

The Social Value of Movement and Dance to the UK - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Estimates, information and forecasts contained within this report are based on the data obtained at that time and the accuracy of resultant findings and recommendations is dependent on the quality of that data.

The author(s) will not be held liable for any data or information provided within this document. The document has been created in collaboration with the project steering group. While the data and recommendations have been continuously reviewed throughout the process, it has not been possible for the author to independently review and verify every element of data provided by third parties.

Acknowledgement

The development of this report has been driven by Tracy Levy, Chair of the Alliance's Movement and Dance Division. Tracy's vision for the work was to deliver a step-change in how the members of the Movement and Dance Division articulate the value of the activity they work so hard to facilitate. As with any project of this scale, the work has not been achieved in isolation. 38 individuals, each highly experienced in the delivery of movement and dance, lent their expertise and knowledge to a series of workshops and consultations. From these consultations a wealth of first-hand evidence was gathered, testifying to the value movement and dance delivers to its participants, its communities, and society as a whole. Through the time, effort and vision of Tracy Levy and her fellow colleagues within the division, the collation of testimonials of the power and value of movement and dance will boost the appreciation of its contribution to the physical activity eco-system; both today, and into the future.

Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 Sport England's Active Lives Survey (November 2018-19) shows 3.66 million adults in England participated in a dance class at least twice over a 28 day period. Movement, dance as physical activity is widely understood to have significant benefits for individual and community wellbeing. However, when individuals are advised to increase their physical activity, taking up movement and dance classes is often overlooked as a recommended activity. There is a perception within the M&D community that the activity they support too often falls between the arts and sports (Portas, n.d.).
- 1.1.2 This document seeks to 'state the case' for movement and dance organisations. This report has been inspired by social impact reports undertaken by other sporting organisations to demonstrate the value of their activity.

Methodology

- 1.1.3 An initial investigation into the feasibility of such a study for movement and dance indicated that the division lacked the resources, capacity and sufficient data required. As a result, a qualitative research methodology, focused on in-depth consultation with experienced members of the dance and movement community was devised for the work.
- 1.1.4 38 respondents were recruited to take part in consultation sessions and workshops exploring the value of M&D to society. The research group represented the majority of the 28 organisations in the M&D division. Together, the consultation group represented decades of experience and interaction with tens of thousands of dancers. The consultation sessions produced a bank of testimonials and case studies. These experiences were then compiled to match the four social outcome areas identified in DCMS's 'Sporting Future' (2015).

Results

- 1.1.5 The results of the study are subdivided into four social outcome areas; health and wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development.

Health and Wellbeing

- 1.1.6 It must be noted that the benefits of M&D are disproportionately gained by people in an age group which is traditionally harder to reach by other forms of sport and physical activity. Therefore, the health contribution towards physical health of participants of movement and dance should be considered to be potentially higher than those stated for the entire adult population.
- 1.1.7 M&D was agreed to improve the physical health and wellbeing of participants in the following ways; physical confidence; cardiovascular fitness and stamina; balance; muscular strength and endurance; body posture and awareness; flexibility; bone strength and resistance to injury; weight management; physical activity. In addition to the above, movement and dance was agreed to be particularly beneficial in the recovery from injury and management of existing ailments. Due to the age profile of participants, M&D was also agreed to deliver disproportionate value in combatting mental health diseases, including dementia and depression.

Mental Wellbeing

- 1.1.8 M&D was agreed to have numerous benefits for the mental wellbeing of participants and volunteers. Benefits were divided into three categories;
- 1.1.9 **Short term (lasting 1-24hrs);** associated with physiological reaction of the body to exercise.
- Stress relief
 - Increase in energy levels
 - A general sense of feeling better about one's self
 - Reduction in social isolation, (participants are amongst familiar people in a familiar setting).

1.1.10 **Medium term (lasting 1-7 days)**; principally driven by the 'collective support' offered by classes.

- Relieving of feelings of bereavement
- A sense of social connectedness and community
- Reduction in loneliness
- Reduction in social isolation

1.1.11 **Long term (lasting longer than 1 week)**; driven by an improved sense of personal esteem.

- Improved self-esteem due to physical fitness and body image
- Maintenance of a 'purpose'
- Maintenance of a 'sense of identity'

1.1.12 Improved mental wellbeing can also be derived through **volunteering**. Key mental wellbeing benefits derived from volunteering in M&D are summarised as:

- Expression of gratitude and 'feel good factor'
- A sense of purpose and value (especially pertinent for those who can no longer participate)
- A support system/network for each other (especially prevalent during the pandemic)
- Friendship and socialising
- Reduction in loneliness and social isolation within older adults is shown to be higher.

1.1.13 **It should be noted that M&D's ability to access older age groups, which can be harder to engage for other activities, means that the benefits derived from M&D are amplified above those delivered by the majority of the sport and physical activity sector. This is especially relevant when considering both physical and mental health and wellbeing, as older age groups are known to be especially vulnerable in these areas. It should also be considered that if M&D activity were to cease, replacing or replicating the value delivered by M&D activities to our society would be highly challenging.**

Individual Development

1.1.14 The contribution of M&D to each area of 'individual development' is outlined below.

1.1.15 **Improved confidence**; Testimonials from consultees showed that the ability of M&D to deliver improved confidence was achieved regardless of age, gender or ability. Improved confidence was not only observed at lessons, but in their day-to-day tasks also. This articulates a critical link between the impact confidence can have on a person's level of life satisfaction, especially in young adults.

1.1.16 **Improved self-esteem**; The statements given above clearly demonstrate that children from different abilities overcame different barriers and grew through the opportunity of participating in classes. It could be said that for some, these may not have been achieved in an alternative game/traditional sport or other physical activity.

1.1.17 **Improved concentration**; This is understood to be derived across all age groups, through the learning of choreography and practising to music. As movement and dance is one of the biggest participation sports and physical activities by a mixture of ages in the UK, this quality is known to be vital at different life stages.

1.1.18 **Increased earnings**; The variety and inclusiveness of movement and dance allows individuals of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to complete qualifications, both in practical examination and in teaching. These have helped many individuals with future jobs, be that within M&D or by having transferable skills to boost their career prospects.

Community Development

1.1.19 'Community development' is appraised across 3 categories:

1.1.20 **Tackling antisocial behaviour;** M&D was understood to contribute to the reduction of antisocial behaviour in the following ways.

- Better coping mechanisms
- Improved self-esteem and well-being
- Weight management and healthy lifestyle
- Benefits in 'resettlement'
- Developing supportive relationships
- M&D is also recognised as an effective communication tool to reach young people as to the risks of antisocial and criminal behaviour

1.1.21 **Replacement of work by volunteers;** Consultees were consistent in noting that without volunteers it would not be possible to put on shows, competitions, demonstrations, and exams. Much of the delivery of sessions would be impaired without the contribution of volunteers as the replacement of volunteers with paid labour would be substantial and render most of the above activity financially inviable.

1.1.22 **Enhanced Social Capital:** M&D's key contribution to social capital can be expressed via examples such as the pride of being part of a team and having the opportunity to demonstrate and perform at local events like Christmas shows or church country fairs. Furthermore, the sense of belonging can be found in children's and adult classes, and when participants are unable to dance, they remain connected through volunteering and having the opportunity to still be part of the movement and dance community.

Conclusion

1.1.23 The report provides clear evidence that when individuals are advised to increase their physical activity, movement and dance classes should be promoted on an equal footing with other activities.

1.1.24 The Sport and Recreation Alliance recommends that greater support and time is needed to change the perception of the activities represented by its Movement and Dance Division. The Alliance believes that significant additional strategic support is required to achieve the changes in perceptions and understanding of movement and dance. Such changes are necessary in order for movement and dance activities to be fully appreciated and realise their potential value to the nation.

1.1.25 Movement and dance as a division is highly reliant on volunteers. Therefore, to attract future volunteers, highlighting the benefits brought out in this report, the Alliance hopes that members of the Movement and Dance Division will be able to recruit more volunteers. In doing so, this will help members to increase their capacity in terms of the amount of social benefit they are able to produce.

1.1.26 Future research is needed within the Movement and Dance Division to produce a more representative report, this includes responses across a broader and larger demographic and to use a question bank that better reflects Sport England's preferred methodology for calculating Social Value.

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