



Above: Karen Bell.

# Move it!

**Karen Bell** of creativityteam, on behalf of the Black Country Arts & Health Commissioning Partnership, looks at how local authority and primary care partners evaluate and value dance with young people

**Move It!** is the second series of projects commissioned by the Black Country Arts and Health Commissioning Partnership. The partnership was established in 2006 to develop a joint framework for arts and health in the commissioning of healthy eating, nutrition and obesity-related services for children and young people.

Move It! was targeted at 13 - 19 year olds and used dance as a medium to explore issues relating to obesity, specifically addressing issues of body image and the impact this has on young people's self esteem and self confidence. The project also aimed to encourage young people to do more physical activity outside of school hours.

Dudley Performing Arts were contracted to oversee the delivery of the dance element of the project. Involving and commissioning an agency with strong connections to the Black Country, with a commitment to provide a high quality service (in both product and process), and experience of arts and health work was crucial to the project's success.

The Commissioning Partnership was committed to involving young people in the planning and development of the project work, giving them an opportunity to produce an art product that could be distributed to other

young people. To achieve this young people were invited to work alongside artists from Sandwell based community arts company Multistory to inform, document and review the local arts and health projects. The group went on to use this material to create the project's website [www.moveitblackcountry.co.uk](http://www.moveitblackcountry.co.uk)

The partnership consists of representatives from Walsall Council Creative Development Team, Wolverhampton City Council, Sandwell MBC and Dudley MBC, together with their associated Primary Care Trusts. Their aims reflect that of the Public Service Agreement (PSA) Target within the DCMS' 2006-07 Business Plan to:

"Half the year on year increase in obesity among children under 11 by 2010, in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole".

Evaluation of the project was undertaken from a social marketing perspective. The partners shared health data and identified a set of shared priorities for the commission. These priorities informed the behavioural outcomes for young people who participated and were used with a set of indicators to evaluate the impact of the project. Research methodology (mind maps, questionnaires, interviews,

observations) was devised in conjunction with the young people themselves and was used to gain insight into what competes for their time, and what encourages or discourages them from taking part in physical activity.

The research undertaken found that a quarter of the young people increased their levels of physical activity during the project and there was a marked increase of 17% in those who did five hours of activity per week. Almost half the respondents said it had made them feel 'good' or 'amazing' and artists and support workers observed a real growth in self-esteem throughout all the groups. Halfway through the project one third of the young people said they felt they had more confidence and by the end confidence within all the groups had increased. The young people identified the main barrier to their physical activity as lack of time, and that the project had given them the space and time to do new things. Other incentives were keeping out of trouble, learning new dance routines, having fun and exercising in a group with a professional dance artist. The final report and evaluation of the project can be downloaded from the Move It! website.

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**Above:** The Elite Boys Group (those at greatest risk of exclusion working with gifted and talented pupils) from Deansfield School. Photo: Multistory/participants.

commissioning round, the Partnership has decided to form a new independent Community Interest Company to oversee the joint planning, commissioning and delivery of arts into health work in the Black Country, on an on-going basis. Creative Health CIC will raise the profile of arts into health

work within the Black Country and work with arts, health and community partners to do this and develop best practice guidelines which can be performance managed. A menu of creative opportunities will be presented to potential partners regularly, in order to continue to commission a range of

new arts into health ‘product’ across the Black Country and respond to the challenges within the commissioning of health services.

For more information on Black Country Arts and Health Joint Commissioning, **contact** [info@creativehealthcic.co.uk](mailto:info@creativehealthcic.co.uk)



**Above:** Movement & narrative piece created by young people at Netherton Arts Centre, Dudley. Photo: Multistory/participants.