



English National Ballet, Dance for Parkinson's in Oxford. Photo © Rachel Cherry

A profound impact

Kiki Gale, Director, Dance for Parkinson's Network UK underlines the value of sharing, developing and exchanging good practice to deliver a high quality dance experience for people with Parkinson's

On a regular basis in East Taphouse in Cornwall, the Neuro Drop In Centre in Lancaster, South Lakes Leisure Centre in Kendal, in Liverpool, Oxford, Ipswich and Cardiff, in the Wimbledon Guild and Kentish Town Health Centre in London, in Whitley Bay and Tynemouth, in Plymouth and Bournemouth and everywhere in between, dance artists are leading workshops for and with people with Parkinson's.

The UK has long been able to celebrate and indeed be very proud of the quality, contribution and commitment of dance artists; working in many different contexts, with many different people, individually or for larger organisations, dance companies or Institutions, with a wonderful diversity of aesthetics and approaches: a shining example of how great art can be made available for everyone.

More recently dance classes specifically devised for people with Parkinson's have begun to emerge as a distinct area of dance practice. It is having a profound impact, is in high demand and provides us with a unique opportunity to demonstrate the value of dance and dancing to participants – creatively, intellectually and emotionally. The work is excellent, diverse and inspiring.

Over the last 15 years, pioneers

including individual UK based artists, dance companies and organisations have created extraordinary opportunities for individuals with Parkinson's to become dancers. They continue to help them to move with freedom and reclaim their physical selves from the effects of this condition. To lose Parkinson's and regain their physical, indeed their dancing selves, in the studio.

The setting up of the Dance for Parkinson's Network UK, is the result of the skill, enthusiasm and inspiration of these individuals and partners. Just as important has been their drive to bring this community together to share, develop and exchange good practice.

Collaboration is at the heart of Dance for Parkinson's practice and initiatives here in the UK. This is demonstrating the value of partnerships that exemplify the potential for cross fertilisation – such as between dance artists and specialist neurological physiotherapists and doctors, university researchers and ballet companies, national and local Parkinson's groups and many others. These partnerships have all initiated opportunities for more individuals with Parkinson's to benefit from participating in dance.

With welcome and significant support from the Baring Foundation,

in 2015, partnerships including People Dancing and Dance for PD®, plus past and current members of the steering group, the Dance for Parkinson's Network UK is poised to enter a period of significant development to achieve a long held ambition that everyone in the UK who has Parkinson's will eventually have access to a high quality dance experience.

It has been a huge privilege to travel across the UK since my appointment in December last year, to take part in classes of many different kinds. I am looking forward to continuing to explore and discover the many different ways in which dance artists are developing this particular area of work.

In partnership with dance artists and companies, organisations and colleagues I look forward to supporting a step change in provision and access. I want to see greater recognition of the impact and value of the work and to strive to provide more exemplary opportunities for those with Parkinson's to dance. We have to develop existing and build new partnerships to make this happen and to support the continuing development of a highly skilled workforce.

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