



ProDanceLeeds 2016 Programme Evaluation Report

By Sarah Spanton (January 2016)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 ProDanceLeeds (PDL) programme continued the development of PDL, devised and managed by dance artists Gracefool Collective, to deliver regular weekly contemporary classes for the professional dance community in Yorkshire, building on the previous 6-month pilot phase (2015). The PDL team are Kate Cox, Sofia Edstrand, Rachel Fullegar and Rebecca Holmberg.

1. Evaluation conclusions

- The programme is highly affordable and of high quality – in terms of content of class, diversity of styles and techniques taught.
- Participants show high levels of satisfaction, benefitting from physical aspects as well as other social, professional aspects.
- It has enabled a community of independent dancers to coalesce and begin to be nurtured. The dance sector as a whole sees value in this ongoing development.
- The artist-led approach to developing and delivering the programme is distinct and valuable and it is building up a loyal participant-base.
- There are ongoing issues of low attendance on some days, due to the precarious nature of many dancers' work.
- The programme is not financially sustainable and needs ongoing public funding.
- The issue of affordability is significant, as dancers can't afford to pay more for class – a commercial model is not currently viable.
- There is a need to expand the programme's reach beyond Leeds into the wider region, and beyond the NSCD cohort, however the team is in an excellent position from which to develop it further.
- The programme has garnered a positive national profile through the recruitment of reputable national teachers – they are valuing it and spreading its worth by word of mouth.
- The Space2-led Business Support programme was highly valuable to the team, raising skills levels and confidence.
- Individual team members' leadership skills have been greatly enhanced and are going to benefit the dance sector in the short, medium and long term.
- The programme has a key role in the region's eco-system for dance. It is enabling a flourishing independent dance sector, without which a thriving City of Dance can't be achieved or maintained.
- More work is needed to embed the value of the programme in the consciousness of the mid-large scale dance organisations in the region.
- There is a strong need to collaborate to work out how to support PDL to continue to deliver and develop the programme, so that it integrates even better with all the other dance sector activity in Leeds and the wider region.

2. Key facts 2016

- Funding received November 2015, delivery began in December 2015.
- Enhanced from pilot, running 5 classes a week instead of 3.

23.11.15 to 12.12.16	Total number of programme weeks	Total number of classes during programme
55-week period	51	247

- 1.5 hour long classes – times were mainly 9.15 – 10.45am.
- Class prices were: £4.00
- Friends of PDL Card price was: £30.00
- There were 41 Loyalty Card holders (46 including the 5 PDL Team members).
- 49 different class teachers – based locally, regional, national and international, for example Anthony Middleton, Vanessa Grasse, Ian Garside, Rachele Rapisardi, James Finnemore and Davide Sportelli (based in Italy).
- 297 individual participants (including PDL team).
- 1824 attendances by participants to class.
- Wide range of dance styles and techniques were offered; contemporary techniques such as Graham, Cunningham, release, contact improvisation as well as ballet and new forms such as Gaga.
- Class participants mainly live in Leeds.
- 3 workshops were held over 5 days: Ian Garside, Tomislav English and Lola Maury.
- 2 Gathering events were held on 16 December 2015 and 14 May 2016.

3. Key findings

PDL set out to achieve 10 goals in 2016. This analysis in brief outlines how each goal was achieved, unexpected outcomes and key areas of learning for the future of the programme. 42 participants responded to an in depth online evaluation questionnaire.

3.1 Providing affordable, high-quality professional level dance classes in Leeds, to vitally support the strengthening, visibility, connectivity and development of the freelance professional dance community in Leeds and the wider region.

The programme provides high-quality dance provision, which when coupled with affordability means the class programme has been exceptional.

'I feel PDL's initiative is crucial in order to bring the professional dance community in Leeds together. It gives them a place to meet, it gives them continuous training to keep developing skills at all times together, it gives them something stable and on-going to relate to, it gives them a place for interaction and exchange' (T¹).

The PDL programme has also strengthened, made visible, and connected and developed the freelance professional dance community in Leeds and the wider region - highlighted by the four partners who responded to the evaluation questionnaire, with unequivocal agreement that the class programme is *'Absolutely VITAL'*, *'Very important'*, *'Extremely important'*. The small workshop programme and Gathering events are not continuing going forward due to capacity issues.

3.2 Building on and keeping up the high-quality dance provision offered to dance professionals in the region, ensuring regular body-maintenance, continuous professional development, maintenance and development of high skill levels – essential for sustaining a professional career in dance.

The PDL programme has delivered a predominantly high-quality programme of classes which ensure regular body-maintenance, continuous professional development and the maintenance and development of high skill levels. Teachers enjoy teaching on the programme and believe it enhances their professional standing.

'The standard of regular professional classes offered by Pro Dance Leeds is outstanding. Nowhere else, outside of London, is offering such a range of distinguished and experienced practitioners' (Pa).

¹ Abbreviations

P: Participant, T: Teacher, Pa: Partner organisation

3.3 Developing a significantly increased (in terms of numbers and of reach) and progressively more loyal and satisfied participant-base.

More participants have taken part overall in 2016, than in 2015. Whilst the 2 years are not directly comparable, average class attendances have decreased since 2016. Participant reach has not extended much beyond Leeds. However, participants have a sense of ownership and loyalty towards the programme.

3.4 Enhancing the programme's profile locally, regionally and nationally.

The goal of enhancing the programme's profile locally has been strongly achieved, especially through social media and teacher word of mouth, with the regional and national profile also growing. PDL use a number of online tools to promote the programme; their website, a Facebook site, a twitter account and a monthly Mailchimp newsletter. They have also produced flyers and tote bags, one promotional video and held two photoshoots. Teachers from across the country and (in one or two cases abroad) are finding out about the programme and contacting PDL - evidence that the programme's profile is growing throughout the UK and beyond.

3.5 Deepening existing partnerships and initiating new partnerships.

It has been a challenge to deepen existing partnerships in 2016. Some initiation of new partnerships and networking activity has taken place.

3.6 Becoming financially sustainable, with a viable business plan for the programme to continue without ACE funding, having the financial controls to attract funds from alternative sources.

The programme included the team's participation in a year-long bespoke Business Support Programme led by Space2, comprising of 12 business development meetings and one-to-one mentoring, working aspects such as core business values, financial planning, brand identity and marketing strategy. PDL identify the Business Support Programme as one of the most positive aspects of the year – they have developed their business skills, including strategic thinking, management systems, budgeting, and time management.

'All the information required for my visit was given to me well in advance, including being sent a contract for the work. I felt all correspondence was handled in a very thorough and professional manner, which put me at ease. Everything was very clear and any questions I had in the lead up to my visit were answered fully and promptly' (T).

The programme is not financially sustainable through a commercial business model alone, but PDL is working towards writing a business plan and developing the financial controls to be able to attract other sources of funding.

3.7 Retaining a strong artist-led identity and approach.

PDL has developed its' artist-led identity and approach further in 2016, and a distinctive range of benefits to being artist-led are beginning to be identified.

'They know what is like to live and survive as an artist and they are able to accommodate that' (T).

'What I particularly like about teaching PDL is the freedom I feel to create and lead my class during the week; I don't feel restricted by a pre-existing nature of work or identity of the organization...' (T).

3.8 Contributing to the local and regional dance ecology, by underpinning Leeds'/Yorkshire's vibrant, professional dance scene.

There is a strong sense from partners and participants that PDL's programme has contributed to the local and regional dance ecology, by underpinning Leeds'/Yorkshire's vibrant, professional dance scene.

'In recent conversations around Leeds Dance Partnership it has been important to have PDL around the table to represent the voice of the freelance sector (as much as possible). Any organisation that is championing the importance that dance has in the city is adding, strengthening and consolidating the cultural identity of Leeds' ...' (Pa).

PDL provides the essential body maintenance and ongoing training/CPD, which dance artists making their own work and dancers working for/with companies need, to remain in peak condition and ready to work at a professional level. They are then able to pursue their careers successfully whilst living in Leeds and the wider region. Without these opportunities to maintain physical condition and to train further, Leeds can't sustain and continue to develop its independent dance sector. Partners see PDL as contributing to the strengthening of the independent dance scene by encouraging *'...others to wish to join and reside in the area. If it looks like there is a lack of facilities, cpd, networks and training for dancers in the area, professional will choose to go elsewhere'* (Pa).

3.9 Contributing to Yorkshire's dance sector goal of retaining recent graduates and young professionals in the Yorkshire region, including offering recent graduates a bridge between professional training and work.

Whilst there isn't a lot of direct evidence, there is a strong sense amongst all stakeholders that the programme is a strong contributing factor for retaining recent graduates in the region. Additionally, there is no direct evidence from recent graduates about whether the programme is offering them a bridge to training and work, however attending class offered some participants professional work and develop opportunities (see Figure 8), and stakeholders agree that the programme is strengthening the freelance independent dance sector, which is essential for recent dance graduates career development (see Section 4.2).

'Pro Dance also importantly acts as an organisation that contributes to the retention of artists and developing artists in the region, rather than the inevitable brain drain to London/Berlin/Brussels/Amsterdam' (Pa).

3.10 Strengthening and championing Leeds' role as a dance/cultural hub, contributing significantly to the vision for Leeds as a City of Dance and helping consolidate Leeds' cultural identity towards its City of Culture bid.

PDL is contributing to strengthening and championing Leeds' role as a dance/cultural hub, and to the vision for Leeds as a City of Dance and which may help consolidate Leeds' cultural identity towards its City of Culture bid.

3.11 Unexpected Outcomes

There are two main unexpected outcomes identified through the evaluation process; team members' growing leadership skills and the development of evaluation skills.

4. Key facts unpacked

4.1 Average class sizes and attendance

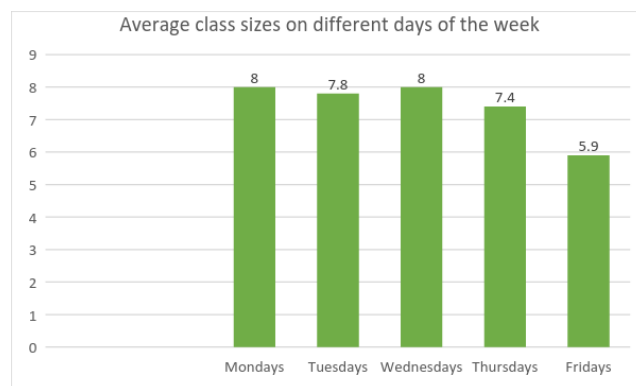
A mean average using available data over the year is 7.42 participants per class.

However, when the data is analysed more closely, the average numbers of participants per class is shown to differ on different days of the week. Mondays and Wednesdays achieved 8 people per class, Fridays achieved 5.9 people (see Table 1).

Table 1 Participant attendance per week day of the week

Day of the Week	TOTAL participant numbers	No of classes (with recorded participants)	Average attendance/ class
Mondays	358	45	8
Tuesdays	397	51	7.8
Wednesdays	401	50	8
Thursdays	367	49	7.4
Fridays	273	46	5.9

Figure 1 Average class sizes on different days of the week



- 24 classes attended by between 1 to 3 participants.
- 87 classes attended by between 4 to 6 participants.
- 107 classes attended by between 7 to 12 participants.
- 27 classes attended by between 13 to 23 participants.

4.2 Participant monitoring: ethnicity, health, location

42 participants completed a detailed online evaluation questionnaire. Evidence includes participants' ethnicity and whether they identified as disabled.

54.74% of participants' respondents were White Other and 35.71% White British (see Figure 2).

Only one participant self-identified as having their day-to-day activities limited by a health problem or disability, with one participant preferring not to say (see Figure 3).

Most participants completed monitoring data (213) about where they lived².

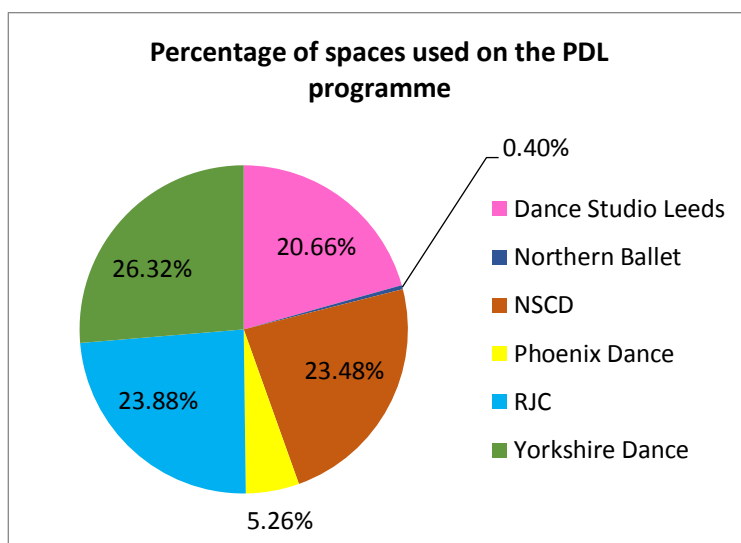
² For 84 out of 297 participants no postcode was given, however it is known that many of these participants live in Leeds. Postcode analysis is taken from the postcodes/information from 213 out of 297 participants.

64.78% of participants live in Leeds, 11.27% live elsewhere in Yorkshire (York, Huddersfield, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Barnsley and Harrogate), 6% elsewhere in the North of England (Manchester, Lancaster, Chester, Oldham and Stockport) and 10% in London (see Table 2).

Table 2 Studio spaces used on the 2016 programme

Figure 4 Where participants live

Participants living in:	In detail	%
Leeds		65
Yorkshire	York, Huddersfield, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Barnsley and Harrogate	11
North of England	Manchester, Lancaster, Chester, Oldham and Stockport	6



4.3 Classes venues

Classes took place in a range of studio spaces across the city; Dance Studio Leeds (DSL), Northern Ballet, NSCD, Phoenix Dance, RJC Dance and Yorkshire Dance. The majority of classes were taken in 4 spaces; Yorkshire Dance (26.32%), RJC Dance (23.88%), NSCD (23.48%) and DSL (20.66%) (see Figure 4).

4.4 Teacher popularity

Of the 49 teachers, several individual teachers' classes recorded very high numbers, such as Antonio Borriello, with 23 participants at one of his classes. Some teachers taught more classes than others – teacher popularity can also be analysed by dividing participant numbers by the number of days a teacher taught (see Table 3).

Table 3 Average number of participants per overall days taught

Teachers	Total participants by teacher	Total days taught	Average number of participants per teacher per overall days
Amanda Lewis	80	5	16.0
Jennifer Lynn-Crawford	28	2	14.0
Pat Durham	68	5	13.6
Nathalie Leger	52	4	13.0
Lewis Wilkins	60	5	12.0
Natalia Iwaniec	71	6	11.8
Toby Fitzgibbons	105	10	10.5

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