

Dance and Older People Evaluation Report

**The results of a two-year evaluation programme
in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Livingston
between April 2010 and May 2012**

Shall we Dance? the film to accompany this study is available
to [view now on Vimeo](#).

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1 Executive Summary

'I feel younger because I can do something I loved in my youth but do not have to be concerned about keeping up with people half my age', class participant

- This study set out to assess the impact on older people of taking part in a dance class over a two year period. It was commissioned by Creative Scotland who wished to measure the success of its funding of three pilot programmes to provide dance for older people.
- The information that was gathered from each of these programmes and, from the teachers and other key staff within each organisation, has enabled us to track some of the physical, emotional and social developments that have occurred for each group at key points during the two year period.
- We have also made a film which captures the essence of the classes and lets the dancers speak for themselves about the impact of taking part.
- The message that has come through from the start of this project is that the classes were fun, were challenging but accessible to all the participants and were an important part of the participants' social routine.
- Observing and listening to the dancers it is very clear that attending these dance classes is perceived to be an overwhelmingly positive experience.
- It is also clear from talking to the dancers and their teachers that the dance class has come to represent much more than 'just a class' for many of the participants, but has achieved a value and a status in some of the participants lives which is more important than they, or the group leaders, could have anticipated.
- **The key finding from the statistical data drawn from self-completion questionnaires shows us that where physical fitness and mental stimulation were initially expected to be the most important benefits to participants, 'belonging as part of a group', has become the benefit of which most participants are 'most aware' by the end of the evaluation period.**
- The physical and mental stimulation are a bonus, with more of the group feeling themselves to have 'good' levels of physical fitness and emotional health at the end of the two years than at the start. More of the group are able to achieve the physical demands of the movement and more find it easier to remember things from week to week. Fewer have difficulty understanding what they are being asked to do.
- The majority of the group end the two year period with no concerns about looking foolish and for many the opportunity to perform is a thrill and not an anxiety. More dancers end the project with a higher level of self-esteem than at the outset.
- However, anxiety about triggering or developing an injury persists throughout the evaluation period and many comment on their previous or existing injuries or areas of physical weakness. Despite the confidence of the dancers and their enjoyment of the classes, this remains an underlying challenge for many dancers in this age-bracket.

- Whilst this study was never intended to make comparisons between any of the participating groups, the classes were very different and each had a very different focus:
- The Edinburgh group contained the highest number of younger dancers. This group quickly achieved Dance Base's goal of becoming a performance group, and indeed a very active one, despite having the highest proportion of participants for whom performing to an audience was ranked as of no importance at the start of the evaluation period.
- The Glasgow group, run by Dance House, was established with the specific purpose of creating a performance piece that would take place as part of the World Congress on Active Ageing in Glasgow in summer 2012, and during Active Ageing week in 2011. It was hoped that the group would be made up of older men who had never danced before. The group that developed was all female and had the highest number of dancers in the middle age-bracket, many of whom had experience of dancing in other groups.
- The Livingston group was set up at the Howden Park Arts Centre as a general 'drop in' class for older people from across West Lothian. The class developed from the highly successful Generation Arts programme which had been running as an older people's arts project in West Lothian for many years. This group included the highest percentage of older dancers. The dancers involved became very socially confident and reported the highest increase in improved emotional health by the end of the programme.
- It appears that each of these pilot projects have added something valuable, unexpected and joyful to the lives of the participants.
- The key learning points for the teachers and organisers of these classes has been that older people are not to be under-estimated.
- Aside from unavoidable concerns about sustaining injuries, the issues that arise from teaching these classes are not necessarily different from those encountered in a dance class for any age: the challenge of teaching a mixed ability group, the need to make time for the dancers as individuals, the importance of appropriate teacher training, dealing with strong personalities, the predominance of women, and fluctuating attendance due to many other commitments.
- What has helped these groups to flourish is the liberation they feel from dancing amongst others of their own age; from being respected for their abilities and being challenged to learn more.
- The recommendations, questions and observations that conclude this report reflect these findings.
- This evaluation would not have been possible without the co-operation of each of the organisations involved, the class teachers and the dancers themselves and we extend our thanks to them all.

Lucy Mason – October 2012

2 Scotland's Ageing Population

'In the face of rapid population ageing, it is of great importance to ensure that each individual's opportunity for healthy and active ageing is optimised', The Health and Well-being of Older People in Scotland, NHS Scotland, 2001¹

- 2.1 Scotland's population is expected to decline overall over the next thirty years. But whilst the population is expected to decline the proportion of the population over 50 years of age is expected to increase. As at 2004, there were 1.76 million people aged 50 and over living in Scotland. This represents 35% of the total population, the largest segment of all age-groups. Of these, 370,000 were aged 75 and over, representing 7% of the total population.
- 2.2 According to the Scottish Government's Actuary's Department², the number of people aged 50 years and over is projected to rise by 28% to 2.25 million by the year 2031 and the number of people aged 75 years and over is projected to rise by 75% by the same year, to nearly 650,000. Scotland is projecting a larger increase in the number of people aged 65 years and over by 2031 than the rest of the UK.
- 2.3 On the whole, our older people are quite healthy. The majority of people (65%) aged 50 years and over in Scotland are living without a long-term illness or disability, and the majority of older people in Scotland continue to live in the community well into later life³.
- 2.4 However, traditional family and working patterns have changed and many older people are living alone - particularly women, but increasing amounts of men. Lack of physical activity is a major contributory factor in the increased isolation and immobility of many older people.
- 2.5 The World Health Organisation recommends that all adults should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week. It also recommends that all adults over 55, including those who are frail, should undertake exercises which improve their balance and strength to help increase mobility and prevent falls.⁴
- 2.6 However, in Scotland only 23% of men and 16% of women aged 65 – 74 years are achieving this level of activity.⁵ This means that many older people lack the strength and mobility to look after themselves. Many suffer poor mental health as a result. A sedentary lifestyle can also increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, osteoporosis and some forms of cancer.
- 2.7 As increasing numbers of older people succumb to inactivity and isolation so the cost of looking after them increases, adding a potentially huge burden to local services as resources are being severely cut back.

It has never been more important for our older people to find ways to feel better about themselves and to feel part of a wider community.

¹ www.show.scot.nhs.uk/isd

² The Scottish Government, All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population: 3 The Evidence Base (www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2007/03/14163202/1)

³ NHS Scotland (2003) Adding Life To Years. Annual Report 2002-2003

⁴ Let's Make Scotland More Active: A strategy for physical activity, p 55

⁵ As 1 above, section 4.0: Promoting and Maintaining Health and Well-being

3 The Role of Dance

'Dance takes you away from the mundane things in life...it's a great way to express yourself', class participant

- 3.1 Dance is a creative physical activity which requires the focus of both mind and body. It can be achieved at some level by everyone, regardless of age or physical ability. It offers a means of self-expression through physical movement, however small or limited that movement might be. Dance is also an intrinsically social activity, often requiring contact with others. It is usually performed to music and has the potential to be a joyous and uplifting experience. There are numerous forms of dance, ensuring that a dance style can be found to suit most tastes and sensibilities.
- 3.2 In Scotland, dance is considered by many to be a key part of social and cultural identity and there is a thriving tradition of ceilidh and country dancing across the country.
- 3.3 Dance is unique in its potential to offer physical and mental health benefits to participants as well as the opportunity to engender a sense of community through collective experience.

4 The Health Benefits of Dance

- 4.1 There have been several studies undertaken into the health and well-being benefits of dance for **older** people.
- 4.2 A recent study at the University of Strathclyde, in association with the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, found that Scottish Country dancing had *'extensive and measurable fitness benefits for older people'*. It found that dancers aged 60–85 who perform Strathspeys, jigs and reels are more agile, have stronger legs and can walk more briskly than people of the same age who take part in other forms of exercise.⁶
- 4.3 A major study by the Centre for Creative Ageing in the US involving 300 older people aged between 65 and 103 reported that participation in a professionally led arts programme, which included dance, over a two year period resulted in better health, fewer doctor visits, reduced medication useage, improved mental health, more socialisation and fewer falls compared to a control group involved in community activities but not working with professional artists. Significantly the study reported that a major factor contributing to these outcomes was the process of striving to achieve something of 'beauty' on a regular basis over a period of time.

*'art programs...foster sustained involvement because of their beauty and productivity. They keep the participants involved week after week, compounding positive effects being achieved. Many general activities and physical exercises do not have this high engaging, thereby sustaining, quality.'*⁷

- 4.4 In Nottingham, The Young@Heart project studied two dance projects intensively over a 10 week period. Whilst this was a short period, significant impact on the health and well-being of participants was observed:

⁶ *Dance For Life* research study, Strathclyde University (<http://www.strath.ac.uk/>) undertaken with Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (see ix above)

⁷ The Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally conducted cultural programmes on Older Adults, Final Report: www.gwumc.edu/cahh/NEA_Study_Final_Report.pdf

The report concluded that the opportunity to express oneself through the medium of dance held benefit for both emotional and physical wellbeing. Involvement in dance facilitated a growth of confidence, was a forum for the expression of positive emotion and safe reminiscence, and helped participants increase physical activity levels and improve on their physical health-related knowledge. The report also acknowledged these benefits as not only individual but also as collective. Participation in the group was suggested to combat experiences of social isolation and provide a positive representation of older peoples contribution to, and involvement in, the wider community⁸

- 4.5 One of the stated aims of the project was to research what dance offers to older people that other forms of exercise does not. It quotes a number of studies into this subject:⁹:

'Simmons (2007) contrasts the experience of dance with that of sport for older people suggesting it sweeps aside the idea of duty. Exercise might be viewed as a chore, but dance offers a world of choice and activity that can be experienced for the sheer joy of motion...Libster (2006) reports that dance does something more than improve physical and mental functioning in the elderly, saying it has a positive impact on what she describes as spirit - an aspect of wellbeing that is overlooked in other kinds of physical activity'

- 4.6 The Dance and Older People – Evaluation Project for Creative Scotland aims to add to the body of research monitoring the health and well-being benefits of dance for older people and through the documentary film in particular to find a creative way to articulate the impact of dancing on the 'spirit' of the older people involved.

5 The Cultural Context

- 5.1 During the period of this study there have been a number of significant developments across Scotland's cultural sector which could help to extend the impact and ensure the implementation of the recommendations offered in this report.
- 5.2 Creative Scotland published its Corporate Plan for 2011 – 2014, with the stated aim *'to deliver a national programme for arts and older people from 2011'*¹⁰ and has subsequently launched Luminare – Scotland's Creative Ageing Festival, in partnership with Age Scotland, and with funds from the Baring Foundation¹¹. There is currently a commitment to support this Festival for 3 years. It is hoped that the Festival may provide a context within which to consider and respond to this study and may provide a platform to showcase the work of the three groups involved. It is also hoped that this study, and the accompanying film/dvd, will provide a useful resource and advocacy tool for Creative Scotland.
- 5.3 The Scottish Government has prioritised dance as one of its key tools for ensuring a legacy from the 2012 London Olympics and the 2014 Commonwealth Games to be held in Glasgow. *Get Scotland Dancing* was launched in 2010 and aims to involve people of all ages and ability across Scotland in a dance activity.

⁸ *Young@Heart, An Evaluation of the development of Young@Heart, a dance Project for Older People* by Kirstie Joynson, Ada Hui & Theodore Stickley, July 2009, (www.dance4.co.uk) page 3

⁹ *Ibid.*, page 6

¹⁰ *Creative Scotland Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014*, April 2011, ISBN: 978 1 85119 197 0,

www.creativescotland.com

¹¹ www.luminatescotland.org

“We want to get more Scots involved in dance. It’s fun, creative, a great way to keep healthy and can be enjoyed by everyone – even if you’ve never done it before.”
Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Minister for Culture and External Affairs, launching *Get Scotland Dancing*, October 2010¹²

- 5.4 At the time of writing all the groups participating in this study have had the opportunity to benefit from projects relating to this national programme. It is hoped that this continued focus on dance may provide further opportunities for involvement in regular dance programmes by these, and other groups of older dancers nationwide.

6 Parameters of the Study

‘Much of the research on healthy ageing advocates that, since longer lives are not necessarily seen as better lives, there is a continuing need for health promotion messages which focus on a healthy quality of life, rather than simply longevity and extension of life for our ageing population’ All our futures: planning for a Scotland with an ageing population: 3 The Evidence Base¹³

- 6.1 This study sets out to evaluate the role of dance as a catalyst for improving the physical, emotional and social health of older people.
- 6.2 It focuses on three dance organisations, each given pilot funding by Scottish Arts Council (becoming Creative Scotland in April 2011) to establish a new programme to engage older people in dance between 2010 and 2012.
- 6.3 The funding was offered in response to the Scottish Arts Council Taking Part Survey 2008 which found that those aged 65 years and over are less likely to participate in cultural activity than those under 65 years, 66% to 71% respectively¹⁴. Participation in dance by the over 65s in Scotland was found to have decreased between 2004 and 2008¹⁵.
- 6.4 It was also responding to the 2009 the Baring Foundation report, *Ageing Artfully: Older People and Professional Participatory Arts in the UK*¹⁶ which highlights the capacity of the arts to make a significant difference to the health and well-being of older people, and the need for increased participatory arts provision for this age-group across the country.

¹² www.ouractivation.co.uk/dance

¹³ *All Our Futures, Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population*; 4.0 Promoting and Maintaining Health and Well-being, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/03/14163202/5>

¹⁴ Scottish Arts Council, Taking Part Survey, 2008, 2.2.6, www.scottisharts.org.uk

¹⁵ As 7 above, table 2 – 18

¹⁶ *Ageing Artfully: Older People and Professional Participatory Arts In the UK, September 2009*, www.baringfoundation.org.uk

6.5 **The Brief**

The Scottish Arts Council tender document for this study required the consultants to:

- a. support shared learning between the successful projects
- b. capture the work through the production of a film/dvd
- c. evaluate the success of the funding programme including making recommendations about the future development of this work

6.6 The three projects established with this funding were:

- Golden – a weekly dance class for the over 60s at Dance Base, Scotland's National Centre for Dance in Edinburgh.
- Generation Dance – a weekly dance class for the over 60s based at Howden Park in Livingston, run by West Lothian Council, Arts Services in Livingston.
- Still Dancing – a performance-focussed dance group for the over 60s run by Dance House in Glasgow.

6.7 In all cases, the funding available enabled participants to take part in a dance class free of charge throughout the two year period.

6.8 **Timeframe and methodology**

Each project was followed over a two year period between April 2010 and May 2012. The Evaluation Team was Lucy Mason: arts consultant and producer, Nicholas Bone: theatre and film director and producer and Kevin Cameron: film-maker.

6.9 **Qualitative Data**

There were three visits to each project – at the start and end and one interim visit. The timing of each visit was determined both by the availability of the consultants and the nature of each project.

6.10 At each visit, class participants were invited to sign up to be interviewed individually about their experiences within the group, and the classes were also filmed during these visits. All participants completed a permissions form, and those who did not wish to be filmed were excluded from all subsequent footage.

6.11 There was some consistency across the three visits, but not all of the same dancers were interviewed and filmed at each visit.

6.12 The group teachers were filmed at the second and final visit, giving their account of the developments and achievements of their respective groups, in relation to their initial expectations.

6.13 As well as generating useful anecdotal feedback which could be included within this written report, the purpose of the filming was to create a film which would capture both the personal stories of the individual dancers who were participating in the dance classes, and give a visual sense of the collective experience.

6.14 **Quantative data**

The dancers in each group were invited to complete a questionnaire at four stages during the two year period. Dancers were asked to anticipate, and subsequently

record, the benefits and challenges of participating in a dance class against listed criteria and also to give background information about their physical and emotional health and social activities.

6.15 **Shared Learning**

Key personnel from each organisation responsible for delivery and/or strategic development of the project were brought together at three points during the study to discuss and share their learning and experiences.

6.16 It was initially intended that the three groups of dancers would be brought together to share and observe each others' work. However, this was not achieved due to difficulties of logistics and scheduling.

7 The Three Projects

7.1.1 Golden at Dance Base, Edinburgh

'I love this class. It makes me feel alive and stimulated', Golden participant

7.1.2 Operating in Edinburgh since the late 1980s, Dance Base offers regular classes each week in over 40 styles of dance, welcoming 2000 people through its doors each week.¹⁷

7.1.3 Golden was introduced in summer 2010 within the public dance class programme specifically to encourage older people to express their creativity through dance and to celebrate and draw on the experience which older people would bring to the class.

7.1.4 The specific aims and objectives for Golden which were identified at the start of the project were:

Aim:

- To create a performance group for Older People

Objectives:

- For the content and style of the group to be determined by the group
- To establish opportunities for the group to perform
- To review the group every 6 months or as required to ensure its continued development.

Desired Outcomes at the end of 2 years:

- To have a performance group in place
- To be producing work of high quality which stretches participants
- To have performed at Dance Base Christmas Show and as part of Mental Health week in 2010 and other opportunities in 2010 and 2011 yet to be identified
- For participants to have a shared interest in the outcome and achievements of the group

7.1.5 Golden was advertised in Dance Base's publicity as:
Golden is a class for anyone over 60 who enjoys dancing without strain but with enthusiasm. Taught by the artistic director of Dance Base, it's a contemporary based session with eclectic music and guest teachers who pop by to lead some classes in whatever the group would like to do. It's a dance democracy!

7.1.6 Classes were offered free of charge to participants. An average of 23 people attended the class on a weekly basis between April 2010 and July 2012.

7.1.7 Context

As a self-selecting, motivated and independent group, Golden represents a very different constituency from the older dancers with whom Dance Base's outreach programme typically works.

7.1.8 This outreach programme has a commitment to inclusion and focuses on working with groups and communities who are under-represented in dance participation. The

¹⁷ www.dancebase.co.uk

work has been delivered for over 8 years with the aim of providing older adults with a physical activity to which they can relate and which they enjoy.

- 7.1.9 The work is delivered on a project basis with dementia patients and stroke victims in hospitals and in care homes throughout Edinburgh, helping to stimulate new learning, enhance mental alertness and improve the moods of participants. Through this work Dance Base also aims to raise the status of older adults amongst their families and communities:

'Many of our participants are depending on carers, consequently their capacity to achieve things independently is greatly affected. Their dance classes often provided a much needed new view on their lives'. Janet Dick, Outreach Co-ordinator, Dance Base

7.1.10 **What happened next...**

Golden was created and developed by Morag Deyes, Artistic Director of Dance Base and herself an esteemed 'elder' of the Dance world. Her aim was to engage the Golden participants with as wide a range of dance styles as possible, and to equip the group to become confident and flexible performers. Guest teachers were invited to work with the group, and the styles of dance they experienced ranged from Bollywood to Burlesque to Ballet.

- 7.1.11 The class was very popular and quickly became over-subscribed. A further class was introduced for those dancers who wished to create their own choreography and which ran independently from Golden. As this was not part of the funded project a charge was made. This did not appear to deter dancers from attending.

- 7.1.12 The group continued to expand over the two year period, attracting a wider diversity of abilities and ages, and a couple of men, over the six terms. By the end of the two year funded period, the project would appear to have met its core aim and objectives and desired outcomes. The group had gained in confidence and experience and were much in demand as a performance group.

- 7.1.13 The factors which would appear to have affected the group's ability to succeed to this degree were:

- The inspiring environment and welcoming atmosphere of Dance Base
- The ability of the dancers to relate to the teacher as 'one of them'
- The framework of involving the dancers in decisions about which dance styles to learn
- The pre-existing abilities and contacts of some of the participants as dancers and being very 'dance aware'
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the group members
- The opportunities to perform that developed from the outset, which themselves resulted from the high profile of Dance Base and of its Artistic Director as an advocate of the group's potential

'it's been great. Morag is an inspirational teacher and a great role model for us all', Golden participant

7.2 Still Dancing run by Dance House, Glasgow at Partick Burgh Hall

'I used to dance in Barrowland to rock and roll in the 60s and 70s. Still Dancing has rekindled my love of music and dance in my soul. Thank you.' A Still Dancing participant

7.2.1 Dance House

Dance House was established in 1999. The organisation promotes and provides dance and physical activity for people of all ages and abilities in and around Glasgow. As part of Scotland's network of dance centres it offers classes in a wide range of movement styles, taster workshops, training weekends, choreographic and performance opportunities for both professional dancers and community dancers.¹⁸

7.2.2 Still Dancing

In partnership with Glasgow Life, this project was built around the aim of creating a new performance group of older people to be led by Scottish choreographer Norman Douglas during two intensive blocks of time in spring 2011 and summer 2012 which would perform at the World Congress on Active Ageing in Glasgow in August 2012 and within Active Ageing weeks in June 2011 and June 2012.

7.2.3 The Specific aims and objectives of the project, as identified at the start of the project were:

Aims:

- To increase demand for dance participation among Older People, particularly older men
- To explore different models for engaging Older People in dance activity, particularly older men
- To develop an audience for new work by Older People
- To improve the health and well-being and maintain the mobility of Older People
- To give the Older People of Glasgow an opportunity to be seen and heard and for them to provide a positive role model to other senior citizens
- To illustrate the social potential and benefits of dance participation
- To tap into the life skills and wealth of experience of this age group
- To ensure a legacy from the project

Objectives:

- To use a male choreographer/facilitator to help establish and develop relationships between Dance House and older men from a broad range of communities around Glasgow
- To establish a number of local groups which can be brought together into a combined performance group which meets in central Glasgow for 5 or 6 week blocks in 2010, 2011 and 2012
- To create new performance pieces which involve Older People actively in the artistic devising process
- To produce a new dance piece to be performed at the World Congress on Active Ageing in August 2012 and to take part in the Active Ageing weeks in June 2011 and 2012
- To encourage attendance at dance performances by Older People from community groups etc.

¹⁸ www.dancehouse.org

- To share learning with dance partners from Edinburgh and West Lothian
- To collaborate with other Glasgow-based arts partners as appropriate, and as funds allow

Desired Outcomes:

- To have achieved high-quality large-scale performances
- To have achieved high levels of engagement from Older People, particularly men
- To have established links with a network of Older People's community groups
- To be able to see the personal development and learning of individual participants and groups of participants
- To have evidence of engagement by Older People in the creative process
- To have evidence of increased press and media interest in the work of Older People
- To have developed sufficient interest, enjoyment and commitment from the participants for them to want the performance group to exist beyond the funding period

7.2.4 In its publicity material, Still Dancing was promoted with the following invitation:
To all the mature citizens currently living in the Glasgow area: you are invited to join Govan-born choreographer Norman Douglas to create a large scale movement project. Come with us on this epic journey, joining your collective voices and experiences to shout loud and clear that you, the Elders of Glasgow, want to be seen and heard.

7.2.5 An average of 18 people took part in the classes. Participation in this project was free of charge. The project rehearsed from February to June 2011 and again from April to August 2012.

7.2.6 Prior to Still Dancing, Dance House's main engagement with older people was through its Community Development programme (previously called Education and Outreach) which has enjoyed a reputation for high quality community performance and participatory projects.

7.2.7 What happened next...

The Still Dancing project required a very intensive period of attendance from the dancers and there was significant commitment shown by the participants to making these performances happen. Not all the dancers could commit the time or felt able to manage the level of stamina required for this project, but sixteen dancers performed in the new work by Norman Douglas as part of Active Ageing week in June 2011 and 30 danced in the piece at the World Congress on Ageing in August 2012. This was a huge achievement for the group.

7.2.8 To engage dancers outwith the specific rehearsal period required for the performance work, and maintain momentum and focus for the dancers, Dance House created another class specifically for more mature movers, called *Always Dancing*. This ran weekly each term from January 2011 and was charged at £6.00 and was open to all with no obligation to perform or to join the Still Dancing group. *Always Dancing* has now become an intrinsic part of the Dance House class programme and a satellite group is now running outside central Glasgow. Price does not appear to be a barrier to attendance.

7.2.9 The aims, objectives and desired outcomes for this group were extensive and strategic and would appear to have been very largely met. The one area that the

group struggled with was the desire to engage with and involve male dancers. Seventeen workshops were held with groups across Glasgow, including bowling groups, choirs and social clubs. Over 320 people attended these workshops which were led by choreographer Norman Douglas. However, none of this contact converted to attendance by men at the class.

7.2.10 Dance House had a change of Artistic Director soon after the funding for this project was awarded and created a new post of Community Development Manager during the second year of the project. Whilst it is too early to know what the impact of *Still Dancing* is in terms of legacy for Dance House, the new team is committed to applying the learning from the Still Dancing project to the development of the organisation's future community engagement programmes.

7.2.11 The factors which would appear to have enabled the group to meet its original aims and objectives were:

- The opportunity to work with a highly respected male choreographer
- The pre-existing experience of dancing and taking part in dance classes that many of the group brought to this opportunity
- The determination of the group to overcome the considerable physical and practical challenges of attending the class and creating the performance
- The forward planning of Dance House, with Glasgow Life, to anticipate the opportunity that the World Congress on Ageing and the annual Active Ageing weeks would present to raise the profile of older people as creative and committed performers.

7.2.12 The factors which may have contributed to those aims, objectives and desired outcomes that were not met were:

- Traditional male values and expectations in relation to dancing
- The relatively short time anticipated between making contact with community groups who have previously had no connection with Dance House or previous experience or interest in contemporary dance and getting their commitment to forming a performance group.

'The changes in the group have been very enlightening. At our first meeting I informed them that I was going to push them beyond their own expectations, they rejoiced in this decision. I was told that too many people make it easy for them when they are working elsewhere because of their age and they find this patronising. Their fitness has improved so much that they are seldom out of breath after the class has finished'. Norman Douglas, choreographer

7.3 Generation Dance at Howden Park, Livingston, West Lothian

7.3.1 Howden Park

Howden Park Arts Centre is managed by West Lothian Council's Community Arts Team. The venue offers a continuous programme of professional arts performances, exhibitions, classes and events.

7.3.2 As a local authority venue, Howden Park is served by the Arts Development team who work across a number of venues and outreach locations to take arts activities to all sorts of people in communities across West Lothian.

7.3.3 Generation Arts was established in 2004 as a programme of arts activities aimed at people aged 60 – 90 years old in West Lothian. It is delivered in partnership with a number of local service providers, and aims to involve older people in the arts. It visits care homes and community clubs as well as inviting older people to Howden Park centre. The programme includes music, movement, storytelling, poetry and visual art workshops and taster sessions as well as inter-generational projects with local primary schools.

7.3.4 The Community Arts Team established Generation Dance as an additional strand to the Generation Arts programme to provide a dedicated movement-based class for older people on a regular basis. It was advertised in the Howden Park brochure as:

This is a fun and relaxed creative movement and dance session suitable for men and women aged over 60 of all abilities. Take part seated or standing, be creative, improve general fitness and socialise. You can also join in tea dances and intergenerational projects throughout the year.

7.3.5 An average of 24 people attended the class between June 2010 and May 2012 which was offered free of charge to participants.

7.3.6 The specific aims and objectives for Generation Dance, identified at the start of the project were:

Aims:

- To increase opportunities for Older People to access creative dance provision
- To improve Older People's physical awareness, strength and mobility
- To improve Older People's confidence and self-esteem so that they can become advocates for the Generation Dance project
- To link Generation Dance to the network of Council-wide arts activities and services for Older People.

Desired Outcomes:

- For the participating Older People to have become more independent and confident compared to the start of the project
- For the participating Older People to have improved health and well-being compared to the start of the project
- For the participating Older People to have gained increased physicality compared to the start of the project
- For Howden Park to have established a network of participants who take part in a range of provision for Older People across the region

- To have more Older People coming into the building to socialise and take part in other activities
- To be consulting with the client group as a resource to help inform other elements of the programme
- For Generation Dance participants to be connected with the rest of the programme

7.3.7 What happened next....

This group met on a regular basis as a 'drop-in' class. The numbers started small but grew steadily over the funding period. It was not focussed towards a particular goal, but rather aimed to build up the strength and stimulate the creativity of the participants. The group responded well to being challenged over the two year period, and a small number were involved in the touring production of *A Conversation with Carmel* choreographed by Natasha Gilmore. The group were also involved in an intergenerational project with primary school children choreographed by Alan Greig.

7.3.8 Having been the oldest and the least confident as dancers, this group developed into a much more mobile and self-assured group, many of whom would stay and have lunch together at the theatre after the class and were starting to become aware of and interested in the wider programme at the Arts Centre, attending performances and exhibitions.

7.3.9 By the end of the two year funded period, the project would appear to have met all its core aim and objectives.

7.3.10 The factors which would appear to have affected the group's ability to succeed to this degree were:

- Many of the group already knew each other from taking part in other Generation Arts activities run by the West Lothian Community Arts programme
- The proven benefit already experienced by some of the group from taking part in the Generation Arts programme and their subsequent enthusiasm to act as advocates for Generation Dance in recruiting and welcoming new members to the group
- The opportunity to work with two teachers, one seated and one standing, in response to the needs of the participants
- The social opportunities (cafe, restaurant, bar) presented by the host venue at Howden Park
- The commitment and learning shown by West Lothian Council and the arts team at Howden Park Centre to supporting arts programmes for older people in previous years and through previous programmes across the region
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the class teacher
- The trust that was developed between the teacher and the class participants over the two year period

'The group as a whole have improved their physicality; they can remember longer sequences, the warm up is longer and more energetic, they can balance better and for longer, there are less people that sit down during the session. Therefore their strength, flexibility and stamina have all improved since the beginning of the project' Emma Jones, class teacher and Dance Development Officer, West Lothian Council

8 Shared Learning

8.1 Aims and objectives

The aim of the Shared Learning element of the evaluation programme was to take the opportunity to share expectations, achievements and challenges across the three organisations and to explore together how the organisations might learn from each other and, ideally, establish a way of communicating about their learning that could be applied to other projects in the future.

8.2 Methodology

Three meetings were held with the group leaders/organisation leads, one at the outset, one after the first year, and a final one at the end of the two year period. These meetings were facilitated by the Evaluation Team.

8.3 Dance Base was represented at each meeting by Morag Deyes, Artistic Director and teacher of Golden and Emma Jones, Dance Development Officer at Howden Park and teacher of Generation Dance.

8.4 The Glasgow project was represented at the first meeting by Sheila McGubbin, General Manager of Dance House and at the second and third meetings by Ailsa-Mary Gold who was appointed Artistic Director after the project had started.

8.5 The initial meeting was also attended by Katie Stuart, Chief Executive of Dance Base and Kirsty White, Arts Officer for Glasgow Life, a partner with the Dance House project.

8.6 At the first meeting each group was asked to list the things they wished to learn from their own project and from each other. The following items were identified as learning goals:

What do you want to learn from the project?

8.6.1 Dance House:

- How to engage with male dancers
- How to cope with those who don't want to perform (or can't) but still want to take part
- How to manage the process (practicalities) of quite a complex project
- How to unlock older people's creativity
- An understanding of generational differences

8.6.2 Howden Park:

- How do participants feel about taking part in an arts activity
- How are they different at the end from at the beginning

8.6.3 Dance Base:

- To celebrate age, wisdom and experience
- To ditch perceptions of 'old' age
- How to develop teaching skills in response to this age-group?
- How to unlock older people's creativity
- How to manage the group members as people (pastoral care)? Does this need someone else?
- Looking after the general well-being, not just the physical
- What do participants want to get from it?

- What can we learn from them?

8.7 What do you want to learn from each other?

- To see the different dynamics of the different recruitment approaches, i.e. seeing who comes and who doesn't.
- Age-specific solutions
- How the projects are set up
- Methods and practicalities
- Challenges/problem solving
- Benefits – same or different?
- To see other projects in action
- Seeing the development of other projects

8.7.1 It was suggested that ways of achieving individual and group learning could be through:

- Creating a pool of teaching and organisational skills
- Setting up an artists' group to talk and observe
- Sharing solutions
- Observation of classes and sharings of work
- Meeting up between facilitated sessions
- Virtual discussion – by email
- Using journals to:
 - Encourage participants to contribute thoughts/pictures at each session
 - Record teacher thoughts/expectations/observations

8.7.2 Articulating these goals was a useful exercise for each of the groups to do in a shared context and helped each group to understand more about the other projects.

By the end of the project, and two meetings later, it was felt that the majority of the goals had been met, and a number of issues and opportunities arising across the groups had been usefully discussed together.

The key achievements shared at the meetings can be summarised as follows:

8.8 Achievements

- Each group has been popular, with each retaining and growing in numbers
- Each group has bonded and developed into a supportive social community
- Each group has responded well to being challenged physically
- The dancers in each group have shown evidence of increased physicality and stamina and improved balance.
- The dancers in each group have shown evidence of being able to retain more information from week to week, particularly where sequences are taught regularly and built on in a structured way
- Having an 'older people's' class has been a way of bringing in more mature dancers, and empowering them to feel more confident to join other dance classes not aimed specifically at older dancers
- The two year programme period has been beneficial in enabling the teachers to learn about the physical and emotional needs of the group and to respond appropriately in their teaching style.
- Each group has become more than a dance class to some individual members of each group. *'It is a lifeline'* (Emma Jones, Howden Park).

8.9 The key challenges shared at the meetings can be summarised as follows:

- The organisations/group teachers have been challenged by the emotional needs of the groups, recognising the need to give more time to the group.
- The diversity of ability within the groups has challenged the teachers at Dance Base and Howden Park about how best to divide the group up between those more and less mobile.
- However, all the group leaders have had their perceptions of what these dancers can achieve challenged, and each group has exceeded initial expectations of the group leader and teachers, particularly in terms of performance ability.
- Each teacher has learned to avoid patronising or generalising about the needs and abilities of older dancers.

8.10 The response of the three teachers/organisation leads to the Shared Learning process can be summarised as follows:

- The Shared Learning meetings were felt to be of value to those attending and would be considered as a tool for future projects involving a number of partners.
- Each group leader/teacher benefited from specific learning points discussed with others in the meeting.
- Each group leader/teacher appreciated the opportunity to be encouraged to consider and evaluate their teaching style, the group response and their feedback on the project – however the initial proposal that these observations would be captured in a journal for the purpose was not achieved.
- Similarly, finding the time to meet or communicate with each other between structured meetings facilitated by the Evaluation Team proved impossible due to lack of time and forward planning
- The groups did not get the opportunity to perform to each other or to meet and discuss their different experiences of the two year dance programme. This was due to practical difficulties and a lack of a clear driver for the event.

8.11 A full note of the achievements and key learning points discussed at the three meetings with the three organisations is given at Appendix 1.

8.12 From the points outlined above we can conclude that as well as being a very useful forum for discussion of each group, the Shared Learning meetings provided a welcome opportunity for reflection and to remind each teacher/organisation lead of their part in a bigger programme of work and the potential for their experiences to provide useful information to others.

8.13 It was interesting to note that this way of working with colleagues across the sector was considered valuable but rarely achieved, not for lack of will but for lack of time and planning.

8.14 The idea of observing and indeed teaching each other's classes was discussed at each meeting but was never achieved. This would certainly have provided the teachers from each group with a valuable opportunity to share their experiences more directly and to create a wider frame of reference for discussion.

'I feel that we have shared at meetings and that has been very interesting and useful',
Emma Jones, West Lothian Council

9.1 Analysis of questionnaires

9.1.1 In addition to capturing the progress and personal experiences of the dancers on film, participants were invited to complete a questionnaire at the start and end of the project, and on two occasions in between. See Appendix 2 for a copy of the questionnaire.

9.1.2 The questions asked were in three sections:

9.1.3. Background Information

The Background Information section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their age bracket and gender, to give an appraisal of their current physical and emotional health and to indicate their interest and participation in other dance or arts classes. It also asked respondents to prioritise their reasons for joining the class.

9.1.4 Benefits

The dancers were asked in the first questionnaire to anticipate the importance to them of nine benefits which might arise as result of participating in a dance class. In the three subsequent questionnaires they were asked to rank their level of awareness of each of these anticipated benefits.

9.1.5 Challenges

The dancers were also asked to anticipate the level of difficulty they might experience in relation to nine challenges which might arise as a result of participating in the dance classes. In the three subsequent surveys they were asked to rank the level of difficulty they were in fact experiencing in relation to these challenges.

9.1.6 By asking the same questions across all four surveys it was hoped that it would be possible to track changes or developments in the way participants were feeling physically, emotionally and socially about participating in the class.

9.1.7 Whilst all members of each group were given a questionnaire on each occasion, not all the dancers completed them, and the same dancers did not necessarily complete all four questionnaires. Not all questionnaires that were returned were completed in full. The Glasgow group only completed three questionnaires as the group was not in place during Autumn 2011 when the third questionnaire was issued.

9.1.8 Despite these inconsistencies and variations, 75% of respondents overall report that they had completed a previous questionnaire at the time of completing the final questionnaire. It is therefore possible to conclude that the findings which follow are representative of the majority of respondents.

9.1.9 The findings are given in three sections:

- i) headline findings for the three groups combined, substantiated by quotes from the dancers
- ii) summary interpretation of the data taken from the first and final questionnaires from the three groups combined. The tables with the full data for the three groups combined is given in Appendix 3.
- iii) summary interpretation of the data taken from the first and final questionnaires from each individual group. The tables with the data for the first and final questionnaires for each individual group is given in Appendices 4, 5 and 6.

9.2 **Headline findings – All groups combined**

By combining the results of the questionnaires from all three groups, we can draw some useful general conclusions about the overall impact that attending these classes has had on the dancers involved. This data suggests that at the end of the project:

- **the benefit which has increased by the highest margin (52%) between the start and end of the evaluation period is awareness of ‘belonging as part of a group’ with 63% being ‘most aware’ of this benefit at the final visit.**
- **An increased percentage of respondents are now attending the classes for ‘social’ reasons whilst the percentage of those attending for health and fitness reasons has decreased.**
- **the respondents’ levels of physical and emotional health have either been sustained or improved.**
- **51% of participants are ‘most aware’ of learning new skills.**
- **60% are finding the physical demands of the movement ‘not at all’ difficult**
- **Fewer dancers than anticipated are having difficulty remembering things from week to week.**
- **None of the dancers are finding it difficult to commit to attending the classes on a regular basis.**

These headline findings indicate that the majority of dancers are deriving the most benefit from the social and collective opportunities that the dance classes can provide. The practical and creative challenge of learning, repeating and in some cases performing new dance moves has helped to improve their physical and emotional health and has provided a framework through which they can meet new people, made friends and feel a sense of belonging.

9.3 **In the dancers’ own words**

The way in which the dancers describe their experience of attending these classes serves to illustrate these results.

- *I feel more alive in myself as well as in my body*
- *It has opened up a new world to me*
- *It’s exciting being involved in a group*
- *It is good to learn new dances and at this time in your life, you do not feel embarrassed if you do things wrong. We all laugh with one another not at one another*
- *To me, dancing is the best form of exercise in that it is physical, mental and social, all of which are increasingly important as you get older*

Being retired and moving to Edinburgh from my home of Ayrshire for 30 years I found it hard to make a big effort to start a new life, but the dance class was one new experience I have been able to take part in

- *My back problems have all but disappeared*
- *I am now taking more interest in my physical fitness*
- *Great fun, loads of laughs, good Tuesday feeling*
- *A wonderful opportunity to take part in different experiences and to meet people of my own age group who are interested in the same things*
- *[it is] valuable therapy after bereavement*
- *Very definitely lifts mood and is fun. Sometimes you don't get out much when you reach 70. The routines give your brain a workout too.*
- *[I come] to keep as fit as possible in order to live independently as long as possible*

Even most of the challenges listed are mostly positive:

- *Finding things a bit difficult has been part of the process – a challenge that becomes easier to achieve gives you a real sense of success*
- *Apart from a slight problem with my foot I have enjoyed the physical side of dance. I have found a little difficulty remembering some of the moves, but this does not detract from the enjoyment of the class.*
- *Performing is terrifying yet electrifying – a brilliant challenge, also lovely memorable experience*
- *Not attending is not a difficulty, just lots of other things to do, e.g. gardening*

9.4 Summary interpretation of the data taken from the first and final questionnaires from the three groups combined. The tables with the full data for the three groups combined is given in Appendix 3.

Background Information (see Table 1 below for details):

9.4.1 From the data collected in the questionnaires at the start of the project, it appears that the overall group is mostly made up of women, with the highest age of participants ranging from 65 to 74 years. They are an already active group, with 68% taking part in other dance classes and 86% taking other forms of regular exercise outside this dance class. The majority are attending these dance class because they enjoy dancing and wish to benefit from keeping fit.

9.4.2 Approximately 50% of the group rate themselves as being in 'good' physical and emotional health.

9.4.3 They are a sociable group, with 78% of the group taking part in other social activities more than once a week, outwith this class. 43% of the group rate 'creativity and self-expression' as 'very important' to them.

By the time of the final questionnaire, it is possible to observe that:

9.4.4 the split between men and women is consistent with all previous surveys, with 98% being women.

9.4.5 the majority of respondents still fall into the 65 – 74 age bracket, but the percentage of this age group has increased from 56% to 63% of respondents. There is a slight increase in those aged 75 – 84, with these dancers representing 13% of all respondents.

9.4.6 Interestingly, it appears that fewer dancers are now attending other dance classes. This could be due to the variation in numbers completing the survey. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that this could be due to the dominant role that the funded dance classes now play in these dancers lives.

9.4.7 92% now undertake another form of regular exercise, an increase from 86% at the outset. Whilst this is not substantiated by the quantitative data, anecdotal evidence suggests that the dancers feel themselves to be in improved physical health and therefore more able and wishing to take on other forms of exercise.

9.4.8 An increased percentage of respondents are now attending the classes for 'social' reasons whilst the percentage of those attending for health, enjoyment of dance and fitness reasons has decreased. However, 'enjoyment of dance' remains the most popular reason for attendance.

9.4.9 The physical fitness of the group has improved - with none indicating 'poor' or 'very poor' physical fitness. 58% now rate themselves as having 'good' physical fitness, an increase of 7% for this ranking against the first survey.

9.4.10 50% also rate themselves as in 'good' emotional health. The balance has shifted since the first survey, with fewer now considering their emotional health as 'average' and more considering it 'good' and 'very good'.

9.4.11 Creativity and self-expression are still very important to the group, with a higher percentage now rating this as 'quite important' than at the outset.

Table 1: Background Information – all groups

1st questionnaire - September 2010 (38 respondents)

4th questionnaire - May 2012 (40 respondents)

	Questionnaire 1 (September 2010)	Questionnaire 4 (May 2012)
Female	97%	98%
Male	3%	3%
Aged 55 – 64	33%	25%
Aged 65 – 74	56%	63%
Aged 75 – 84	11%	13%
Aged 85+	0%	0%
Do you attend any other dance classes:		
Yes	68%	50%
NO	32%	50%
Do you take any other form of regular exercise		
Yes	86%	92%
No	14%	8%
What are your primary reason(s) for joining this class?		
health	18%	15%
Enjoy dancing	29%	28%
Fitness	23%	21%
Social	17%	20%
Something to do	5%	6%
Referral	4%	6%
other	4%	4%

How would you rate your physical fitness at the moment:		
Very good	8%	13%
Good	51%	58%
Average	41%	30%
Poor	0%	0%
Very poor	0%	0%
How would you rate your emotional health at the moment:		
Very good	24%	28%
Good	46%	50%
Average	22%	18%
Poor	8%	5%
Very poor	0%	0%
How important is creativity and self-expression to you:		
Very important	43%	40%
Quite important	38%	48%
Neither one or other	14%	10%
Unimportant	3%	3%
Very unimportant	3%	0%
How often do you take part in social activities (other than this class):		
More than once a week	78%	75%
Once a week	22%	23%
Twice a month	0%	0%
Once a month or less	0%	3%

9.5 Benefits (see Table 2 below for details)

At the start of the project, the **most important** anticipated benefits for the majority of respondents were the opportunities to learn new skills and develop their existing skills further. It was considered **very important** for them to feel fitter physically and more mentally alert and it was **quite important** for participants to feel that they belonged as part of a group, to make friends and to feel more confident about their bodies. For the majority it was **not at all important** for them to have the opportunity to perform to an audience

- 9.5.1 This suggests a group of people who, in the majority, value the opportunity to learn something new and to develop existing skills, suggesting that they are already experienced in dance. At this stage the focus is on the process rather than the outcome, with the individual physical and mental benefits being a greater motivation to attend the classes than the potential social and public benefits.

At the end of the evaluation period it is possible to observe:

- 9.5.2 that awareness of the **physical fitness** benefits of participating in a dance class is being achieved at levels consistent with, or greater than, their anticipated importance to respondents. 59% are now 'very aware' of this benefit and 26% are 'most aware'.
- 9.5.3 that 62% of respondents are 'very aware' of the benefits of feeling **more mentally alert**, 13% more than those who indicated this was 'very important' to them at the outset. 18% of respondents are also 'most aware' of feeling more mentally alert, although this is 9% fewer than those who indicated this was the most important thing to them at the outset.
- 9.5.4 that 46% of respondents now feel 'very aware' of feeling **more confident in and about their body** and 26% are 'most aware' of this benefit. In both cases this level of awareness exceeds the anticipated importance put on this benefit by respondents at the outset.
- 9.5.5 the increase by 38% of those who were 'most' aware of the benefit of **making new friends**; 8% anticipated a benefit at this level at the start, and 46% (the majority) were 'most aware' of this benefit at the conclusion. This benefit had been 'not at all important' to 18% of respondents at the outset. Only 5% were 'not at all aware' of this benefit at the end, a reduction of 13%.
- 9.5.6 that gaining **enjoyment from taking part in a creative project** has become a 'very' important benefit to the majority of respondents (42%) when the majority had initially ranked this as 'quite' important.
- 9.5.7 a significant increase in those feeling the benefit of **belonging as part of a group**. 63% of all respondents felt this to be the benefit of which they were 'most aware' at the end of the project, where only 11% had anticipated this being the 'most important' benefit to them at the outset.
- 9.5.8 how important the buzz they get from **performing** has become to the group, with 47% of respondents now being 'most aware' of this benefit compared to 8% anticipating this as being the 'most important' anticipated benefit at the start, an increase of 39%. This achievement is particularly marked, given that 'having the opportunity to perform to an audience' was rated as 'not at all' important to 42% of

respondents at the outset, ranking it the least important anticipated benefit to a significant majority of respondents.

9.5.9 that 51% of respondents are ‘most aware’ of **learning new skills**, an increase of 19% against those who felt this to be the ‘most important’ anticipated benefit. The classes appear to be challenging the dancers to develop new skills and they are feeling the benefit.

9.5.10 that all respondents are experiencing some awareness of **developing their existing skills further** and that 34% are ‘most aware’ of this benefit, the same percentage for whom this was the ‘most important’ thing at the outset – making this an important expectation which has been met. 55% of respondents are also ‘very aware’ of this benefit, 11% more than had initially anticipated this being a ‘very important’ benefit.

9.5.11 the fact that 36% of respondents were ‘most aware’ of feeling their **self-esteem is being boosted**, compared to 16% who felt this to be the ‘most important’ anticipated benefit at the outset, a rise of 20%.

9.5.12 Consistent with early findings, it appears that the overall trend in relation to benefits across the two years is that whilst the majority of respondents are ‘very aware’ of the physical fitness and mental health benefits of participating in the dance classes, the benefits of which the majority of respondents are ‘most aware’ at the end of the evaluation period are those which offer personal and social development opportunities.

Table 2: Benefits: All groups

1st questionnaire - September 2010 (38 respondents)
4th questionnaire - May 2012 (40 respondents)

<i>How would you rate the following statements about possible benefits that might arise from participating in a dance class:</i>	1. This is not at all important to me	1. I am not aware of this benefit at all	2. This is quite important to me	2. I am slightly aware of this benefit	3. This is very important to me	3. I am very aware of this benefit	4. This is the most important thing to me	4. I am most aware of this benefit
	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th
I hope to feel fitter physically	6%	5%	19%	10%	50%	59%	25%	26%
I hope to feel more mentally alert	3%	5%	22%	15%	49%	62%	27%	18%
I hope to feel more confident in and about my body	8%	5%	47%	23%	32%	46%	13%	26%
I hope to make new friends	18%	5%	45%	8%	29%	41%	8%	46%
I will enjoy taking part in a creative project	8%	5%	39%	24%	34%	42%	18%	29%
Feeling that I belong as part of a group	8%	3%	53%	8%	29%	26%	11%	63%
Having the opportunity to perform to an audience	42%	24%	29%	16%	21%	13%	8%	47%
Having the opportunity to learn new skills	5%	3%	24%	8%	39%	38%	32%	51%
Having the opportunity to develop existing skills further	5%	0%	26%	11%	34%	55%	34%	34%
Having my self-esteem boosted, with the potential to benefit	16%	8%	37%	23%	32%	33%	16%	36%

9.6 Challenges (see Table 3 below)

An assessment of the highest values in each rating box shows that, for these participants at the start of the project very few participants were expecting to find significant challenges from participating in the class, however performing to an audience was the **most difficult** anticipated challenge for a small proportion of the group (8%).

9.6.1 Of those who were expecting to find some things **difficult or a bit difficult**, the highest proportion anticipated that they would not remember things from week to week and that they may not be able to attend all the sessions

9.6.2 For a very high proportion of participants (79%) they were expecting to find it **not at all difficult** to make physical contact with others or to have trouble getting on with others in the group.

By the time of the final questionnaire:

9.6.3 60% are experiencing no difficulty with the **physical demands of the movement**, an increase of 21% against the percentage who anticipated to find this 'not at all' difficult at the outset. 20% fewer respondents than anticipated are also finding the movement 'a bit' difficult, but it is not the 'most difficult' thing for any respondents.

9.6.4 Those finding it 'not at all' **difficult to understand** what they are being asked to do has increased to 90% against 53% who anticipated finding this 'not at all' difficult at the outset; and where 42% of respondents had anticipated finding this 'a bit difficult' at the outset, only 10% are actually experiencing difficulty at this level by the end.

9.6.5 More dancers are **remembering things from week to week** than anticipated, with none finding this the 'most difficult' thing and 38% are now finding this 'not at all difficult' compared to 26% who had anticipated finding this 'not at all' difficult at the outset. However, this is still a challenge for some of the dancers: 8% are finding remembering things 'difficult', the same percentage who anticipated having difficulty at this level at the outset; and for 54% it is 'a bit' difficult, the highest ranking at this level for any of the challenges, although 6% fewer than had anticipated finding this 'a bit' difficult at the outset.

9.6.6 No dancers are finding that **anxiety or embarrassment about looking foolish** is 'difficult' or 'the most difficult thing', compared to 5% who anticipated experiencing difficulty at these levels at the outset. By contrast 75% are not experiencing any difficulty at all with this.

9.6.7 **Anxiety about getting injured** is 'difficult' for 10% of respondents, and 'quite difficult' for 30%. However, it is not the 'most difficult' thing for any of the dancers, and 58% have no difficulty with this.

9.6.8 92% now find it 'not at all' difficult to **get on with other people in the group**, an increase compared to the 79% who anticipated finding this 'not at all' difficult at the outset.

9.6.9 However, for a small percentage, **being nervous if they have to perform to an audience** remains the 'most difficult' thing and an increased percentage are now finding this 'difficult' - although the percentage of those who are experiencing no difficulty with this has also increased from 35% to 53%.

9.6.10 Concern about not being able **to commit to attending all the classes** has mostly dispelled by the end of the survey period, with no dancers finding this the ‘most difficult’ or ‘difficult’ and 78% finding this ‘not at all’ difficult. 23% still find it ‘a bit difficult’ but this is half the percentage of those who anticipated finding it difficult at this level at the outset. The dancers *want* to come to the class, and we know from the interviews that for many the class becomes an important focus for their week.

‘it’s great fun – I look forward to it every week’

9.6.11 The overall trend in relation to challenges for the three groups combined over the two year period is that the classes would appear to have had a positive effect on the confidence of the group: in all nine challenge areas, higher than anticipated percentages of respondents have experienced no difficulty ‘at all’ and a smaller percentage of respondents than anticipated are finding eight of the nine challenges ‘a bit difficult’. Of course there are still challenges which the dancers find ‘difficult’ or ‘most difficult’, but in all cases these represent less than 13% of respondents.

Table 3 Challenges: all groups

**First questionnaire – May 2010 (38 respondents)
Fourth questionnaire - April 2012 (40 respondents)**

<i>How would you rate the following statements about challenges which might arise from participating in a dance class? You might wish to think back to when you started attending this class.</i>	1. I am not expecting to find this difficult at all	1. I am not finding this difficult at all	2. I expect to find this a bit difficult	2. I am finding this a bit difficult	3. I expect to find this difficult	3. I am finding this difficult	4. I expect this to be the most difficult thing for me	4. This is the most difficult thing for me
	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th
The movement will be too physically demanding for me	39%	60%	58%	38%	0%	3%	3%	0%
I will not understand what I am being asked to do	53%	90%	42%	10%	5%	0%	0%	0%
I will not remember things from week to week	26%	38%	61%	54%	8%	8%	5%	0%
I will feel anxious or embarrassed about looking foolish	66%	75%	24%	25%	5%	0%	5%	0%
I will be uncomfortable if I have to make physical contact with other people	79%	83%	18%	15%	3%	3%	0%	0%
I will be anxious about triggering a previous injury or getting a new injury	58%	58%	37%	30%	0%	10%	5%	0%
I will not get on with other people in the group	79%	92%	18%	5%	0%	0%	3%	3%
I will be nervous if I have to perform to an audience	35%	53%	54%	26%	3%	13%	8%	8%
I will not be able to commit to attending all the sessions	45%	78%	42%	23%	8%	0%	5%	0%

10 Summary interpretation of the data taken from the first and final questionnaires from each individual group.

Golden - the Edinburgh group (see appendix 4 for tables)

10.1 Background Information

At the start of the evaluation period the Edinburgh Group has the highest proportion of younger dancers, aged 55 – 64 years. This group appear to be very social and very active with a lot of experienced dancers and their motivation for attending the classes is because they enjoy dancing.

10.1.2 By the time of the final questionnaire, the key areas of development appear to be that:

The majority **age range** has shifted from 55 – 64 years to 65 – 74 years, reflecting the passing of time but also the increase in age of new members joining the group. However, compared to the other two groups, the Edinburgh group still has more dancers in the lowest age-bracket, 55 – 64 years.

10.1.3 This group has the highest percentage (15%) of the three groups of those who rate their **physical fitness** as 'very good'. There has been a 22% increase across the two years in those rating their physical fitness as 'good', from 38% at the outset to 60% at the end.

10.1.4 There is an increase in those assessing themselves as in 'good' **emotional health**, from 38% to 45% across the two years. Those in 'very good' emotional health have sustained, and there is a decrease in those describing themselves as in 'poor' emotional health

10.1.5 **Self-expression and creativity** have risen to 'very important' for 60% of respondents, from 38% at outset. This is the highest ranking across the three groups. No one has rated this as 'unimportant' or 'very unimportant' at the end.

'it's been a great pleasure to be able to pick up and take part in dance again – it has been such a huge part of my life', Golden participant

10.2 Benefits

For the Golden dancers at the outset, the **most** important anticipated benefit was the opportunity to learn and develop skills. It was **very** important to them to feel fitter physically and **quite** important to feel more confident in and about their bodies. **Not at all** important was the opportunity to perform to an audience.

10.2.1 **By the time of the final questionnaire**, the highest ranking benefits enjoyed by the Edinburgh group were achieved in areas not anticipated at the outset:

10.2.2 So, whereas wanting to feel that they '**belong as part of a group**' was the 'most important' anticipated benefit to just 7% of respondents at the outset, this was the benefit of which 65% of respondents were 'most aware' in the final questionnaire, an increase of 58%.

10.2.3 **Making new friends** has become the benefit 'most' felt by the highest number of respondents in the final survey (45%), having not been anticipated as the 'most important' anticipated benefit by any respondents at outset;

- 10.2.4 Similarly, where having the '**opportunity of performing to an audience**' was not considered the 'most important' anticipated benefit to any of the respondents at the outset, and was ranked 'not at all important' by 57% of respondents in the first questionnaire, this was the benefit of which the highest proportion of respondents were 'most aware' two years later, with 70% ranking enjoying performing to an audience the benefit of which they are 'most aware'.
- 10.2.5 '**Having my self-esteem boosted**' was the benefit that 40% of respondents were 'most aware' of in the final questionnaire, having been anticipated as the 'most important' benefit for only 7% of respondents at the outset;
- 10.2.6 and whereas feeling '**more confident in and about my body**' was the 'most important' anticipated benefit to 7% of respondents at the start of the evaluation programme, it ranked as the benefit that 26% of respondents were 'most aware' of in the final survey.
- 10.2.7 **Enjoying taking part in a creative project** was listed as the benefit of which 44% of respondents were 'very' or 'most' aware in the final survey: increases of 15% and 23% against their respective rating at the outset.
- 10.2.8 **Feeling physically fitter and more mentally alert** became 'the most' marked benefit for 21% and 16% of respondents respectively at the end of the project. Interestingly, no respondents had ranked these benefits with this level of importance at the outset. However, the percentage of those respondents enjoying this level of benefit in their physical and mental fitness is still smaller than those who are 'most aware' of the social and personal development benefits.
- 10.2.9 An analysis of these outcomes suggests that the Edinburgh group have benefited over the two years in more ways than they originally anticipated. They hoped to learn and develop their skills, and they have. But they have also enjoyed huge social benefits from participating in the group, and these benefits now outweigh the fitness benefits. They have gained confidence from the sense of shared endeavour to learn, perform and express themselves creatively.

'It's wonderful to come to a class so full of inspiring older people and to leave in a happy high, full of endorphins'

10.3 Challenges

This group did not anticipate a high degree of difficulty with any of challenge listed. However, 16% expected to find the **most difficult** challenge being committing to attending all the sessions and 7% were also anticipating it being the **most difficult** thing to perform to an audience and to get on with others in the group. They expected to find it **difficult** to remember things from week to week. They thought the movement would be a **bit** physically demanding and that it would be a **bit difficult** to perform to an audience.

10.3.1 By the time of the final questionnaire:

10.3.2 none of the dancers list any of the challenges as the 'most difficult' thing for them.

10.3.3 the biggest shift is the development to 60% of those who are finding it 'not at all' difficult **being nervous if they have to perform to an audience**. This compares to the 7% who anticipated this being 'not at all' difficult at the outset.

- 10.3.4 60% now find it 'not at all' difficult to **manage the physical demands of the movement**, compared with 14% who were not expecting to find this 'at all' difficult at the outset.
- 10.3.5 There has also been an increase of 56% in those **committed to attending all the sessions**.
- 10.3.6 In summary, the Edinburgh group have developed into a physically and socially confident group with high levels of commitment.

'Really enjoyed the chance to perform – usually these opportunities are for younger dancers'

11 Generation Dance – the Howden Park group (See Appendix 5 for tables)

11.1 Background Information

At the start of the evaluation period, the Howden Park group had the highest proportion of older dancers, aged 75 – 84, and was the only group to include a male participant. It also had the highest proportion of participants taking part in other arts activities or creative classes.

11.1.2 The primary incentive for the Howden Park group joining the class was for Health reasons and, unlike the other two groups, none ranked themselves as having ‘very good’ physical fitness or emotional health. For all respondents this class was their only form of regular exercise. Self-expression and creativity were ranked as ‘quite important’ to this group, a lower ranking than the other two groups.

11.1.3 The participants in this group appeared to find it harder to complete the written questionnaires and were also most anxious about appearing in front of the camera. However, 64% of those who completed the final questionnaire state that they had also completed a previous questionnaire.

At the end of the evaluation period it is possible to conclude that:

11.1.4 There has been an increase in those aged 65 – 74 and a decrease in those aged 75 – 84. However, this is still the group with the highest proportion of dancers in the oldest age bracket.

11.1.5 There has also been a sharp rise in those in ‘very good’ **emotional health**, from 0% at the outset to 42% at end. However, 8% also now describe themselves as being in ‘poor’ health, where none scored at this level at the outset

11.1.6 There has been an increase in those describing themselves as in ‘good’ **physical health**, from 25% to 50% between the start and end of the project. 8% now also rank themselves as being in ‘very good’ physical health

11.1.7 8% assess themselves to be in ‘very good’ emotional health compared to none who ranked themselves at this level at the outset. There has also been a reduction in those describing themselves as in ‘average’ emotional health.

11.1.8 There has been an apparent switch from ‘health’ being **the main reason for joining the group** at the outset to it being a joint priority between ‘enjoyment of dance’ and ‘social’.

11.1.7 The group continues to be very sociable, with 75% attending more than one other social activity each week, both at the start and the end of the evaluation period.

11.2 Benefits

For the **Livingston** Group at the start of the project, the **most** important anticipated benefits from participating in a dance class were the opportunity to feel fitter physically, to take part in a creative project, to belong as part of a group and to develop existing skills further. It was **very** important to them to feel more mentally alert and to learn new skills and **quite** important to make new friends and to feel that their self-esteem is being boosted. **Not at all** important was the opportunity to perform to an audience.

At the final questionnaire stage it appears that:

- 11.2.1 all of the Howden Park respondents are aware of **making new friends** and feeling they **belong as part of a group** with 73% now 'most aware' of the latter benefit, compared to the 25% who hoped for this level of benefit at the outset.
- 11.2.2 A significant percentage of respondents are now 'most aware' of feeling **mentally alert, being more confident in and about their bodies, making new friends and learning new skills** despite none of these being anticipated as the 'most important' benefit to respondents two years previously.
- 11.2.3 A high proportion (55%) are also 'very aware' of **feeling a boost to their self-esteem** where none had indicated this as being a 'very important' anticipated benefit.
- 11.2.4 Where a small proportion of respondents had indicated that **feeling fitter physically** was 'not at all' important at the start of the evaluation process, all respondents at the final survey stage were either 'very' or 'most aware of this benefit.
- 11.2.5 **Performing to an audience** was 'not at all' important to the majority of respondents at the first survey and remains the benefit of which the majority of respondents (70%) are 'not at all' aware at the end.

11.3 Challenges

For the **Livingston** Group, the challenges they expected to find the **most** difficult were remembering things from week to week and being nervous performing to an audience. They expected to find the movement **a bit** difficult and were a bit nervous about getting injured. They were expecting to find it **not at all** difficult to get on with other people in the group and were not expecting to feel anxious or embarrassed about looking foolish.

At the final visit we can observe that:

- 11.3.1 Compared to initial concerns, 91% are now **understanding all that they are asked to do** and none are finding it the 'most difficult' thing **to remember things from week to week**, although this does still pose difficulty for some.
- 11.3.2 As anticipated, no respondents are having any difficulty getting on with others in the group. **performing to an audience** is still the area of greatest challenge and more respondents than anticipated **feel anxious or embarrassed about looking foolish**.
- 11.3.3 Concern about **sustaining an injury** has increased.
- 11.3.4 The Livingston have benefited in more ways than anticipated and appear to have grown in confidence, physically and socially. They have concluded the evaluation period as a bonded group of friends. It is not surprising that 70% of respondents were unaware of benefits of performing to an audience as this was never a focus for the project.

'I have been involved with generations arts in Livingstone for 9 years. I have found the dance exercise MOST FUN and the class I attend has grown (mostly by word of mouth I think) to a really big, happy group. We have excellent tutors, long may the continue..' Generation Dance participant

12 Still Dancing – the Glasgow group (See Appendix 6 for tables)

For the **Glasgow group**, a smaller number of dancers completed the final survey than the first two, and there were no questionnaires completed at the third stage. However, 88% of those who completed the final questionnaire state that they have completed a previous questionnaire.

12.1 Background information

At the start of the evaluation period, the group is made up entirely of women and the majority of the respondents fall into the aged 65 – 74 bracket. Nearly 80% of the dancers already attend other dance classes and take other regular exercise, with 63% ranking themselves as in 'good' physical fitness. Only 30% take part in other arts or creative classes. 26% of the respondents assess themselves as being in 'very good' emotional health although 11% also rank themselves as having 'poor' emotional health. This group has the highest percentage of dancers for whom 'creativity and self-expression' is 'very important'.

By the end of the evaluation period:

12.1.2 no men have joined this group despite this being the organisation's main objective.

12.1.3 the highest number of dancers are still aged between 65 – 74 years, the middle bracket.

12.1.4 The Glasgow group still has the highest proportion of dancers attending other dance classes, although this number has slightly reduced over the 2 year period.

12.1.5 The Glasgow group are still less likely to attend other arts and creative classes.

12.1.6 More dancers (13%) are attending the class for 'social' rather than for 'fitness' reasons.

12.1.7 More dancers describe themselves as have 'very good' **physical fitness** than at the outset and the majority still have 'good' physical fitness (63%), the highest of the three groups.

12.1.8 The Glasgow group is the only group with no dancers who describe themselves as in 'very good' **emotional health** at the end of the study, although there is an increase to 88% from 42% at outset in those describing themselves as in 'good' emotional health – the highest proportion across the three groups. No dancers describe themselves as in 'poor' emotional health, a decrease of 11% at outset.

12.1.9 63% of the Glasgow group now rate **creativity and self-expression** as 'quite important' – the highest of the three groups - against 37% at outset.

12.2 Benefits

For the **Glasgow Group** at the start of the evaluation period, the **most** important benefit was the potential to feel more mentally alert. A high proportion also wanted to learn and develop skills. It was **very** important to them to have their self-esteem boosted and quite important to feel that they belonged as part of a group. One of the least important anticipated benefits was the opportunity to perform to an audience.

At the final questionnaire stage it appears that:

- 12.2.1 all the Glasgow group are aware of **learning new or developing existing skills further**.
- 12.2.2 However, fewer participants than anticipated at the outset appear to be 'most aware' of **feeling fitter physically or more mentally alert**
- 12.2.3 A higher percentage of participants are now 'most aware' of **feeling that their self-esteem is being boosted**.
- 12.2.4 38% of participants are 'most aware' of the benefit of **enjoying the buzz of performing to an audience** and no participants report being unaware of feeling a benefit in relation to performing. This was initially 'not at all' important to 26% of participants and only the 'most important' thing to 11%.
- 12.2.5 Perhaps in tandem with this, 63% of the dancers are now 'very aware' of the benefits of **expressing themselves creatively**.
- 12.2.6 The social elements of the projects have also been important, with 43% (compared to 11%) now being 'most aware' of the benefits derived from **feeling they belong as part of a group** and 57% (compared to 21%) very aware of the benefits of **making new friends**.
- 12.2.7 The Glasgow dancers have developed into a group who value the new skills they have achieved and have grown to enjoy and appreciate the buzz they get from performing to an audience. They enjoy the social aspect of the group and are enjoying feeling a boost to the self-esteem.

12.3 Challenges

For the **Glasgow** Group, the challenge they anticipated finding the **most difficult** was feeling anxious or embarrassed about looking foolish. They were expecting to find it **difficult** to commit to attending all the sessions and that it would be **a bit difficult** to remember things from week to week. The thing the majority anticipated being of least difficulty was getting on with other people in the group.

At the final visit we can observe that:

- 12.3.1 Despite no respondents having anticipated it being the 'most difficult' thing, 12% of the Glasgow group are now finding it the 'most difficult thing' to **get on with others in the group**, although an increased percentage were also finding this 'not at all' difficult.
- 12.3.2 An increased percentage were also now finding it difficult to **overcome nerves about performing to an audience**.
- 12.3.3 Whilst 6% find **anxiety about looking foolish** the 'most difficult' challenge, this is fewer than those who anticipated this to be the 'most difficult' thing for them. 75% also now find this 'not at all' difficult, an increase from 58% at the outset.
- 12.3.4 However, none are finding it 'difficult' to **commit to attending all the sessions** and 63% are finding this 'not at all' difficult, an increase of 21% on the first survey.
- 12.3.5 There are also more respondents expressing fewer difficulties with **making physical contact with others**.

- 12.3.6 100% of the respondents are now finding it a 'bit difficult' **to remember things from week to week**, an increase of 26% against those who anticipated finding this 'a bit difficult' at the outset. However, this is no longer the 'most difficult' thing for any respondents.
- 12.3.7 13% of the respondents now have concerns about **triggering an old injury or getting a new injury** and are finding anxiety about this 'difficult' where none had anticipated this at the outset. However, 63% are also not finding this difficult 'at all' – an increase of 10% in those who anticipated no anxiety about this at the outset.
- 12.3.8 In summary, some of the Glasgow group have experienced the most challenges getting on with others in the group and some retain some difficulty with being nervous if performing to an audience. Despite a reasonably high level of physical confidence, some respondents retain some anxiety about sustaining an injury. The data from the Glasgow group shows a group with the most varied responses, reflecting the mixed abilities and experiences of those participating.

'Bring it on – I will fall down, dust myself off and start again', Still Dancing participant

13 Issues, questions and recommendations

Based on the feedback and observations recorded from following the three dance classes over the last two years the following issues, questions and recommendations are proposed as areas for discussion and further consideration. It is hard to make hard and fast recommendations as it is very clear from the three groups that were followed that everyone is different and the circumstances which work for some dancers, teachers and organisations will not necessarily work for all.

13.1 Everyone is different

A learning point that became clear to the three organisations very early on was the need to move away from treating older people differently from any other group who have elected to attend a dance class, and in particular to avoid presuming that their ambition is limited by their age.

13.1.2 In all three groups, the participants' creative and physical abilities exceeded the expectations of the dance and class organisers. This may have been due to the period of time that each group stayed together or because of the particular support and time that each teacher and choreographer gave to their respective group. Or it may have been due to low expectations being set by the teachers and organisations at the outset, due to lack of experience in this area. They really didn't know what to expect.

13.2 Age-specific classes or not?

However, it was generally felt that having classes aimed specifically at an older age-range was beneficial for the participants because it removes concern about being compared to younger and more agile dancers. This was found to be liberating for the participants, removing an unwelcome layer of perceived judgement and self-consciousness. However, the age-specific programming should not presume that classes necessarily need to be easier or less ambitious (see Mixed Abilities below).

13.2.1 It was noted that those who found confidence dancing in age-specific classes were more likely to try out other dance classes, aimed at a general adult audience and not just those targeted at older people.

13.2.2 Retaining the age-specific programming is therefore recommended as means of increasing confidence and providing a route for more confident older dancers into the more general class programme and ensuring that the less confident or agile dancers continue to feel comfortable amongst their peers.

13.3 Mixed abilities

Two of the groups identified the challenge of working with a group with differing abilities. For the Howden Park group the solution was to use the funding available to pay for an additional teacher to work with those more comfortable working in a seated position. We know that the dancers felt comfortable and accepted because they could relate to teachers working at their level, and interestingly those working from seats reduced during the course of the two year period.

13.3.1 We know from feedback that some participants felt they could have been challenged more in the classes; and some were concerned that the challenge was too great. This is a difficult balance to achieve, just as it would be for a dance class of any age range, and particularly in these cases once the groups had bonded into social as well as creative entities.

- 13.3.2 In the Golden and Still Dancing classes, there were many participants with considerable experience of dancing, and in some cases, of teaching dance. At Dance Base, these dancers were supported to set up their own dance class - at Dance Base but run independently by the dancers themselves. The majority also continued to dance with Golden. Some of the Still Dancing participants expressed frustration about what they felt was a lack of challenge for those more able and experienced.
- 13.3.3 It is recommended that future classes for older people are advertised for dancers at differing levels of ability or experience with the opportunity for dancers to graduate to higher levels over time; and that the classes are offered on a termly rather than a weekly 'drop in' class to avoid the need to integrate new dancers of varying abilities into an existing group.
- 13.4 Should the classes be free of charge?**
 Many of the participants acknowledge the benefit of attending a class without having to pay. However, it is interesting to note that where paying classes were established beyond the pilot groups, but for the same age-range (Always Dancing in Glasgow and Flow and 24 Carat in Edinburgh) the need to pay did not appear to deter participants.
- 13.4.1 Whilst funding is recommended to ensure that these classes, and others in other centres across Scotland, continue to run it may not be necessary to offer the classes completely free of charge. It could be appropriate to offer classes at a discounted rate or to leave the decision about pricing and access to the individual organisation to decide based on their target participants and the demographic of their area.
- 13.5 Training for teachers**
 Howden Park used some of their funding from Creative Scotland to enable community dance expert Diane Amans to teach two workshops to dance teachers interested in working with older participants in Scotland. This was felt to be extremely valuable, although attendance at the second workshop was disappointing.
- 13.5.1 If more classes are to be developed which are focussed on the older generation then it would seem appropriate to make it possible for dance teachers based in Scotland to have access to the best training and work experience to ensure they can offer the best to the dance participants.
- 13.5.2 It is recommended that future sessions with Diana Amans and/or other specialists would be of benefit. Morag Deyes and Emma Jones would also now be well placed to pass their knowledge and learning to others in the field. This should be encouraged and facilitated by Creative Scotland or another intermediary to ensure it is planned, promoted and supported with an ongoing Shared Learning agenda and/or mentoring programme.
- 13.6 How to create the best circumstances to achieve the best impact - pastoral care and difficult stuff**
 Despite the need to avoid limiting the physical or creative aspirations of a group of older dancers joining a dance class, the emotional and personal needs of the group should also not be under-estimated.
- 13.6.1 Each of these groups developed into more than just a dance class for many of the individuals concerned. They become a social network and a support group. Unlike many classes run by these organisations, and others, the dancers got to know each

other and to make friends within the group. Relationships were formed and important bonds developed.

13.6.2 The role of the teacher is crucial to facilitating the environment in which these personal connections can be made. This requires that the teachers have time to spend with the group after the class and are also thinking about how to support their needs beyond the class. We heard that Morag was helping the dancers get access to massage and nutritional advice to support their physical needs; and Emma sits and chats with the dancers in the cafe after their class.

13.6.3 Whilst it is impossible to anticipate all the needs of a group of older dancers, it is recommended that future group teachers and organisations build in some *time* to respond to the needs of their dancers before and after the class itself, factoring this into any fees to teachers, where appropriate. From the experience of Golden and Generation Dance in particular, it is likely that there will be significant benefit for the teachers as well as the dancers from this situation.

13.6.4 In the case of Still Dancing dealing with some difficult inter-personal issues between participants became a management issue which was both challenging and time-consuming for the Artistic Director of the organisation who was not involved in teaching the classes. These issues may not have been specific to the dancers being older but they reinforce the need for good lines of communication to exist between the class teacher and the relevant manager of the organisation in order that appropriate management support is in place, both for the teacher who may be dealing with difficult issues and where necessary for the individual dancers.

13.7 **Why so few men?**

Despite many attempts to break down pre-conceptions, Dance in most of its forms is generally considered to be an artform undertaken by young people, and in particular by young women and girls – so it is no surprise that there should be so few older men in the three groups participating in this evaluation.

13.7.1 It is of particular interest that the only group with no male dancers was the Glasgow group given that this project had specifically set out to attract male dancers.

13.7.2 Dance House made extensive contacts with clubs and community groups around Glasgow where they hoped to be able to locate men who might be interested in joining a dance group for older men. They engaged Norman Douglas to work on this project not just for his skills as a choreographer but because they hoped that his background as a Govan shipbuilder and as an ex-footballer would make it easier to persuade men with no experience of dance to consider getting involved. Norman suggests that the lack of response was due to the *'West of Scotland male [being] so overpowered by embarrassment [and], lack of confidence'*

13.7.3 The learning taken from this experience by Dance House is to follow up initial contacts made more quickly and to set up outreach satellite groups rather than expecting all prospective dancers to come to them.

13.7.4 A very small number of men joined the other two groups. One comments that he would like to see more men in the group, and suggests that a 'men only' group might help bring people in. For him, though, joining the group was *'my best decision since retiring'*.

13.7.5 Finding ways to attract men to a group for older dancers remains a key challenge for all the groups. If Dance House's experience is typical of the country as a whole, a

strategy is required that will need funding to help create contacts which can be sustained and developed through long-term local relationships.

13.8 **Preaching to the converted?**

Encouraging and enabling older people to dance does not have to be the domain of the traditional 'outreach' programme. These classes show that older people can and do elect to attend a class at a central location and under their own steam. They are not the same older people as those who require dance to be brought to them in a more therapeutic way. But their place within the overall dance class programme of the three host organisations is of no less value as a result.

13.8.1 Dance Base recognises that those in Golden are very different from the usual constituency of older dancers that they aim to reach through the Outreach programme – and it is interesting to learn that some of the Golden group have lent their support as performers and advocates to help fund-raise for this outreach programme. It is also of interest to learn that the reason one of the Golden dancers joined the group was through taking part in a Dance Base Outreach programme which she enjoyed; another calls it 'inclusion in action'.

13.8.2 The Howden Park group was much less experienced in dance and less physically confident than the Edinburgh or Glasgow groups. However, many of the Howden Park dancers developed into this group through their participation in, or awareness of, the Generation Arts programme that has run from Howden Park in many local centres over the last 10 years, illustrating the benefit of building relationships and gaining trust with individuals over the long-term.

13.8.3 During the course of this study, this group were successful in raising funds from West Lothian Council's Challenge Fund to roll out parts of the Generation Arts programme to 19 Care Homes in West Lothian. The project is also funded by West Lothian Council Community Arts, West Lothian Council Health Improvement and Awards For All.

13.8.4 As a model both of partnership working and long-term development, the Howden Park project would appear to have significant benefits and it is recommended that partnerships with local Health Boards or Trusts are pursued to help support continued work with this age group not just for therapeutic purposes but for the important purpose of continued good health in older age.

13.9 **How to take forward the ambition of the groups?**

Golden and its breakaway group – 24 Carat – have proved that it is very possible, given the right environment, combination of people and opportunities, for older people to become an effective amateur/semi-professional performance group. Dance Base has lent its management support to 24 Carat to help guide the dancers towards ways of achieving funding to support their development and administrative needs. It will be interesting to see how this partnership evolves and whether there is scope for a dance agency or equivalent model to provide management support for such a group.

13.10 **Shared Learning**

The process of facilitated Shared Learning provides a useful forum for reflection, discussion and sharing of experiences and was welcomed by all the group leaders/teachers. However, it was clear that without the active intervention of a facilitator such opportunities are unlikely to be realised. Where objectives had been set for discussions or meetings to take place amongst the groups between the facilitated meetings these were not achieved, in either year. The role of the Evaluation Team in facilitating these opportunities between the structured meetings was not clear and more could have been done to help encourage interaction between

projects on a more regular basis. However, despite the lack of time or opportunity to pursue a closer working partnership, the benefits of an annual meeting were very clear, as the outcomes articulated in Chapter 8 above make clear.

13.10.1 It is recommended that similar projects involving more than one organisation are facilitated to reflect and share their learning.

14 **Future funding**

*'I always wanted to dance as a child, when I retired my wish came true...',
class participant*

We believe that the evidence outlined in this report makes a compelling case that the award of funds to each group has been a success. The majority of the aims and objectives that each organisation set for its project have been met, some important learning has occurred and the respondents' have all gained significantly from the experience of being involved, as have the host organisations.

It is recommended that funding of this nature should continue, with due consideration given to the issues and questions raised above.

'I have enjoyed every minute', class participant

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