

## DAZL Model and Case Study



### Background & Outline

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

DAZL was recognised by the NHS Chief Medical Officer as an Innovation in Public Health in 2002 and won a Health Service Journal Award for reducing health inequalities in 2008. Since then the organisation and the DAZL model has been recognised nationally by One Dance UK and Public Health England. DAZL has won many awards including Best Overall Contribution to Child Friendly Leeds and Outstanding Contribution to Public Health Award. DAZL received the Outstanding Contribution to Culture Award at the 2017 Leeds City Council Compassionate City Awards and more recently the Leeds Dance Partnership & People's Choice Award at One Dance UK Awards 2018. DAZL is currently commissioned by Leeds City Council Public Health and the programme forms part of the Childhood Obesity Strategy implementation plan for Leeds.

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

**DAZL Primary Aim** - To improve the mental and physical health of children and young people aged 3 – 19 years, particularly girls, through dance as physical activity in disadvantaged communities of Leeds.

**DAZL Secondary Aim** – To reduce health inequalities, improving the health and wellbeing of children, young adults with disabilities up to 25 years, families, and the wider community throughout Yorkshire through asset-based community dance and wider cultural opportunities.



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

**Website:** [www.dazl.org.uk](http://www.dazl.org.uk)

## The DAZL Model

The DAZL Model – “*Reducing inequalities and tackling inactivity through asset base community development and dance*”. Below is the five-stage model underpinning all DAZL activity!

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

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

- Regular afterschool and in school curriculum dance sessions in Primary, Secondary Schools and Colleges.
- Regular inclusive dance sessions for young people with a disability in schools and community settings.
- Extensive community-based dance groups and sessions across targeted areas.
- School holiday programmes to maintain the levels of physical activity and healthy eating in the school holidays.
- Specialist dance and health programs in care homes, hospital wards, recovery centres, mental health units and offsite alternative school provision.
- Many performance opportunities throughout the year including local shows and galas hosted by DAZL and partners.
- Competitive Dance Teams (Sports Dance), Youth Dance Companies (Artistic Dance work) and specialised Dance fitness programs.

DAZL attracts large numbers of young people of all shapes and sizes and has engaged more than 30,000 children and young people since the project began in 2000.



In the past three years DAZL has engaged with 15,840 children and young people in regular dance activity. Of these 68% were inactive (defined as doing no more than one to two hours organised physical activity per week beyond school) which amounts to 10,771 children. 76% of the children and young people engaged by DAZL were girls doing a minimum of 12-week dance intervention.

## **2. Community Leadership - Engaging, supporting and empowering local people and communities.**

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



The Community Youth Dance Leaders accredited course is a key strand of DAZL's work and involves training young people to gain a qualification and then supports them to deliver dance sessions back to their community. As the Community Youth Dance Leaders' skills increase then so does their responsibility as appropriate. Over 50 young people have achieved the Community Youth Dance Leaders qualification; all have volunteered or worked for DAZL in some capacity over the last 20 years. 8 of these young people are still working for DAZL today, 2 of which are employed. The current Director, Ian Rodley, also came up through the community dance leaders programme. In 2020, 90% of the organisations' staffing team are from the local communities which reflects the ethos of our model and the people DAZL works with.

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

### ***Chrisie's Journey***



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

Chrisie Emmonds (Parent, Volunteer, DAZL Community Facilitator)

### **3. Partnerships - *Supporting and delivering the wider youth, arts, health, and social care agenda.***

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

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

### **4. Artistic Development & Progression – *Supporting the artistic development, nurturing new and existing talent within DAZL.***

DAZL continues to invest in local artists and nurture new talent, developing choreographic skills, listening, and responding to the voice of local young people. Creative pathways are also in place to offer progression routes into vocational dance and artistic dance programmes through partnerships with the wider dance sector such as the Children and Young People Dance Network North and Regional Dance Development Network.



As young people progress through DAZL they experience a wide range of cultural and artistic experiences including diverse dance styles and choreography workshops and experiences. DAZL participants can engage with high quality performance opportunities in Leeds and beyond. Exceptional DAZL students can access elite training at the Centre for Advanced Training Scheme. Currently DAZL has young people at Northern School of Contemporary Dance and Phoenix Dance Company - Youth Dance Academy programs. DAZL also encourages young people to progress onto formal dance vocational training and universities, encouraging aspirations and feelings of self-worth.

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

Parental and wider community involvement supporting celebration events such as dance showcases, local galas, and fundraising is a key feature of DAZL's work. Performing dance is an essential part of the dance experience for most children, just as a football match is to football training. DAZL stages many local and large-scale showcases, performance opportunities and dance competition events each year. DAZL has an audience of over 10,000 community members annually from across the city viewing many events and shows each year. These events are also posted and livestreamed to DAZL social media for those who can't make the live performances. These live and digital events bring communities together to celebrate the achievements of the DAZL children and young people. They provide a positive focus for disadvantaged communities where often the attention is on problems. Championing the achievements of the children and young people encourages the families to invest not only time but positive engagement in these activities and build new relationships. This leads to support and volunteering at these events which enables DAZL to grow as an organisation and more effectively with the wider community.



## DAZL Research – what is the evidence?

DAZL is undergoing multiple research projects in partnership with Leeds Beckett University, as part of this work we have done some initial pilot projects which also includes mapping the provision and impact of DAZL across the city of Leeds (2017). We have developed this work with a large-scale research project addressing the DAZL impact on mental health (2020). The next stage is looking at the DAZL model in its entirety which would also include a 1-year randomised control trial plus a mixed methods approach looking at all aspects of the DAZL model (2021).

**Leeds Beckett University Research on the DAZL programme**  
by Dr Beccy Watson, Dr Brett Lashua and Dr Pip Trevorrow



### Summary of research findings

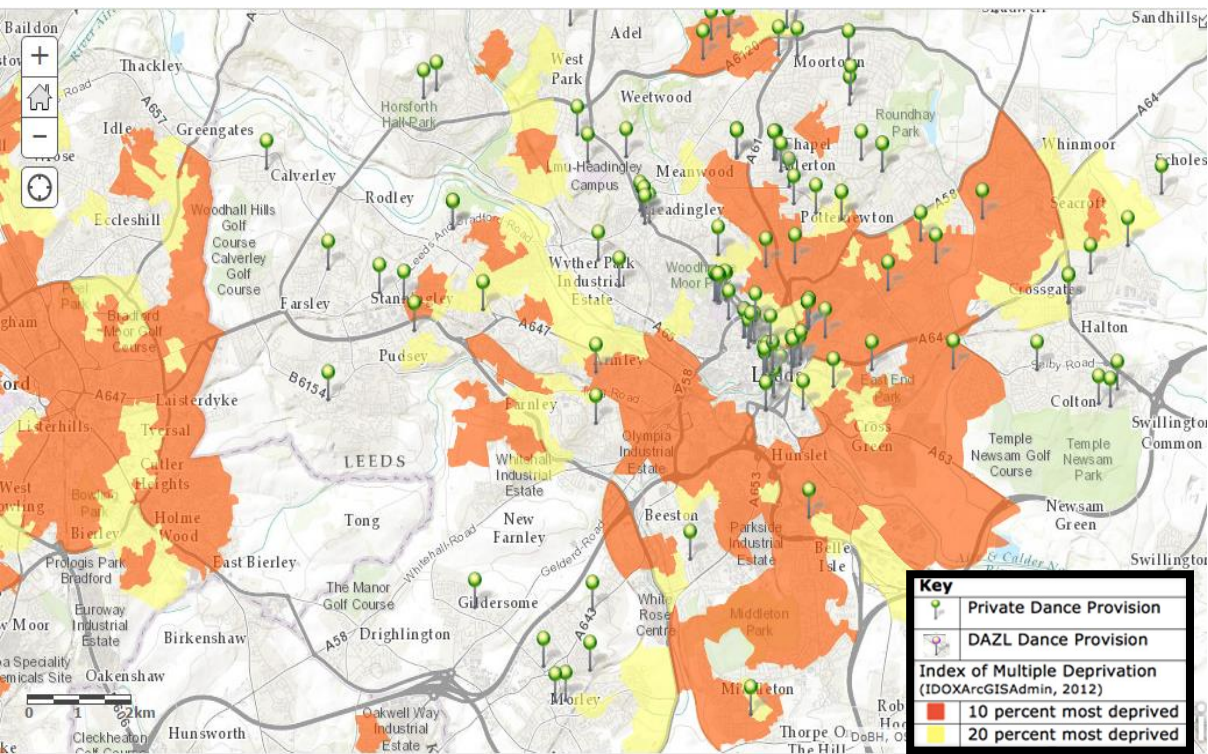
“Our preliminary study demonstrates that DAZL does make a positive difference to health and wellbeing for young people from disadvantaged communities in Leeds. It indicates that for the 16 teenage girls in this particular study, dance provided by DAZL is an established, embodied and embedded aspect of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

### Findings on DAZL reducing inequalities in dance provision in Leeds

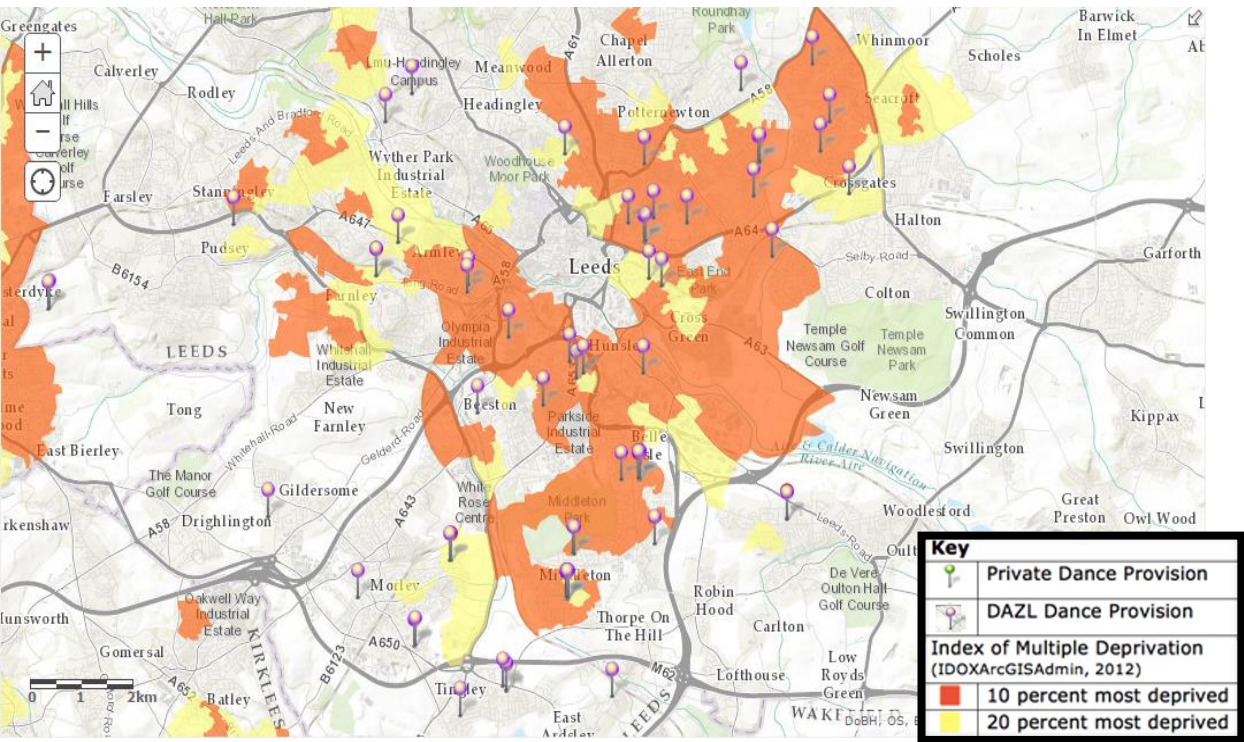
The ArcGIS Online map shows government statistical data for areas of multiple deprivation vis-à-vis the plotting of dance provision. The juxtaposition of these layers offers a compelling illustration of the difference between *where* dance provision is offered and *what kind* of provision (commercial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

MAPS

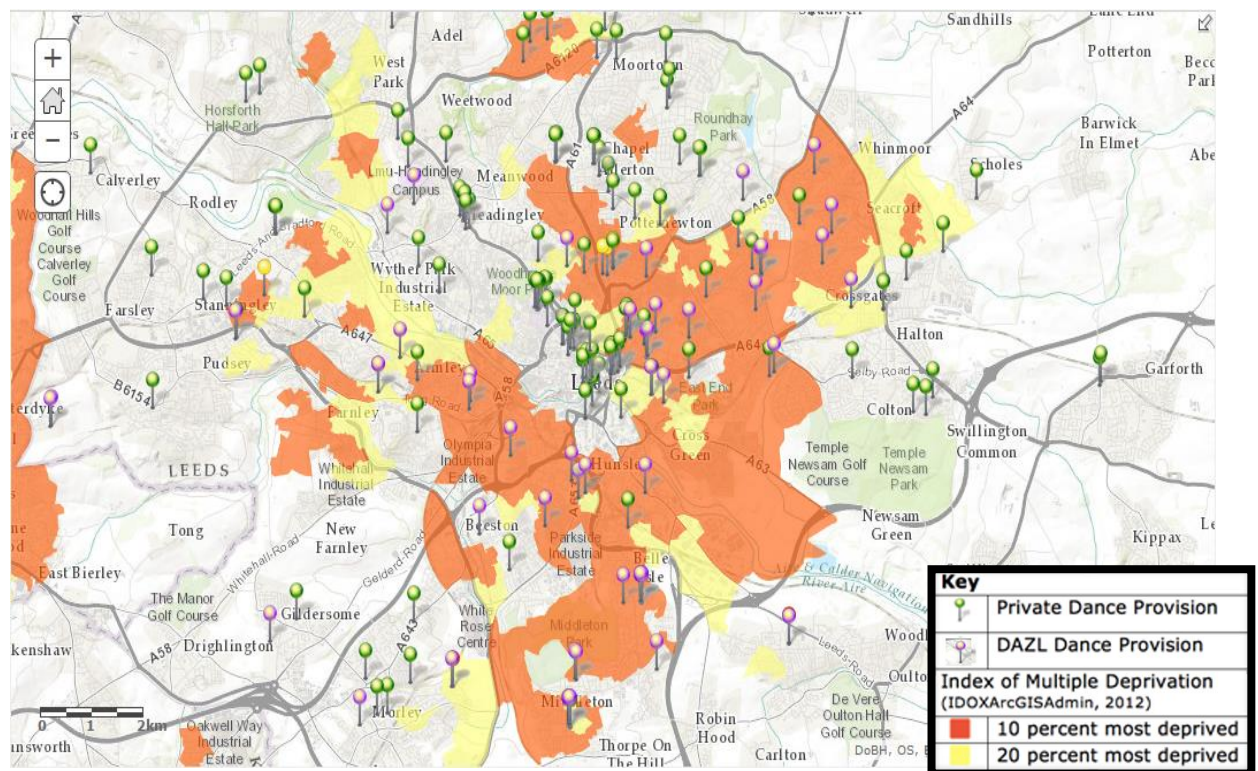
Private dance provision in Leeds (IMD Areas 2017)



DAZL Provision across Leeds (IMD Areas 2017)



## Dance provision in Leeds including DAZL and private provision (IMD Areas 2017)



Further research on the DAZL Website <http://dazl.org.uk/dance-and-health-research/>

## Case Studies

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



### Ian Rodley – DAZL Director

I grew up on the Belle Isle Housing Estate in South Leeds and attended the first ever DAZL projects. I started dance when I was 12 years old with Jan Burkhardt, which ignited my passion for the arts and interest in DAZL program. I trained through the DAZL Community Youth Dance Leadership course at 16 years and was supported by DAZL to set up my own youth dance project, Escape Youth Dance, which ran successfully in the area for 8 years. I then worked for DAZL as Dance Facilitator and whilst in this role I created and founded the Championship winning Cheerdance strand for DAZL. I was also responsible for developing the DAZL Boys, which engages boys of all ages in cheerdance. This innovative work gained worldwide recognition. In 2010 I became the Director and have had the opportunity to successfully lead the organisation since then. The trust I build up through my dance work has allowed me to engage and support many hard to reach young people. Alongside the dance sessions I provide informal support for DAZL members including signposting them to counselling, sexual health and education advice. As the first person in my family to go to university I have encouraged the DAZL young people and even my own mother into further education!

## DAZL Members

All three of the DAZL Community Dance Leaders or Practitioners below come from Inner South Leeds, which is in one of the 5% most deprived areas in the UK. They started out as young people attending DAZL sessions and progressed to volunteers and then community dance leaders and beyond. They are all the first members of their families to attend further or higher education and one has now progressed through the organisation and become an employed member of staff.



**Stephanie Dobson – (DAZL Dance Fitness Specialist)** *"I started out in DAZL when I was 13 years old, this was the first dance group I got involved with. Back then I was getting into trouble and this resulted in me getting arrested but as dancing became my passion Ian inspired me to do well and succeed in something positive. He pushed me to go to college and take B-TEC dance. I then became pregnant at 17 and decided to have a couple years out but DAZL gave me the chance to gain further qualifications as a Community Youth Dance Leader and that is when I started giving back to my community. I found that teaching at DAZL meant so much to me as I came through the program, which then encouraged me to go back and do a degree in dance at university. I am still currently teaching, running the competition dance teams and leading the DAZL Dance Fitness program for women at 30years old. I feel if it were not for DAZL I would not be where I am at this present time. To watch the children I inspire, grow and progress not only as dancers but as people inspires me every day to push myself that little bit harder in my day to day practice and training"*



**Kaci Emmonds (DAZL Community Dance Leader)** – Kaci grew up in Middleton and started with DAZL at 7-years old at an after-school club with Ian. DAZL became a way for her to focus and stay out of trouble whilst at school. Kaci has now completed her Level 3 B-TEC in Dance and is in her first year of her Dance Degree at Mechanics Performing Arts, Wakefield University. In her role at DAZL she is now working and supporting community groups and delivering dance and mental health programs in local schools. Kaci is the first person in her family to pursue the arts and education beyond secondary school and study at degree level.



**Amy Smith – (Dance Facilitator)** *"From being a participant in a DAZL session at 13 years to delivering sessions for the company I have been able to develop from dancer to my previous role as Community Youth Dance Leader/ Freelance artist and now to the DAZL Dance Facilitator. DAZL has inspired and driven me to follow a career I would never have dreamt of pursuing. Having the opportunity to develop young people the way Ian Rodley and Jan Burkhardt inspired me in my first dance class is amazing and extremely rewarding. I have gained my qualifications in dance and have a wonderful career, if I can inspire these young people like DAZL has inspired me then in the next few years we will have lots of young people at colleges and university for the first time ever"*

## First stage results of DAZL Wakefield (replicating in new area)

DAZL Wakefield is part of Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL) we have taken our Model, workforce, and experience to implement DAZL in its entirety with the support of Wakefield Council Public Health and the Sports and Leisure Services. This includes working with Aspire Health Wakefield, the local primary, secondary schools, and Wakefield College. As a neighbouring locality DAZL has been able to also replicate the community youth dance leader's element working closely with Wakefield College and University Centre students and to host performance events. This has enabled DAZL to nurture and support new talent from the local community to become DAZL Community Youth Dance Leaders who can lead from the front and develop the new DAZL Wakefield programme whilst gaining their professional dance qualifications.

The aim is to promote healthy lifestyles, build confidence and resilience whilst improving the health & wellbeing of children and young people aged 5-19 years across Wakefield and the Five Towns. We have an initial focus on four priority areas of deprivation across the district. In the first three months 233 young people took part in the program. In the first 3 months DAZL delivered 94 free dance as physical activity session to the families.



This program has highlighted the replicability of the model and will be an ongoing partnership with DAZL & Wakefield Public Health. Both organisations have a shared ambition to maximise this currently offer throughout the Wakefield district, to schools, community venues and leisure services.

## Next steps for the Model – develop your own program with support from DAZL

Now is time to start testing the transfer of this community development model to other local authorities where DAZL is not present to deliver the programme, but takes a consultancy role. DAZL could support the creation of partnerships, train local Community Youth Dance Leaders, offer guidance on marketing and communications plans, towards the development of a customised local Dance and Community Development Model. DAZL would not be an active partner, but can offer consultancy to your Local Authority and organisations. DAZL would see its role as supporting the local partners to develop their own programme, workforce development and training.

1. A 1-2-day structured workshop, with potential partners, to consolidate your local area's perspective and next steps.
2. A toolkit that includes everything from staffing structure, person spec, job descriptions, to all elements of the DAZL Model.
3. DAZL Community Youth Dance Leaders Training course (with manual).



Susan Rautenberg, Chair of the DAZL Board of Trustees. "I am proud to have been part of DAZL since it was started by the NHS in 2000. The model presented here is 20 years in the making. The key element for developing any future community development-based dance programmes is community involvement and participation and that takes time, years, to establish. We hope that this model programme and our Community Dance Leaders programme can benefit others in other local authorities".

## Does this sound like something you want in your local authority?