

Dance United London Academy

Recruitment pack for Service Users



Dance United work with people in difficult circumstances who are often marginalised in society and whose potential is often unrecognised. Contemporary dance training and performance of the highest quality has the power to unlock this potential. Dance United delivers work that is tough, tightly-focused and highly disciplined. No hiding places, no short-cuts, no excuses. We have seen it work with young people with multiple deficits across the UK, street children in Ethiopia and across the divide in Berlin and Northern Ireland.

Our participants experience a sense of confidence, power, and the exhilaration of achievement. By pushing way beyond their own expectations, and those of others, they are inspired to define a new sense of self and in turn seize the opportunities that may lie ahead.

The London Academy is an award-winning intervention for young people aged 14 - 25 with difficult circumstances including persistent young offenders and those at risk of offending or young people who are at risk of being excluded from school and have disengaged from education and learning.

The Academy is an intensive and demanding programme based on professional contemporary dance training and performance, from which comes a host of lifelong and transferable skills. We run 3 projects each year, one within each academic term.

The Academy programme approaches learning in a different way and aims to give young people:

A positive experience

Transferable skills

Improved confidence and self-belief

An understanding of working as a team

The project begins with a three-week intensive performance programme culminating in a professionally staged theatre production. The objective is to give the dancers a rapid sense of completion and success and an insight into how quickly they can learn and perform to a high standard.

Following this, the young people use their new-found skills to help deliver dance workshops with primary school children from a local school.

The final part of the project incorporates a range of activities including workshops with professional companies and trips to prestigious, cultural institutions. Participants also learn other dance styles, developing a more sophisticated technique and learning at least 2 other pieces of choreography including an opportunity to explore their own choreographic skills. The project culminates in a final performance, the "Graduation", to an invited audience of family, carers, workers and friends where they showcase all they have achieved.

All of the above leads to a level 1 or 2 Open College Network (OCN) qualification.

A team of dedicated dance practitioners and youth work professionals lead the project with a group of up to 20 young participants. Young people from local colleges will join the project as role models - providing peer support.

The Academy focuses on participants' fitness, nutrition and health with breakfast and lunch provided each day. The Academy demands professional standards of commitment and discipline. Expert training is provided with a high staff to participant ratio.

Participants can expect to receive the support and pastoral care they need to achieve and complete the project.

Most young people will experience and be involved with contemporary dance for the first time.

After the Academy, some participants go on to further dance training, but the main focus is on transferable skills and attitudes, underpinned by a new and growing sense of self-belief and self-worth. We have a range of exit strategies in place to assist the young people in their next steps which are implemented in the final weeks of the Academy. Some graduates return as role models on future cohorts and others join our Performance Company. All participants are offered a mentor to work with for the year following the completion of the programme.

The next project

The next project starts 20th February 2012 and finishes 5th April 2012.

Participants are expected to work 5 days a week for up to 6 hours a day.

Taster week and week 1 start with half days, gradually building to full days: 10am – 4pm each day (with a 1:30pm finish on Wednesdays from week 4 onwards).

Young people are encouraged to attend a recruitment session (at their referral agency or at our venue) where they can meet the Academy team, are shown DVDs of previous projects and find out more about the project. They are then invited to come along to a taster session at The Academy.

How to select young people

Our experience shows us that bringing together a mixed client group of young people from a range of partner organisations provides the greatest success rates. Dance United can assist with the recruitment of young people and offer recruitment sessions in partnership with referral partners.

An interest or ability in dance is not needed.

The main criteria that can be used to identify referrals are challenging circumstances, low self-esteem, and disengagement. The young person may have offended or be at risk of offending or exclusion from education.

If you identify a young person who you think may benefit from the Academy, the next step is to contact our staff, who will discuss their suitability with you. They will then arrange to meet with the young person before inviting them onto the project. The Academy has benefited a very wide range of participants and suitability will be carefully considered in partnership with service users before the start of the project.



We want young people to succeed. This is what we expect from the young people:

The Academy is a contemporary dance based programme where young people are expected to work in the dance studio in bare feet at all times. It is physically demanding and very hard work.

Participants need to be aware and adhere to the basic studio rules to participate in the project.

Young people will be supervised at all times including breaks.

Young people are expected to sign-up to an agreed code of conduct.

We operate a clear disciplinary and reward system so the young people are aware of the consequences of their behaviour.

Good attendance and punctuality is essential and participants are expected to show their commitment. Poor attendance and punctuality can lead to participants being given smaller parts in performances or eventual dismissal from the project.

Young people will be working with a team of highly skilled professionals (dance team and support staff) and are encouraged to achieve the highest possible professional standards with the support of the full team.

Being in a position where I can let someone down, it's always been the other way round. So for once I have to be an adult and say OK, I know what it's like to be let down, let me not let someone else down.

Participant Academy 2011

It all started a bit up and down and it could have gone two ways. Now I'm open to the big wide world. Bring it on...it's a big step, moving away from friends and family but I'm prepared for the challenges now. It (the Academy) has given me an aim and a goal - and I can always keep progressing.

Matt Dance Access to Higher Education Diploma Level 3, Lewisham College, London

Impact

Dr Andrew Miles (Manchester University) has led an independent evaluation over three years.

Headline conclusions include:

- Major positive impact on participants' attitude and behaviour.
- Less than 33% of young offenders who have had significant engagement with the Academy (from 2006 to 2008) have subsequently re-offended.
- Acquisition of key life skills with 80% of graduates returning to Education, Training and Employment.
- Measurable increases in participants' capacity to learn.
- Access to college courses, young people have gone on to study BTEC Diplomas and enter the world of work.

**A copy of the full report is available on request, please contact: Lauren Attard
lauren@dance-united.com**

Partnership

The Academy aims to develop a strong working partnership with our referral partners to maximise progression and success for the young people. It is essential to have a main and secondary point of contact from your organisation who are responsible for the Academy project and for referring young people.

Once the project starts the Academy is keen to work together with this person as a point of contact for feedback, progression and for dealing with any issues. We encourage participants to use the Academy as a fresh start where they can re-invent themselves. However, it is crucial to share information and understand each other's behaviour management system and any relevant background factors that may affect the young person's health and well-being, as well as safeguarding other participants and staff.

I sat last week at a re-integration meeting opposite a self assured young woman who smiled throughout and was charming. She negotiated a return to a secondary school with staff who were very sceptical about her coping at all and were worried they and she would fail.

That young woman last April was very rude every second of everyday. She was oppositional, difficult to manage and her self esteem was rock bottom. She felt she was useless and would never be able to return to mainstream education. She could not see a future and was very close to being asked to leave [Clissold Park School] as well.

With support she reluctantly attended Dance United knowing she would be by far the youngest. At first she was rude and refused to go but then one day she smiled and giggled like a 'normal adolescent'. Her self esteem grew daily, her opposition to attending dance sessions lessened and during the last few weeks she did not need us at all. We attended her performances and we all were staggered by the quality.

Dance United have made a fantastic difference to this young woman and have given her the tools to succeed in secondary school. She knows she can produce quality when she wants to, and this will always be with her.

Liz Allen

Interim Head Teacher, Clissold Park School

Fees

Dance United is a charity and the different ways that places at the London Academy are funded include direct fees from referral partners, sponsorships and income from trusts and foundations. We therefore negotiate specific arrangements with each of our referral partners according to their circumstances and ours.

For recruitment and all other enquiries please contact:

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