

# Dance United

The Academy- A Summary of Outcomes for Participants



# THE ACADEMY – OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS

A summary of a report by Andrew Miles and Paul Strauss covering June 2006 to June 2008

## Headline conclusion

The Academy offers a radically intensive, dance-led learning programme for young offenders and young people at risk of offending in a community setting. The evidence collected over the first two years of its operation suggests that the Academy programme makes a major positive impact on participants' attitudes and behaviour.

This evidence indicates that Academy participants are less likely to re-offend than their peers and that on completion of the programme they have much higher than expected rates of transfer into education, training and employment. These 'hard' outcomes are underpinned by measurable increases in participants' capacity to learn and the development of a range of key life skills, to which dance as a process and a context is crucial.

## Outcomes

There is convincing evidence that The Academy has made a major positive impact on participants and that this has transferred into other areas of their lives. The programme has successfully engaged a constituency that is largely alienated from formal learning, imparting measurable increases in confidence and self-awareness, communication and coping skills, flexible thinking and self-control. These have fed through into a willingness to take up or re-engage with educational and employment pathways, improved personal and family relationships and a reduced risk of re-offending. In terms of the bottom line, the indications are that actual recidivism rates for Academy participants are considerably lower than among the general population of young offenders on community orders.

## Process

Dance as both context and mechanism is crucial to the way change is brought about. The Academy demands professional standards of discipline and performance while providing a high quality environment in which individuals are supported, given respect and treated on their merits. Participants' learning is informed by a number of non-verbal, dance-mediated processes, which work to bring about wider changes in attitude and behaviour. These include the mental discipline and bodily control encapsulated in 'focus' and the development of 'embodied confidence'. The public performance dimension of the programme creates both a pressure that generates co-operation and responsibility and a sense of achievement, which in turn sponsors ambition.

- Seen in the context of the Academy programme's intensity, duration and constituency, The Academy has remarkably high rates of participant retention. **More than 50% completed the whole 12-week programme.** A further 23% completed the initial three-week performance project.
- Just as striking as overall completion rates are the frequencies of recorded attendances; **average rates of attendance** over the first two years of the programme stand at 86% for all those showing significant engagement with the programme and as high as **90% for those completing the programme.**
- Data gathered clearly indicates that **The Academy programme increases participants' capacity to learn**, with total scores 12% higher on graduation than they were in Week 1.
- Data suggests a strong indication that **The Academy is more successful at reducing recidivism** than the generality of community-based programmes for young offenders.
- **Less than 33%** of young offenders who have had significant engagement with The Academy (from 2006 to 2008) have subsequently re-offended. This compares to overall recidivism rates locally of 70% for those on a community sentence and 50% for less serious offenders.
- **Referrals who** attended The Academy but **dropped out** within the first two weeks **were found to be twice as likely to re-offend** as more consistent and longer-term participants.
- Considering only those participants who left The Academy over 12 months ago, the **expected rate of recidivism is 77%** (given that a high proportion of early recruits were on ISSP and other orders associated with very high re-offending rates). **But for Academy participants the rate is much lower, at 50%.** Moreover, among the five individuals who did re-offend within 12 months, two did so only once, in one case over a year ago and in the other 9 months ago, and three of the five show declining gravity scores, both in terms of the level of the most serious offence they committed and their average scores in the 12 months before and after they attended The Academy.
- Among the 51 Academy participants who were traced, **80% had positive ETE outcomes.** This compares very favourably with a recent (2006) YJB study which found that between only 35 and 45% of young people are in ETE at any one time, a Home Office resettlement study carried out in 2001 and repeated in 2003 which found that just 22% of female prisoners had ETE outcomes arranged on release, and for male young offenders the figure was 46%.

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