she’s doing.”

A second motive of adult participants at the Town Centre was a love of dance, with some participants being motivated to join in after reading about the event in the local papers. The following extract from an interview with one 68 year old female provides an example,

“I heard there was a dance explosion that was supposedly for school children, but the newspaper said anyone could join in, and being a dance fanatic I came with a friend and we joined in, I hadn’t done the routine before but it was good fun.”

All adult participants we spoke with were female and regular attendees of dance/exercise classes in different areas of Plymouth. These individuals described their lives as active and all were retired. The following type of response being common,

“There’s usually, on a Thursday, between 35 and forty of us, but I do two classes Tuesday and Thursday, two hours Thursday and one hour on Tuesday, yeah, we stop for a coffee break, time to catch up.”

We did not find any parents who joined in, and although it was possible that there was a parent dancing whom we missed, it seemed that parents were there to support and encourage children, rather than dance themselves.

#### **6.4 On line questionnaires.**

*Feedback from Dance teachers:* On line questionnaires were completed by four practitioners who contributed to teaching the routine to children in schools. As the chart below shows, all were female, described their ethnicity as white British and each is taking daily exercise in a variety of types of physical activity, not just dance.

Occupation/Role in the project	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Physical activity	Frequency
Dance teacher/Taught workshops	27	Female	White British	Dance, Capoeira, Walking, Surfing, Climbing,	Daily
Dance teacher choreographer	27	Female	White British	Dance, Contemporary/ creative Running, Walking, Kayaking, Cycling	Daily
Dance Teacher/ Dance Shadow	26	Female	White British	Dance, Physical Theatre Contemporary Dance/ Street Dance/Cheer Dance	Daily
Student/ shadow/ Dance leader	28	Female	White British	Contemporary and street - running swimming, gym dancing, walking	Daily

Feedback from these practitioners suggests there were four factors which were particularly rewarding about this project and one area which brought difficulty, these are outlined below.

*National Campaign:* Some practitioners felt that schools can be reluctant to become involved in dance projects. As this event was part of a bigger campaign (Change4life) that carries national significance and was funded as part of a Government Strategy, practitioners suggested it was perceived by other groups as “important” and “valuable” as opposed to “just a dance thing.” This made gaining access to schools and children easier.

*Children’s excitement:* Comments suggest that practitioners were also excited about the opportunity to get children involved and found especially rewarding seeing children become excited and enthusiastic about dance.

*Inclusive:* Feedback from practitioners suggested that event was valued because it allowed diverse groups, ages, abilities and dance preferences to be catered for.

*Recognition from Schools:* Also noted in the responses of these practitioners was the satisfaction of gaining positive feedback from both teachers and schools. A number of practitioners were aware of noticeable differences in how children moved at schools where dance was on the curriculum compared with children at schools where dance was not taught:

“While working in the schools it was very obvious the schools that had dance on the curriculum as the children were so much more comfortable in their bodies and really went for it when doing the routine.”

*Travel:* The only problem practitioners raised, other than not being able to see all the groups dancing at once, was the burden of travelling to schools across the area.

*Feedback from Teachers:* On line surveys were completed by teachers from four schools, Oakwood Primary School, Old Priory Junior School, Woodfield primary School and Salisbury Road Primary. All teachers were female and described their ethnicity as White or White British.

Year at school/ involvement in the project	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Frequency	Physical activity
6/ teaching the children the dance and leading it on the day	54	Female	British	Weekly	Dance, games
5/ Taught routine to classes across the school	33	Female	White British	Weekly	Gym, Running, Pilates, Aerobics classes
5/ helped teach year 5 and then school the dance. Led the project within school	30	Female	White British	Weekly	Swimming
5/ I lead our school to ensure all participated.	26	Female	White British	Weekly	Netball, body combat

While one teacher suggested that the dance explosions wasn’t particularly effective saying, “No more so than the Wake and Shake we currently do,” others teachers felt; (a) it brought

the school and wider community together, and; (b) that it involved children who do not usually engage with dance.

“The event was beneficial as even children who would usually shy away from dancing enjoyed it. There was team work between the different year groups when the older children were helping the younger ones. Some children are still doing some of the dance when playing.”

“Yes, very beneficial. It got all children active, worked on coordination and brought the whole school together. It even involved the wider community as they were invited to watch the final performance.”

While the extracts above highlight some of the positive aspects of the project, the second extract eludes to the difficulty of engaging parents. As we observed at the town centre location in Plymouth, if parents attended an event, they were there to *watch* not participate.

There were three areas in the project where teachers appear to have been disappointed. The first was the DVD, with some teachers suggesting their access to the DVD was too late in the project to be beneficial. Secondly, some teachers were disappointed their school wasn't supported by having one of the original dancers who had taught the school the routine attend their dance explosion. Given that dance teachers taught at several schools during the project this request was always going to be impossible to achieve. Thirdly, was the lack of publicity on the radio:

“More could have been made of the event on the radio, it happened very quickly and felt brushed over given the amount of money that must have been spent on promoting the event at the start”

“VERY VERY disappointed about poor coverage and actual event management, the radio made nothing of something we had spent so much energy promoting and boosting. Felt like a huge let down.”

## **6.5 Three month follow up**

In September 2010 approximately three months after the event, contact was made with the 42 schools that participated. Each was asked to provide feedback about the impact of dance in the school. Additionally, school websites were investigated to explore how the dance event had been publicised by each school. From school's web sites we also examined what had been written about the event via School News or News letters, photographs or other information related to dance or the project. Data was also collected from members of the public who had given their contact details at the town centre event.

*Feedback from the public:* There was a general sense among people interviewed that the dance explosion had been an exciting project, and that it was an important event because it made it possible for all age groups to come together. This seemed particularly important to the older women who participated because dance provided an opportunity to feel part of “life” as the following extracts suggests,

“It's important to mix generations to show my age group that you *can* be active, it's not *just* sinking into playing bingo. That dance explosion - another one would be great, for all generations.”

There was little evidence of increased physical activity as members of the public who took part were already attending weekly dance classes. Nor did these individuals feel they had become more aware of additional dance classes that may be of future interest.

“Because nobody from our dance class was there, we didn’t know anything about it, only what we read in the paper, the class teacher didn’t even know about it, and so no, I haven’t noticed any difference. I live in Plympton, and nothing actually goes on there, you know with dancing that I know of, in the Plympton or Mutley area at all.”

*Observations from school websites:* Exploring the school websites provided an indication of the culture of each school. It also provided an indication about what each school values in terms of activities. Twenty four of the participating schools had web sites that were informative and captured a little of life and events during the school term. Common events that were reported in newsletters and diary postings were sport events, after school clubs, and achievements. Two schools had information that was easily accessible which promoted the Change4life campaign message and the dance event. A further three schools mentioned “Attik dance” as a date in the diary with no further information. One school had a selection of photographs of the Dance Explosion taken on the day, as well as written information about the event. In contrast, the majority of schools only provided information in their news letters or web site about sport success. Victoria Road Primary School is one example. This school has an interesting web site which lists a variety of events and activities for children at the school. Reading the June/July newsletters (which will have been when children were practicing and performing the dance) 20 events were listed. One date in the diary related to the project and appeared as “Attik Dance year 6” however, the “Dance Explosion” and that all children at the school took part was not listed. In contrast, there were congratulations in the news letters to, “our athletes who competed so well at Brickfields on Monday,” coverage of the sports day, and of year 3/4 rounders. This school, like others in the project, supported the project fully and teachers at the school considered it to be beneficial to students. Reflecting what we might learn from this, it appears currently schools (or the individuals responsible for the website and news letters) value sport events but not dance.

*Feedback from schools:* Ten schools responded to our questions about the impact of the dance explosion in their school, these were: High View, Boringdon, Laira Green, Victoria Road, Drake, Woodfield, Oakwood, Mill Ford and Courtlands Special School.

There was great diversity in the ways schools interacted with the project and therefore, unsurprisingly, we received a variety of responses regarding the impact of the dance project as the following quotes illustrate,

“The children certainly enjoyed taking part in the Dance explosion but in terms of the long term effect it has to be said it has been minimal. I think this was mainly due to the time of year but also what was going on around the school at the time. The children were already involved in another project. This had obviously taken up a large part of their time, energy and probably focus. Dance is a part of our curriculum that we are always looking to improve and have worked with an AST for dance previously. Sorry that I cannot report a more long term impact.” (Head Teacher)

“Our children have quite complex motor needs so dance is something that they do a lot of and really enjoy. The day was great. No (laugh) we (teachers) didn’t join in, but teachers watched the children as did a couple of parents who came to support.” (Head Teacher)

“The dance itself was challenging for an average year 6 child, the younger ones did struggle. That said, they tried their best and enjoyed it. It also gave the children the chance to receive quality dance teaching, something I’m unable to do really as a games and athletics specialist.” (PE coordinator)

What this feedback suggests is that at schools where dance was already an integral part of the curriculum, or where the dance event was just one of many events, there was little long term

impact. However, as the last quote reveals, at schools with little or no dance education, or where the physical education teacher is less competent or interested in dance, the project seemed to have provided a vital and important contribution. It is these things which we would now like to consider more fully to explore how this project made a significant impact in some schools. There were five important themes which characterise feedback from schools where the dance event was seen as important.

*Engaging hard to reach children:* Feedback suggested that this project made a significant impact on children who do not usually join in dance.

“The children are used to engaging regularly in dance work and have (dance) provision within the school. Many of the children are keen dancers however there is often a very clear divide between those who enjoy dance and those who prefer not to participate. One of the things which was fantastic about the dance explosion project was that *all* the children participated and were happy to be a part of it, even those who are usually particularly reluctant.”

“It was a brilliant time learning the dance as it enabled children to teach each other. This was especially good for the self esteem of the children who find curriculum subjects difficult.”

“The inclusion of the dance as part of wake and shake was particularly useful as there have been issues with participation of wake and shake at our school and the dance explosions sequence seemed to help this, encouraging more children to join in.”

*Whole school involvement:* There are perhaps very few types of events that have the potential to involve the whole school being physically active at one time. While there was little evidence that parents had been encouraged to join in, at many schools the event had engaged the whole school, teachers and even some governors,

“The actual day of the event was fantastic, even the children from nursery, who had not practiced the sequence at all, came out to take part along with most staff members (including the Head). I really feel that the ethos of the project- to encourage people to move more, be more active and participate - really came through, even those who are less keen on dance, or who don't enjoy P.E, were also fully involved. It was a really fantastic event and it looked wonderful to see everyone moving together.”

“The dance day itself was great as all the children, staff, some parents, some governors, job interviewees and the staff from MM productions all took part.”

*Catalyst to future project:* Commonly, responses from teachers suggested that the dance explosion had enabled teachers to become enthused about dance to the extent that some schools had initiated after school dance clubs.

“Often in schools I work in, the wake and shake either doesn't exist or they find it hard to regularly change the sequences or make them challenging, I think this project offered a sequence that addressed this- providing a dance that was accessible and fun that everyone wanted to join in with. I know this wasn't the aim of the project but I think it was an interesting and useful by-product of the overall project.”

“It has encouraged me to re-start after school dance club which is proving to be popular and fun. I am also trying to arrange for our PTFA to fund a few more dance lessons.”

*DVD:* Responses from schools and teachers showed the DVD had been a valued and important tool for teachers. Specifically, it helped maintain interest and enthusiasm for the event and made it possible for different classes to practice without having a dance instructor present,

“The DVD with instruction was also very useful as this was passed around different classes for their practice. It also allowed teachers to practice bits of the dance at a time.” (PE coordinator)

“Overall I felt the dance explosion was very successful, having the DVD available earlier and more copies would have been useful, plus copies of the music readily available on CD or to download would also have been beneficial.”

*Male dancers:* Although it was only mentioned in a small number of responses, several teachers flagged up that a male dancer teacher would provide an important contribution as a role model for showing that dance is also for boys. While there was *one* male dance teacher involved in schools, perhaps the point raised should be taken to mean that the project had a very “female face” and some teachers believed that having a male dancer at their school would have made a difference to how boys interact with dance.

## **6.6 Legacy**

As the previous section illustrated, the project team worked hard to address each of the core aims of the funding and have been successful in bringing a variety of organisations together in effective partnerships.

At the time of writing there are many openings being considered by project partners which they believe have come about as a direct result of the Dance Explosion. While it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to report on all of these, the project team were keen to point out that the press coverage that was received about the Dance Explosion in local papers, on BBC Spotlight, Heart FM, ITV Westcountry news and BBC Radio Devon, as well as post event coverage on websites and in magazines (such as, Devon Life), has increased the public’s and media’s interest and awareness of dance and health. The project team feel this is now contributing to their ongoing work and facilitating the planning of future participation in dance.

At the completion of this project, there are now more opportunities opening up to teach dance in many of the schools. These possibilities have been facilitated by an updated schools database which included the name of teachers involved with the project. It is also hoped the data base will be used as a resource for dance agencies and future projects.

The project has created an interest in INSET dance days in both primary and secondary schools, and has made improvements and additions to the “wake and shake” that many schools use.

Due in no small part to the way the dance teachers interacted with children and teachers, there is now a great deal of good will between those involved in the project (under the umbrella of Plymouth Dance) and local schools making school more open and interested in to future dance projects.

## 7. THE SWINDON PROJECT

The aim of the Swindon dance project was to create a 20 minute dance performance incorporating 6 different dance groups using a variety of dance styles. The performance would be staged twice in the town centre in front of the big screen and would culminate in a mass participation dance where members of the public would be encouraged to join in.

In the morning before the performance a “final rehearsal” would provide an opportunity for all the dance groups to come together for the first time. These groups would then learn an additional dance routine which they would perform along with members of the public.

Information about dance classes, and “Change4life” would be available and the occasion would also be used to promote a day of “taster sessions” scheduled at Swindon dance later in the year.

### 7.1 Project Partners

The Swindon project forged collaboration between NHS Swindon, Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Dance. The project team was led the Senior Education & Access Officer at Swindon Dance who was supported internally by an additional member of staff and the Artistic Director. The Public Health Programme Manager and the Communications Officer NHS Swindon provided additional support for the project as did a local authority mobile Healthy Schools Team representative. Two representatives from Department of Health South West also attended project planning meetings to provide direction and links with the Department of Health and Strategic Health.

Interviews with the project team made it clear that despite the challenges that may ensue, the project team were keen to involve groups who would not usually be given an opportunity to perform in public, and especially those that are considered to be “hard to reach”. To this end, six groups were identified, one being a local MEND project group. As the project progressed, however, the project team became increasingly uncomfortable with asking these young people to perform in public, given that; (a) these children had signed up for a healthy eating/lifestyle course, not a public “dance” event; (b) it seemed inappropriate and unfair to ask a young person, who may already have a negative body image after being categorised as *obese*, to perform in public; (c) attempting to persuade children to dance in public so that the aims of the project could be fulfilled seemed a little short sighted in terms of what was best for these young people; (d) it may undermine or threaten the trust that had been built up with the dance/project teacher. It was therefore decided that these children would not be asked to participate, but would be encouraged to join in the mass dance. The final number of groups performing was 5 dance groups. These were:

- Crowdys Hill School: a secondary, special school with 137 pupils with complex needs aged between 11-17
- Underground: a dance group comprising young adults from a local youth centre
- Drove Primary School: a “multicultural school” where there are known to be 31 different home languages spoken and 23 cultures represented
- Hot Steppers: a community dance group with an age range of 6-14 years
- Caribbean Funk: an adult dance class with participants ranging in age from 20 years of age to 70+ years of age.

### 7.2 Rehearsal

On the morning of the event (10.30am-1pm) 86 performers and 26 adults/helpers attended a rehearsal at Swindon Dance. The artistic director worked with all the groups to choreograph a

dance routine for the finale and each group was given space and time to practice their performances. The rehearsal provided an ideal opportunity to watch and talk with all individuals who were participating in the performance including choreographers/dance teachers, teachers, and some parents. Our team attended the rehearsal and conducted interviews and focus groups with:

- The Deputy Head of Crowdys Hill School
- A focus group with four teaching assistants from Crowdys Hill School
- Three children from Crowdys Hill School
- The dance teacher of Hot Steppers dance group
- Two male members of Hot Steppers dance group
- Two teachers from Drove Primary School
- Five girls who were part of the Underground dance group
- One male member of Underground dance group
- Six women from the Caribbean funk group

*Feedback from participants:* Given the perception of many people that *dance* is for young people, the inclusion of performers in their 50's, 60's and 70's seemed make an important statement for some participants, as the quote below from a 53 year old member of Caribbean Funk group suggests,

“This is a big thing for me, This class was advertised at Easter as the change for life project, and it was going to be in the show, and we thought *Caribbean Funk*, that sounds good, and so we came along. I didn't see myself going up on stage, but the class is full of all abilities, and a lot of the girls are the same age as me, 'cause I was quite concerned about my age, you get to a point and you think, *should I really be up there?* But we put such a lot of work in, and we all gelled together, and we had such a good laugh, and we've all come. If I would have had to come on my own I wouldn't do it.”

A common theme when participants talked about the dance project was that it was fun, or in the words of the 53 year old quoted above “such a good laugh.” There were six additional themes in the data which showed why this dance event had become important to participants.

*Public performance:* One important aspect of the dance project, especially for the children, was that it provided a reason to be physically active. That is, having to give a performance “in public” and importantly one which was known to be part of a “bigger campaign,” provided an incentive keep attending classes and to practice.

*It's ...the way that you do it:* Those who choreographed or led sessions appear to have taken a “Person centred” approach as opposed to an “Activity centred” approach. That is, dance teachers focussed on the needs of the children/adults and were flexible, responsive, adaptable and inclusive, asking members of each group about *their* dance preferences (Afro-Caribbean, hip hop, street, etc.). While this was mentioned by adult performers it appears to have been particularly important for some of the children participating as the two extracts below suggest,

“(with dance) they have some choice in it, they are encouraged to input into dance but not PE. So in the first few sessions we all sat down and we discussed their favourite kinds of music and their favourite kinds of dancing. In PE they have to go along with the curriculum, its very regimented in PE, in dance there's more freedom” (Teacher)

“In dance we found out what they liked, we tried African and we tried street and contemporary, and they liked African, so we stuck with that!” (Dance teacher)

Interviewer: Do you play sport  
Hot stepper: Yes  
Interviewer: What do you play?  
Hot stepper: I like javelin, and I like running and swimming  
Interviewer: So what is the difference between dance and sport?  
Hot Stepper: Coz with dance, you don't have to stick to the rules, you can be creative

One result of this person centred approach that was evident when we talked to children was that they had a sense of autonomy, because they have contributed ideas and had their interests and views listened to. This kind of inclusive and pupil-centred approach seems to have improved attendance, participation rates and sustained motivation. At Crowdys Hill School, for example, the dance was described as one of only a few after school clubs with high participation rates that have continued week on week (as opposed to dropping off over time as initial enthusiasm declines).

“PE is exercise, it's more of the things they *have* to do like football, girls have to do it, some don't like running, some don't like doing circuit work, but with dance they do it coz they want to do it!” (Teaching Assistant)

Extract with 12 year old participant Drove School:

Interviewer: Why do you like dancing?

Student: Because it's a good way to keep fit, and it's just something that is really good.

Interviewer: If it wasn't a good way to keep fit would you continue to do it?

Student: Yes

Interviewer: Why is that?

Student: Because it's fun, you can do it with your friends after school, because you can show your feelings, you get to, like, put what you feel forward in a different way than saying it

*Inclusive:* Unlike many activities (for example, sport, drama or music) where it is often the most “talented” who are encouraged to perform publicly, the ethos of the event and the way dance teachers have worked made it possible for those children and adults who do not usually get an opportunity to perform publicly or who are unconfident and/or less physically skilled to be included in the performance.

“Swindon dance came to school with the change4life project, and they wanted us to choose girls who specifically had low self esteem, and don't normally get picked for shows or after school clubs.” (Teaching Assistant Crowdys Hill School)

“They [the children] have spoken about how fantastic the staff from Swindon Dance have been – how they've broken it down so it's been easy to follow, not been too much of a struggle, 'cause there's some children that were a bit nervous at the beginning but definitely now seem more at ease.” (Teacher Drove Primary School)

*Increase in Confidence:* Although an increase in confidence was one outcome of the dance project that seemed to influence nearly all participants, perhaps this outcome was most noticeable among children from Crowdys Hill School. The following extract is taken from a focus group with four teaching assistants, to the question; “have you observed any changes since the dance project started?”

Teacher 1: Oh! Big time, big time!

Teachers 2,3,4, (*all in unison*): “Yes definitely”

Interviewer: Can you explain how?

Teacher 1: The child I work with, the first time she did dance she could only do it for 10 minutes. She can do the whole show now, but the first time - after 10 minutes, she'd lay out on the floor. But each week, she'd do a bit more, now when the actual dance starts, the music, she likes all that...

Teacher 2: (interrupting) There are two other girls that go that have a distinct lack of communication, but when you see them dance, you just wouldn't know that at all.

Teacher 1: (looking at teacher 2 and nodding) Whereas before, they would stand in the background, now, they talk to people who they wouldn't have before, they would just sort of, cower away, now, they will go and join in more. And when it's finished, they are just absolutely jumping for joy, just their whole body language.

Teacher 3: And they do work with the group now, and before, if they were out of their class, out of the familiar faces, they wouldn't work as a group, but they do now, now in dance they will join in around everyone.

As the above shows, all three teaching assistants (who work with different children, some with profound learning difficulties) were aware of huge behaviour changes. These included increased confidence, an ability to be with and work with other children, to dance for longer, to concentrate on the movements, and to enjoy being active. These points were also documented in detailed reflective case notes taken by one of the dance teachers in the project. It also appears children were also aware of these changes in themselves as the following extracts show,

"I used to be too shy to dance, now I'm not that shy, so I can dance now, they told us their names (dance teachers), they showed us loads of different things. It keeps you fit, it was fun, the music was good."

"I wanted to dance because it's fun, you can do anything with dance, break dancing, Caribbean, anything, I never used to dance, I don't know why, there's nothing round my place so I don't do much, I sing and dance along with TV."

One disappointment for the project team and dance teachers was that some of the children who had been to practice sessions did not make it to the rehearsal. It appears that their non-attendance was not entirely an unexpected outcome given that the project sought to include those who were the most difficult to engage. Two issues were raised regarding absenteeism on the day: (a) the difficulty of travelling to the dance centre for some children, (b) low levels of emotional, financial and/or encouraging support from parents.

### 7.3 The Town Centre Performance

Performances in the town centre were held at: 1.00-1.30 and 2.15-2.45 with a workshop after each performance. We collected photographic and video data, conducted face to face interviews with 18 members of the public and 31 questionnaires were completed during the interval.

*Numbers watching:* During the drum introduction at 12.30pm 129 people waited in the area of the performance (this number is *excluding* the 90 participants wearing yellow t-shirts). The following timings and crowd numbers are for people who were watching the event standing still (as opposed to walking past);

1.00 (start of 1 <sup>st</sup> performance)	355
1.20 (1 <sup>st</sup> performance)	432
2.00 (between performances)	182
2.20 (start of 2 <sup>nd</sup> performance)	372
2.35 (2 <sup>nd</sup> performance)	432

### 7.3.1 Observations

*Inclusive:* The whole day seems to be very *inclusive* and successful in drawing in and engaging a large number of people from across the community (i.e. evidence of diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, ability etc.). In addition, diverse ethnic groups and ages were represented by those performing and the wide range of different skill and experience levels were obvious to those watching. The dance teachers leading the groups also represented a wide age range, ethnicity and included both male and female dancers. We suggest these factors helped communicate that dance is an activity form that is an accessible and realistic proposition across the spectrum of society.

*Seating:* The area where the event was staged provided a variety of seating/standing options for members of the public. This meant that some members of the public were able to watch from a distance (perhaps just for a few minutes) while others were able to take a seat for the entire duration of the event (some eating lunch as they watched).

*The music:* The music, drum rhythm and dance seemed to create a carnival atmosphere bringing a perceptible energy and spark to this area of the town centre. We detected a clear shift in the general mood and ‘feel’ within the area between 12.30 (just before the start of the drum intro) and 1.10 (when the first performance was in full swing). We observed more people smiling, laughing, interacting, hanging out together, and moving with the music (everything from tapping toes to full uninhibited dancing on public benches). There was a sense of genuine interest, a large number of people accumulated to watch the performance.

*The big screen:* As there was a large crowd around the periphery of the performance space it made it difficult for people further away to see the dance. Projecting the dance on the big screen therefore was important because it allowed shoppers to know what was happening from some way off. This seemed to help grab and sustain people’s attention, making it possible for people at the back to see the dancers more clearly.

*Public engagement:* At the end of both performances an invitation was made to spectators to join in a workshop. At this time some of the “dancers” ran and tried to persuade friends or family to participate. At times this resulted in a frenzied tug-of-war, as a dancer tried to pull a friend towards the dance area while another person pulled in the opposite direction. Often family members were seen (smiling) being dragged from their position in the crowd. We noted a number of times however that teenagers initially joining-in, but later drifted out, appearing to feel self-conscious and “un-cool” in front of other peers who were teasing them from the sides. We also noted some groups of teenagers joining in by dancing to the music at various locations around the precinct, but, not joining in with the directions of the dance leader nor entering the performance space. Calculating the number of participants who joined in the workshop therefore is rather arbitrary. There were on average 40 people who joined in each workshop within the workshop space, with others coming and going during the workshop. There were also two groups of at least 8 teenagers dancing outside the performance area. Their actions are a demonstration of how people can engage with dance in different ways. For some of the teenagers we observed, they joined in, *in their own way* - and this is important to recognise and acknowledge. The project therefore brought an element of spontaneity and inclusiveness which should the project team should be complimented for.

*Team work/care:* We also observed how this dance event provided a catalyst for children to learn how to work in teams. For example, our field notes provided numerous examples of older children helping younger ones.

*Publicity:* A link between the dance and the “Change4life” campaign was provided over the loud speaker by Tom White, who works across healthy Schools, Change4Life and MEND for the local authority. He also invited members of the public to visit the road show tent, which was set up at the side of the dance area where he and his volunteers distributed change4life leaflets as well as badges, balloons and other food facts and information aimed at children. The invitation to the September 5<sup>th</sup> “come and try” sessions at Swindon Dance was also promoted.

*Feedback from spectators:* Of the members of the public we interviewed, the most common response given for watching was to support friend or family member. After this the next most commonly given reasons were: “*just in town shopping*”, “*heard the drums and came to investigate*”, and “*I read about the event*”. One man we spoke with in his 70’s (who had travelled to Swindon from his home 25 miles away) spoke of being profoundly moved by the performance and offered this response to the event:

Brilliant. This is *brilliant*. This is exactly what we need. This is what Swindon needs.

Of the parents/family present, everyone we spoke to was positive about the impact of the dance event. The following extract from one interview with the mother of a 12-year old girl with cerebral palsy provides a feel for why so many parents are so positive:

“[Name of dance teacher] has been coming in each week, and it’s been absolutely fantastic. Nobody’s dropped out, she (my daughter) just enjoys it so much. We don’t have any trouble actually getting her there. When she comes home she sits there or stands there doing the dances. We couldn’t really work out what she was doing until we saw it in the performance! She is a bit behind everybody else, but she’s got her own way of trying to do it. I mean this morning, she was so excited, she couldn’t sleep last night, so excited about doing it, joining in, it’s a big thing, you know. And it’s nice for them to be involved with other children without disabilities, they get invited to a lot of things with people with disabilities and even though she’s got cerebral palsy we want her to be actually in the community, being involved and also, for the other people to see children with disabilities joining in. Her Nan does salsa dancing and I think she felt good cause she had something in common with her Nan, she could show her what she’d been doing, could dance with her, that sort of thing.”

It was very common when we asked parents with young children “Do you dance?” to receive the response that they used to “*go clubbing*” but that had stopped when they had children. Most adults seemed happy to encourage their children to dance but had not seriously considered dancing again themselves. Parents with young children appeared to be less likely to be physically active and often suggested they have no time for their own physical activity.

### **7.3.2 Demographic information from Adapted Dance Tent Questionnaire**

*Gender:* 31 questionnaires were completed by people who remained in the dance area in the short interval between performances. Of these, 29% (n=9) were completed by males and 71% (n=22) by females. As with the Exmouth event the higher percentage of females does not reflect that there were necessarily more females in the crowd, but rather, that when a male and female couple were approached and asked to either fill in a questionnaire or give an interview, the common response would be for the male to volunteer the female.

*Area of residence:* Of the 31 questionnaires completed, post codes were noted on 29 and all of these were Swindon post codes. The most frequently noted was from SN3 n=9 (31%) with SN1 n=8 (28%), SN2 n=6 (21%), SN4 and SN5 both with two respondents (each 7%) and SN6 and SN7 with one person each (3%) of those completing questionnaires.

*Change4Life:* 52% (n=16) of people said they were aware of the Change4Life campaign, and of these 14 respondents accurately answered the question “what do you believe Change4life is about?” These respondents had been made aware of the campaign through television advertisement (n=4) through school (n=1), family (n=2), work (n=1), the internet (n=3) and through the local supermarket (n=1). Fifteen questionnaires (48%) were completed by people who, prior to this performance, had not been aware of Change4Life campaign.

*Lets Dance:* Of the 94% (n=30) of respondents who responded to the question “have you heard of “lets dance with Change4life?” 71% (n=23) were unaware of the dance campaign. Of the 7 people who said they were aware the only method reported was through the school (n=1).

*Non-dancers:* Of those who did not identify with dance, which was 38% (n=12) of those completing the questionnaire, the most frequent reason given for *not dancing* was “no time” reported by 11 people. Nine people responded that they were “too old” with four people mentioning that they “can’t dance,” too far to travel (n=4) or too expensive (n=4). Other factors were “*don’t know where classes are taking place*” (n=3) “*not interested in dance*” (n=2) “*constant pain due to arthritis*” (n=1), and “*no Cajun locally*” (n=1). The ages of respondents believing they were too old to dance ranged from 21 to 59 years of age with five of these being in their 20’s, one in their 30’s and two in their 50’s.

*Dancers:* Of those who self identified as being involved in some type of dancing, which was 62% (n=20) of those completing the questionnaire, 4% (n=1) attended a dance classes, 54% (n=13) danced socially for pleasure, and 42% (n=10) said they danced at home. Four people reported to take weekly classes, 5 to take classes once or twice a month and two people wrote “*as often as possible*” with Street, disco, Caribbean, Cajon, Bollywood, Salsa, Hip-hop, modern, Mannian, and Ballroom being listed.

*Motivation:* When asked why they dance, the most frequent reason given by 5 respondents was “*the music.*” Other factors were friends or the rhythm (n=2) others wrote “*being in town*”, “*keeping fit*”, “*enjoyment*” and “*dance is my passion*”.

*Reasons for watching the performance:*

Reason given	Number of responses	%
Family or Friends	15	46%
No answer	6	19%
Serendipity/out shopping	5	16%
Looked interesting	4	13%
The samba band	2	6%

Of those who said attendance was by chance, one 59 year old woman wrote, “*how beautiful to see children of different races dancing,*” another wrote “*a sound in the town*” alerted them to something happening. These comments provide further evidence that the performers represented a multicultural society and that music and rhythms are effective ways to draw people’s attention.

## 7.5 Follow up event

Sixty-two people signed up to try “taster” sessions of Caribbean, Jazz or Street dancing following the town centre performances, of these 35 were adults and 27 were children. Two male artists taught each of the Caribbean and Street and a female artist taught the Jazz class. Data was collected throughout the day via interviews, focus groups and observation. The following themes capture the main issues evident in the data.

*High level of support:* Nearly every child attending was delivered and collected by parent/s who would then leave. All parents we spoke with, (in the few minutes between dropping or collecting) appeared well dressed, well spoken and often returned having spent their time shopping. While information regarding ethnicity was not elicited, the 23 children participating in sessions were females who in appearance looked Anglo-Saxon and there were no individuals with a visible disability present.

*Proactive parenting:* When asked how they had heard about the taster sessions some parents had been made aware through the town centre event or promotional literature linked with it. However, there were many parents who had found information about the taster sessions on the internet. As the following extract shows, others were made aware through their social networks. The following extract is from a focus group, with two adult females one male, (parents) and 5 children (who were participating in the day), and provides some background,

Researcher: How did you hear about today's event?

Male: I've a friend who works at the council, they keep us up to date with all the things that are going on.

Researcher: And then you tell your other friends?

Two Women: Yes! (laughing)

Researcher: Is this the first time your children have been to something here?

Male: No, they did course in the summer.

1<sup>st</sup> Woman: Yeah, it is for us, we couldn't get on that one, we were too late booking it! (laughs)

Researcher: (to male) Do you dance?

Male: No, I've not thought about dancing, I've got two left feet, I like more competitive things (looking at daughter) she doesn't take after me, her mother dances

1<sup>st</sup> woman: I'd like to do salsa but my husband doesn't want to know

Male: That's a shame, I can see you doing that! (all laugh)

2<sup>nd</sup> Woman: I'd like to have a go but I've just had a baby, I'd like to get back to it though.

While the aim of Swindon Dance was to invite individuals who had not tried dance before, a perhaps inevitable result of their promotional work, as the above shows, is that proactive parents, who seek out "free" session and events, ensure their children gain access. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing and ensures some children are increasing their physical activity through dance, it once again highlights the problem of those children have who do not get this type parental support or encouragement.

*Dance is a children's activity:* During the day the Change4life road show was hosted in the foyer of Swindon Dance with posters, tee shirts, badges and balloons being provided which gave the appearance that the event as aimed at children. For example, there was little or no information on healthy eating or physical activity for adults. When asked about this issue, it appeared that no posters or leaflets have yet been created for adults. Interviews with parents showed that parents also seemed to believe that dance was a children's activity, rather than an adult one, and one that was for females, not for males or for those who are "sporty" and competitive. Three families provided exceptions to this. The following extract from field notes shows how one family joined in:

A group of four came up the stairs slowly, looking around the building as they came, an adult male, smiling, well built, an adult woman, wearing wooden jewellery, also smiling, behind them a boy with shoulder length hair and a girl with long brown hair tied in a pig tale.

Researcher: Is this your first time here?

Male: Yes

Researcher: Do you dance?

Male: No  
Researcher: Why's that?  
Male: (after short pause) I've never ever considered, I mean, it hasn't even entered my head  
Researcher: So, would you if you could? (turning to organisers) Can parents join in?  
Head of Education: Yes, that'll be alright if parents want to join in the sessions, that's fine isn't it (looking at class leader)?  
Class leader: Yeah fine with me

As a result, all four family members joined in the Caribbean Funk. After 20 minutes the adult female (red faced and glowing with perspiration) came to the water fountain in the coffee area.

Woman: We thought we were going for a 15 minute taster session...45 minutes later (huge laugh) my boobs have been going up and down and my tummy's been up and down!  
(A few minutes later)  
Dance class leader: (poking his head round the door) OK everyone, back in!  
Woman: (laughing) Slave driver!  
Researcher: Are you enjoying it though?  
Woman: Brilliant!

While the above chance opportunity came about because the researcher asked if adults could join in, it was also important that the family above were open to the suggestion that dance was an activity they could all participate in, and rather than sitting and watching their children these parents took to the floor. As the above shows, for some families dance provides an opportunity to do an activity *with* children and some parents, given encouragement, join in, however, other parents also highlighted the importance of their children being given the opportunity to develop their own interests without their joining in;

"We just dropped Dan, we stay and watch sometimes, but we like him to have his space – parents need space from kids and kids need space from parents. It's getting the balance though, them not thinking you are getting rid of them, and us not chasing round after them."  
"We came because *he* wanted to do it and we don't want to encroach on his thing, his "activity" you know, we don't want him to think we are taking over."  
"I don't want to invade her space."

*No Time and I can't*: Once again, "lack of time" and a belief that "I can't dance" were factors adults gave for not dancing.

"I've no time for me, by the time I've run around after all of them, we say one activity each, otherwise it's too much." (Mother of four)  
"I used to dance years ago, there's just so many things to think about, for your kids, that things for your self get pushed down the list." (Mother of two).  
"You spend so much time organising your children and looking after them, the bottom of the list is your own health, and we haven't always got child care." (Mother of two)  
"I *know* I have two left feet, I don't want to make a fool of myself, I've just got two dogs and although they are small they get me out, and I've just had an operation, (moving closer, laughing then talking quietly) I might, (join in dance) but it would have to be at my level." (Mother of two)

While the research carried out at the taster session was limited, it nevertheless provided a micro-view of what we have observed at every event; (a) Adults commonly say they have

little time to devote to their own health/physical activity needs; (b) for some adults, *dance* does not fit with their identity (*male, sporty, competitive*), and; (c) low levels of confidence along with perceptions of low skill/physical ability prohibit many women participating.

## **7.6 Legacy**

Due to the success of the dance classes at Crowdys School a school dance club has now been scheduled.

Collaboration between NHS Swindon, Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Dance has provided awareness of what each organisation can contribute to dance/health projects.

18 bookings from people who are new to dance have been taken following the Swindon Dance day of taster sessions.

The Caribbean dance class, initiated for the project, has become a regular class at Swindon Dance with 18 attendees.

Involvement in the project has been an educational process for artists delivering dance enabling practitioners to be more aware of health issues and better equipped to deliver dance projects that support healthy lifestyles.

## **8. THE BRIDGEWATER PROJECT**

The aim of the Bridgwater project was for students from Bridgwater College to create a high profile dance performance. This in turn would be taught to primary and secondary school children, youth groups, dance schools and organisations, community groups and Bridgwater Carnival organisation who would then perform the routine at Angel Place in the town centre.

The performance would culminate in a mass participation dance where members of the public would be invited to join in. This session would be lead by dance teachers.

### **8.1 Project Team Partners**

The Bridgwater project saw a collaboration between NHS Somerset, Sedgemoor District Council, Bridgwater College, TakeArt and two representatives from Department of Health South West, who provided direction and links with the Department of Health and Strategic Health.

In the original brief this project was to be managed by “TakeArt.” At some stage in its early development, however, the designated project lead suggested that due to the time demands of the project she would be unable to carry out this role. It was still possible for this individual to provide some support and continuity to the project. It appears Bridgwater College took over responsibility for the project and a new project lead was appointed. These delays meant the project date was rescheduled for later in the year.

By July it would be fair to say the new project lead had received such positive support from partners with so many creative ideas about how the project could progress that there was a danger that, “too many cooks would spoil the broth.” That is, the project lead was “*swamped*” by ideas and tasks created from project planning meetings and attempting to meet the variety tasks inherent with this project during her 0.2 contract teaching dance at Bridgwater College.

During these planning meetings the original brief was developed and expanded and the event start place was changed with two locations in the town centre being used in the hope that it would make a bigger impact. A new venue, Blake Gardens, was also selected and it was decided there would be a variety of taster sessions which would be run by both able-bodied and disability dance groups. Alongside the taster session on a different stage a variety of dance groups, clubs and students would perform on the main stage. At other locations in the gardens there would be promotional literature available about local dance classes as well as refreshment. The day would culminate in a mass participation dance routine that had been taught to primary school children.

### **8.2 Data collection**

Due to this project taking place several months after the proceeding projects there was some urgency in finishing data collection and making the report available. This has meant there was little post event data collected. However, it was possible to balance this deficit by taking the opportunity to collect more in depth data before the event. This was carried out among college students, children and teachers through attending the school performance and rehearsals.

### **8.3 School Performances & Rehearsal**

Five schools were invited to participate in the Bridgwater project, these were: Sedgemoor Manor, Westover Green, St John and St Francis, Puriton and St Mary's primary schools. Data were collected at Puritan and Sedgemoor Primary School in the week before the town centre event during a special school performance.

### 8.3.1 Puritan Primary School performance 12<sup>th</sup> October

Puritan primary school held their school performance on the 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2010. Interviews were conducted with all 10 parents (9 female and 1 male) attending the performance. Five parents were aware of “Change4life” campaign and four were involved in dance classes themselves. Six parents suggested their children “*already dance*” at weekly dance classes. However, parents made it clear that the Boot Dance was something special, that their children were excited about performing in the town centre, and that they had really enjoyed participating, the following extracts provide illustrations of these points;

“She’s so enthusiastic, looking forward to the performance, she’s been doing it for six weeks and she said she already wants to do it again!”

“She showed me the dance routine, and her sister, she taught her younger sister the dance, they do switch, a children’s version.”

“She loves it, comes out enthusiastic, practices at home.”

“They’ve enjoyed it, keep coming home happy, I haven’t seen it yet, it’s a secret but her older sister’s been doing it.”

Before the primary school pupils performed, Bridgwater College students performed their dance in the school hall. The project lead then provided some context to the dance linking it with national Change4life campaign and physical activity. Twenty children (2 boys 18 girls) then performed a Boot Dance style routine to their school year, teachers and parents.

At the end of the dance the project lead invited all the teachers, watching pupils, parents, and students to join in with the dance. Four of the ten parents joined in while the remainder moved slowly to the back of the room where they were less in evidence and appeared not to want to be noticed or to join in. One boy stood alone in the midst of the whole group of dancing children and did not move at all, while all the other children danced round and about him, smiling. At the completion of the dance the NHS Somerset Health Promotion Manager gave a short talk prompting the children with questions about healthy eating and physical activity. Turning to the performers she asked, “*How does dance make you feel?*” to which one child answered, “*Tired!*” Less surprising were other cries of, “*Excited*” “*Joyful*” and “*Cool.*” From the smiles and excited behaviour it appeared that children had enjoyed the performance, found it challenging, but, also noticeable in children’s responses was a degree of self awareness that something which was physically difficult, was now a little less so, as the following comment illustrates;

“To begin with it was difficult because it was new to me, to begin with I was tired, then that went.”

When asked about the Town Centre event to come most children we spoke with seemed to relish the date, while two children seemed apprehensive about performing in public saying, “*I’m scared of performing because of all the people staring at me.*”

Following the performance a group interview took place with one class of 15 children who were not involved in the performance. Responses suggest that many of these children wanted to be part of the Boot Dance, but, the after school club clashed with other activities they participated in (such as swimming). Many of the group also appeared to be active with one sport or another, with one child recounting a list of activities he was involved with which included golf, football, swimming, cycling, and skateboarding. Other children when asked about dancing suggested simply that, “*it’s not what I like doing.*”

### 8.3.2 Sedgemoor Manor Community School performance 13<sup>th</sup> October

Sedgemoor Manor Community School held their school performance on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, in the playground so that more children could watch. Interviews were conducted with all six parents and grandparents that attended. None of these were involved in dance and two were aware of Change4life. Two parents seemed initially ambivalent when asked about their children's experience of the dance project, however, the first mother's comments later reveal how important dance had become to her daughter;

Interviewer: What do you perceive your daughter thinks about the project?

Parent A: I don't know, she doesn't say a whole lot about it to be honest, just when I ask, "*Was that ok?*" she says, "*Yeah*"

Parent B: Mine's the same, that's all I get

Interviewer: Is this the first time she's taken a dance class?

Parent A: Yeah, she never done anything like this coz she's a bit of a tom boy, so I was surprised she's giving up playing football on Saturday to go to the town centre to perform, so it must be important to her.

The *non-communication* of children apparent in the previous extract was consistent with other parents we interviewed here as the following extracts illustrate, the first from a mother and the second from two Grand parents;

"He hasn't said much about it, he's never danced before, he just brought this letter home and said, "*can I do this?*" And every time he's been, he seemed to enjoy it."

"We were given the call, to say come. We don't know anything about it."

Twenty-six children were involved in the performance, (16 girls; 6 boys). When asked how many attended other dance classes 13 hands were raised. The procedure at Sedgemoor followed the one at Puritan School, with the project lead introducing the event and providing some background and context, then students from Bridgwater College performed followed by the primary school children. At the completion of both of these performances all the other school children, parents and teachers were invited to join in. Many children rushed forward at this point, but no parents joined in nor did most of the teachers. While there were around 200 children dancing, around 100 children sat out on benches in quite cool weather. We spoke with 20 of these, who in the main were boys, lovers of football who played a variety of sport.

As a snapshot, the scene at Sedgemoor Community School captured much of what we had learned and seen at other locations. Firstly, that many people engage in an activity because of friends, which means they can be held back as well as encouraged. The following extended extract from field notes provides some context to this issue;

Children had carried benches from the school hall to the playground to provide seating for the performance, these were all full until the call came to "join in" and then a mass of fidgety children keen for action jumped and ran forward leaving most of the benches empty. However, while the music blared and two thirds of the school danced enthusiastically little groups of children remained stuck on the bench like mud on a shoe.

"Why are you guys not dancing?" I asked coming up to a line of 8 boys and one girl, kneeling down to make eye level contact. The little girl couldn't sit still and was bunny-hopping back and over the end bench as I talked.

"I hate dance," shouted one boy "I can't dance" screamed another. They all shouted so quickly I couldn't write too many comments and hadn't had time to turn on my Dictaphone. Regardless, the children were transfixed by it, and shouted towards it which made me smile. "I hate dancing, I watch it on the telly and it's stupid," said another lad further away.

“What makes it stupid?” I asked. Three children responded at once: “The rules!” “I don’t like this,” said another making clapping moves with his hands while the third said, “I like break dancing, and hip hop.” “I play football, tennis and basket ball” said a boy on the bench to my right.

“What do you like about those?” I tried to ask “He’s really good at them” said the boy next to him “he’s my brother” “I like shiny things” he said standing up, “I like winning things!” “Oh I see” I said while the girl continued bunny-hopping and smiling.

“Do you want to join in?” I asked the girl. She nodded yes. “It’s OK” I replied, you can go and join in. She continued bunny hopping the bench. “Do you want me to take you over?” I said, offering my hand which she took immediately and was lead to the group where she immediately started following instructions. One of three boys on the front bench grabbed my attention as I came back, leaning closer he said, “I want to join in, but Dan won’t.” “So do I!” said the boy next to him, then asking me, he said “Will *you* ask Dan.” I found it funny and sad that two young boys wanted to join in but were being held back by a *friend*. “Dan” I said, taking a liberty by using his name, “Why don’t you join in?” Dan didn’t answer and didn’t join in.

As the above shows, some children’s participation is restricted because their friends will not join in the activity. For children who want trophies and to win, events that are participatory, like dance, provide no opportunity to win, and therefore are these activities can be “judged” as not worth trying. While the number that sat out was not insignificant, it was a minority. In contrast over 200 children seemed to have great fun stopping, clapping and moving to the music. At the end of the dance the project lead asked those children who were not involved in other dance classes if they would like to continue to attend dance classes; 40 children raised their hands in response.

Following the dance, interviews were conducted with ten children (5 boys) and three teachers. All the children seemed to have enjoyed the dance project, some were nervous about the performance at the weekend, and many talked about practising the routine at home. One interview, with two girls aged 7, stood out exemplifying the way that children have made the project their own:

Interviewer: Did you enjoy that?

A & B (in unison): Yeah!

Interviewer: What did you enjoy about it?

A: Yeah it keeps us fit and healthy

Interviewer: OK, suppose it didn’t keep you fit would you still like doing it?

A: Yeah

Interviewer: Why is that?

B: I like - shall I answer or will you?

A: You can go and then I will

B: I like spending time with my friend

Interviewer: And did you practice together?

A: Yes at home

B: Yeah sometimes

A: Sometimes, we went other places to practice

Interviewer: Did you, where did you go to practice?

A: We went to the part

B: Wow, you went to the park, what about the music?

A: I put it on my phone

The above shows once again how the dance project has given children something to practice for, and something worth practicing such that it enhances friendships and has allowed these children to nominate their own space and time for practice.

### 8.3.3 Bridgwater College Rehearsal

Bridgwater College students, (one male and 11 female) aged 17/18 years of age were interviewed following rehearsals. All reported being very physically active and other activities they participated in included running, swimming, gym, cycling, and rugby. When describing their involvement in the project several themes characterised the importance of the project.

*Health Message:* Firstly, when asked if this project was different or similar to other dance events students made it clear that “lets dance with Change4life” was different because there was an important health message which was central:

“There’s a point to it, to like inspire people to change their lifestyle, it’s not just another dance project.”

“It’s like you are doing it for the community.”

“Some young people don’t have the chance to go to dance, so we’ve helped them find out that they like it, and they get the confidence to do it.”

*Enthusiasm of children:* Students were aware of how keen many primary school children had been to learn to dance, it wasn’t that children were being forced or coerced. Students also described being inspired by children due to how enthusiastic they had become about learning the dance routine and preparing to perform.

“I think it’s good that we’ve worked with younger people, ‘cause usually it’s just us, so it’s nice to get involved with primary school children and try and get them involved in dancing, and they were getting excited about it.”

“There were a few that hanged back but as they watched the others then they wanted to join in.”

*Gaining public acknowledgment:* Regarding their own public performance students described the importance of social esteem and that being given an opportunity to show their work through public performance was both adding value to their own work while at the same time promoting an activity they were passionate about:

“It’s like spreading the word, like our work, if you actually do it (perform) for people.”

“A lot of parents didn’t realise their kids would enjoy dance but now parents see their kids have enjoyed it they might take them to dance.”

### 8.4 Bridgwater Town Centre Dance Event

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October the Bridgwater event got under way. We collected photographic and video data, and conducted face to face interviews with 35 people attending the day, or participating in workshops. Of these 22 were aware of the Change4life campaign.

To start the programme two groups of students from Bridgwater college performed at two venues in the Town Centre, then, meeting up, they lead a procession to Blake Gardens. This venue is a beautiful park close to the town centre the size of six football pitches with one main path leading through it. A stage was erected in one area of the park facing the path and flower beds. Two smaller performance spaces were created for taster session in two areas near the main stage. There were a dozen park benches around the performance space but many people brought chairs and sat and watched for the whole afternoon.

As the afternoon progressed more people and more people sat on the grass enjoying the October sunshine with many people picnicking, and there seemed to be a very happy carnival atmosphere. As more people gradually came to the central stage there were eventually too many people watching for people to see clearly unless they pushed through to the front. Noticeable in the crowd were wheelchairs, push chairs, people with walking sticks, and the crowd seemed to represent a cross-generational group. While many of the people in the park had come to watch a family member participate there were also regular park goers present, as in the following extract with a mother sitting with her son:

“We have an attachment for the wheelchair so I could go cycling and me and another woman who has a son similar to mine, we went out and did 15 miles the other week. I need a week to recover, I didn’t know this was on, we just came down to have a picnic.”

Smaller groups were present around the street running exhibition/taster session to the right of the stage or the more central workshop space to the left of the stage.

*Numbers participating in performances and workshops:* Despite a concerted effort by the project lead to involve a wide variety of dance practitioners she felt the invitation to lead taster sessions or perform had been poor. However, a full programme of diverse events was put together. The following chart provides an overview of the number of people participating in workshops/taster sessions during the afternoon and the number of people watching performances on the main stage.

Time	Main stage performers	Spectators watching Main stage	Workshop	Participants	Street Running
12:00	Introduction	240			
12:20	LA Festival	290	Rock & Roll	34 watching 20 participating	
12:30	Robert Blake	240	Samba	15 watching 30 participating	35 watching
12:40	Seroc	140			
12:50	Bridgwater College LA Festival	170	Street Dance		
1:15	LA Festival East Bridgwater School Elementz	170	Cerlobeat	16	16 participating
1:35	Interview with primary school children Anna, Disability & Stop Gap	385 80 Sitting on the grass, 305 standing		17	22 watching
1:40	Primary school performance				
1:45	Audience invited to join in	500 dancing including children and adults 220 without yellow T shirts			
1:50			Stopgap	16 including mixed ability, special needs, & all ages	

*Feedback form workshop participants:* As the chart above shows, over 100 people took part in taster sessions at different times during the day. While some of these were obviously, (due to their yellow t-shirts) involved in the project, there were also people who were new to the particular class they were attending. The main reasons people gave for joining in one of the taster session/workshop were; (a) an opportunity to try something new, or; (b) as a catalyst to getting back into dance, as the following extracts show:

“Cause we do jiving, we thought we’d try something a bit difference.”

“I can’t dance at all, I’ve never done anything like this, I use to do tap and do ballet but I haven’t done it for years, what with child care and work...and now it’s just, finding the right thing. I’ve never seen anything like this, it’s great to do new things, these are my daughters, they do ballet but would like to do something different so we came.”

In the main, it seemed to be people who were already dancers and already positive about dance who joined in taster sessions, not people who had never danced or tried dancing who participated. One parent watching provided some insight into why some people are reluctant to join in;

“Inside I’m a size 10 trying to get out, but I don’t want to feel guilty about being the size I am. I *know* the weight on my knees, I don’t need to be told, but, that’s (the dance class) like being back in school and I don’t want to be *the* fat kid in the class. At this point in my life I’m with all the mums and they are all doing the run for life, or jogging or going to the gym, and you do feel a lot of pressure.”

For this woman, going to a dance class would make her feel “guilty” because of her weight. While participating in dance may be one route to reduce her weight, the negative experience of how others relate to her is too big a barrier to her participating in a class.

*Feedback from spectators:* A large number of people attending the event were parents and grand parents and it seemed that there were lots of mums and dads pushing or carrying young children. Feedback from people watching was enthusiastic about the event and commonly people would say “*I’ve never seen anything like this here.*” However, there was also a sense that the event was mainly for children, as the following suggests;

“This is inspirational, it’s fantastic, it does make me want to do it, but the motivation goes after a while. To be honest with you, you have this like window, time, in your life, I used to go clubbing, but now, it’s about my kids. So as far as dancing is concerned, I look forward to the family parties!”

The tents with information about local dance classes seemed to draw a steady crowd throughout the afternoon and provide important links for some parents, like the mother in the following extract, who needed help in finding a suitable class;

“My girls have been on to me since this started, about doing a dance class. They do *any* dancing that the school puts on and they love it. They’ve never done any classes before ‘cause I can’t afford them, times two! But I’ll go and have a look at the leaflets on one of those stands and see if there’s something I can afford.”

The above raises an additional issue we notes among some parents for whom paying for dance classes isn’t an option, especially if there is more than one child in the family, regardless of how eagerly children want to participate.

*Feedback from teachers:* While not all the teachers from the primary schools had been involved in the project many came to support the school and event. Feedback from teachers was very positive with some teachers writing and providing feedback to the project lead at completion of the project. The following extract from one teacher provides some important insights on three points; (a) that the project was seen as an important event; (b) that those who do not usually engage with PE became interested and; (c) it provided a vehicle for one child to teach another, all of which suggest that some children would have increased their physical activity levels as a direct result of the dance project;

“The children (and adults!) really enjoyed the event. The children have been buzzing about it all week and we even spent some of our PE time yesterday teaching the dance to other members of the class. The girls from my class are desperate to teach the whole school and have asked me if I can set up a gumboot dancing club for them as they miss it!”

“All of the children, even those who didn't come on Saturday, really enjoyed learning the dance and performing it in front of others. I also believe that it has helped them to become more active; one girl forgot her PE kit for the whole of year 4 and now is bringing her PE kit in every week because she wants to learn how to dance. I'm not sure that this would have been the case if she wasn't part of the gumboot dance.”  
“There were also two boys who took part that are shy and do not normally take part in afterschool clubs, especially dancing. One of the dancers is autistic and we have found it very hard to get them to go to afterschool clubs and she is suddenly asking me, “*when we can do the dance again.*””

### **8.5 Legacy**

While not without problems, the partnerships created to run the Bridgewater event now have a greater understanding of what is achievable, in terms of dance/health projects within the Segemoor area, as well as an understanding about how the aims diverse organisations intersect and what each partner might contribute. These insights will facilitate the implementation of future projects that are currently in an embryonic stage of development.

Described as; “brilliant creative team-work” by one partner, individuals from the Department of Health, Somerset PCT and NHS, Sedgemoor District Council, Take Art, Bridgewater Town Council and Bridgewater College have created a template or model for mass participation projects in this area and a commitment to use this model to target inactivity.

Involvement in the project was an educational process for practitioners and students from Bridgewater College. Initially their role was to inspire children to participate through performing, and then later, to teach the routine to children. At the completion of the project, however, practitioners described the practical lessons they had learned which stands as a lasting legacy improving the delivery of dance. Practitioners and dance students are now better equipped to deliver dance projects that support healthy lifestyles.

Evidence suggests there are now more opportunities opening up to teach dance in local schools and an interest has been generated in schools that were not part of the project.

Due in no small part to the way the dance students and practitioners interacted with children and teachers, there is now a great deal of good will between those involved in the project and local schools.

Many children have been introduced to dance, some for the first time, and their involvement has been such a positive experience that they have become enthusiastically committed to looking for any opportunities to dance.

## 9. DISCUSSION

The preceding sections show how four projects successfully created mass participation events that, promoted Change4life, brought together dance and health agencies, raised the public awareness of dance and provided thousands of children in Plymouth as well as hundred of children in other areas an opportunity to take part in a dance event. There has been an increase in partnership working and a greater understanding between partners of the limitation and strengths that each bring. The following explores major themes in the data from across the projects.

### 9.1 Evidence of how the project may have increased children's physical activity

*Feedback from parents:* Across all the projects parents reported children were talking “incessantly” about dance and the about event. Parents were also aware that children were practicing the routine at home, teaching siblings, having friends round to practice and finding outdoor spaces to practice. This was outside school time, and without parental encouragement or supervision. Many parents also reported giving in to “badgering” by their children and have now enrolled them in dance classes.

*Interviews with children:* Our interviews with children also picked up on how much children had enjoyed practicing dancing such that some downloaded music on to computers or phones, would practice with friends of their own volition, without parental supervision and in places and ways that were autonomous.

*Feedback from teachers:* Interviews with teachers showed the project engaged children who teachers believe are the most difficult to reach. That is, children who do not usually get involved with sport, physical activity or after school clubs were motivated to dance. One teacher using as an example a child who had forgotten to bring their sport kit for the whole of term is now bringing the correct clothing because she wants to dance. Teachers reported some children, who at first would not do more than 10 minutes dance, now dance the whole session.

We believe these points suggest there has been an increase in physical activity levels among some children. A great deal of research has shown that physical activity experiences in childhood influence adult physical activity, therefore, if we can turn young people on to physical activity, through dance, at a young age, and make it a positive experience it is much more likely they will continue as they get older. If some children have become passionate and more skilful in dance, and have gained even a degree of self confidence about dancing in public as a result of lets dance with Change4life, then these projects may have provided a lasting legacy through helping some young people become active across the life span.

### 9.2 Evidence for increasing adults physical activity

There were two adult groups we identified for whom project may have increased physical activity levels.

*Dancers:* People who signed up for taster session or joined in the workshops at Exmouth, Swindon and Bridgwater communicated a desire to “try something new” or “different.” For some of these adults, who were already taking dance classes and are positive about dance, new and different classes are being taken in addition to previous classes, The Caribbean class that started as part of the Swindon project is a case in point, some of the members of this group were already taking part in other dance classes and are now supporting this new group.

*Getting back to dance:* Several women we interviewed said, “I used to dance, but what with work or children! Dance had to go.” For these individuals, their children have grown up and

therefore now there is time to devote to dance. For this group, who were looking to join a dance class, the taster sessions provided the perfect step towards this goal.

### **9.3 Evidence for increasing awareness of Change4life**

*Reaching wider audience:* 30% of respondents at Exmouth and 48% of respondents at Swindon had not heard of the Change4life campaign – they now have witnessed the events described in this report. The dance events therefore seem to have played an important part in promoting Change4life and dance for health to groups for whom other promotional strategies and advertising campaigns had failed to reach.

*Chance encounters:* 25% of people questioned at Exmouth and 16% of people questioned at Swindon were not intending to come to the events but had been alerted by the music, colourful tee shirts, banners, balloons, and signs and had come to investigate. From this we can surmise that; (a) people's lives are not always scheduled and planned, but that serendipity plays a part and; (b) these dance events seem to attract a crowd and thus there is an opportunity to use chance encounters at public events to promote health messages.

### **9.4 Reasons people gave for not dancing**

*Already Active:* Perhaps the most obvious and of least concern, in terms of health, of reasons people gave for not dancing were those children and adults who were already involved in other types of physical activity and sport.

*No Time:* A common theme in the data collected across events was that that many parents with young children find work, organising children and managing the home fills all the available time within their day. This point is relevant across physical activity modes and is not restricted to dance. At the same time many of the individuals interviewed experienced a degree of tension knowing that they were unable to be more active. Several mothers we interviewed suggested that they believe for a short time in one's life, life has to be moulded round children and their needs, regardless of the personal consequences.

*Can't dance:* Many people we interviewed reported that they, “could not dance” with comments like, “I know I have two left feet.” It is hardly surprising that many adults would not participate as doing so would risk making public their perceived incompetence. Such a stance we believe reflects a perception that in order to dance a person needs to have a degree of skill or competence. Our interest with this type of individual is *where* and *how* did this perception arise? Given that even in the play ground some children said they, “couldn't dance” there is much that needs to be done by the exercise practitioner or health promoters to break down this fundamental barrier to dance participation. It seems that saying “we are all in the same boat” or “just do it” are not effective strategies to help these individuals participate.

*Low self esteem/body image:* Research has shown that females commonly have lower confidence and a more negative body image compared to males. Negative body image, and not wanting to feel guilty about one's shape or size were issues some women described which prohibited participation in any exercise class, not just dance.

*Dance is for kids:* Many adults we interviewed saw the campaign as targeting children and many also perceived dance to be a children's activity: these parents were happy to support their children but did not to join in. Given that there are huge numbers of parents sitting and watching children participate every day, there seems to be an ideal opportunity to get parents moving if dance event organisers and practitioners can target adults more.

### **9.5 Dance & gender**

Findings suggest that dance is still perceived by many people to be a *female activity*. We also noted some comments to suggest that some activities such as playing football, are still seen as being a *male domain*, with the use of “Tom boy” still being used to describe a girl who plays football.

## 9.6 Evidence of inclusion

Each of the projects were able to achieve a degree of “inclusion.” While is perhaps impossible to target every excluded group within one project the following summarises how different projects met their aim to be inclusive.

1. Older and younger children danced together at school, in playgrounds, school clubs and at home, in all projects.
2. The DVD produced by Plymouth included the not so skilled as well as skilled dancers.
3. At the Piazza in Plymouth there were people aged from 7 to 70 dancing together, and at the Swindon event one adult group performing in the town centre included women in their 70's.
4. Special schools were included in the projects of Plymouth, Swindon and Bridgwater.
5. People with a disability lead taster sessions at Bridgwater.
6. One of the dance groups performing at Swindon were from a special school.
7. Youth groups and schools from areas where health inequalities are high were included at Swindon.

## 9.7 Things people got from participating

The benefits of participating in one of four dance events are summarised below.

1. Increase in confidence - was mentioned by teachers and parents.
2. Increase in self (body) awareness - was mentioned by parents and teachers
3. Recognition - was mentioned by practitioners and children
4. Increase in self esteem - was mentioned by children when they spoke about loving dance because they had learned new moves, and by teachers who suggested for children who find curriculum subjects difficult, it has increased their own self esteem through teaching and helping other students.
5. Contributing to health of young people - mentioned by college students
6. Motivation to start new school clubs, take classes, attend INSET, facilitate dance project and performance - was mentioned by teachers

## 9.9 Motivation

It was clear from the data that there were a variety of things which motivate people to dance, the music, the event, being part of something, parties and alcohol were all mentioned. However, one theme evident in the data that strongly supports other research and is important for health promoters to take on board, is what we call a *relational orientation*<sup>3</sup> people as opposed to for the self. Relational actions identified in the dance projects were (a) fathers

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<sup>3</sup> For more on Relational Orientation see; Carless, D and Douglas, K. (2010). *Sport and Physical Activity for mental health*. Wiley- Blackwell.

Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2009). Abandoning the performance narrative: Two women's stories of transition from professional golf. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. 21(2), 213-230.

Douglas, K. (2009). Storying my self: Negotiating a relational identity in professional sport. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*. 1(2), 176-190.

Gilligan, C., 1993. *In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

joining in dance *for* their children, (b) children dancing to be *with* their friends, (c) mothers giving up their physical activity *for* children and (d) children not participating because one friend wouldn't join in. While there is much that could be written about this issue which is beyond the scope of this report, it is worth flagging up how important relationships are and how much they influence human action or inaction. Health promotions which only target self improvement and an individual's own health are likely to be ineffective with large portions of our society because many of us are oriented to "others" not "self."

## **10. FINAL REFLECTIONS**

Throughout the evaluation process we have had the pleasure of observing and interviewing a variety of dance practitioners. Their perspectives, philosophies, ethics, observations and insights however have not been fully tapped in this evaluation as the focus was the dance events, not the practitioner. It is important to acknowledge the important input of these practitioners by documenting and learning from their experiences of delivering "let's dance with Change4life." We feel there is much to be learned from data collected during this evaluation that could be explored and disseminated more fully for colleagues, other organisers of dance events as well as those in education for its pedagogical content.