

Move Together Newquay Pilot

Move Together is a pilot dance project for women affected by cancer running at the Heron Tennis Club. The project is funded by Active Cornwall through the Tackling Inequalities Fund. Sessions are led by Dance Centred Co-Director Sam Lawrence with Newquay based dance artist Miranda Howard in a supporting role. 8 weekly sessions were delivered in total and were free of charge.

“We have found that having something to refer to that brings such joy to people going through a cancer journey has been truly special. Move Together can support patients as they go through diagnosis, treatment and rehab and give much needed respite from the worries that this process brings.”

Emma Seeward Adams
Social Prescribing Lead

Learning Summary

There is a need for this type of provision. It is essential to keep this activity free of charge at point of access for participants. Participants valued the person-centred approach and it helped them to keep attending and reap the benefits, even on bad health days.

Social Media marketing is a highly effective and successful way to connect with potential participants. Women only sessions enabled participants to create deep and meaningful connections in a local setting in a way treatment focused provision cannot. They report feeling safe and free from judgment.

The sessions not only had a positive impact on overall physical activity levels but also rest and mindfulness activities. Fun, laughter, making dances and creative reflection gave participants a new identity to focus on; a creative being.

The sessions helped participants manage their pain. Having two dance artists in all the sessions was important and resulted in added value for the project “It has been incredibly valuable to work alongside a more experienced practitioner. I have learned more in this way than on any kind of theory-based training course.

Evaluations

We evaluated the sessions qualitatively with questionnaires that were made available both on the last session and also digitally.

We documented the sessions using visual artist Antonia Eden through photography, video and images and language.

The creative evaluation was done by Sam and Miranda, reflecting on their session notes, ongoing feedback and the creative work of the group.

Case Study

Sign Up Process

We focused on creating a digital campaign as we thought the women who would be likely to participate would be familiar with this. We created a sign up campaign using Sam's knowledge from her training and experience. We thought carefully about the worries, concerns and barriers that would prevent sign up and participation. We created content using language and images that would soothe and give vulnerable women confidence to take the step to sign up. We created an e-flyer and used it to signpost partners to the sessions via direct email messages and phone calls. We posted on our own FB page and also popular Newquay community FB pages. We filled 16 spaces in 8 days and 75% of participants reported finding us through Facebook.

Marketing	Participants
Social Media	12
Friends & Family	2
Health Professional	1
Local Newspaper	1

What We Learnt

Barriers to participation

Barriers reported include:

- COVID
- Pain
- Travel distance and transport
- Consultant / Hospital Appointments
- Nerves (will I be able to do it?)
- Bad day health wise

A safe and supportive setting

Having one dance artist leading and one supporting, meant the women felt individually nurtured and supported when they needed it (eg when feeling particularly vulnerable physically or emotionally) whilst the group activity maintained energy, momentum and focus.

"Sam and Miranda have been amazing. They fully understand the difficulties - physical and emotional - of cancer affected people and have built sessions which are easily accessible to a range of people. Thank you SO much."

Free to access

"I wouldn't have been able to take part if there was a cost. I haven't worked since last year and financially cancer has made everything so much more stressful."

Financial pressures reported include:

- Paying for treatments,
- Limited income (early retirement due to health, benefits, unemployed)
- Heating on in cold weather, parking at appointments, extra clothes due to bloating.

After collecting our evaluations for Move Together, we met with Judy Clapp who told us that on average people with cancer are £573 per week less well off than people without cancer. She outlined some of the main reasons for this which concur with our participant responses.



Case Study

Sessions for Women

Benefits reported include:

- **Sharing** - experiences, treatment info, “speaking openly feels possible”.
- **Friendships** - around a shared identity of being a woman, cancer in common and dancer, safe space, relaxing.
- **Body Image** - Easier to share fears and worries about body image, builds confidence and feel less self conscious, boosting female identity.

“For me, my cancer has felt very body image sensitive so being with women only is really important to me.”

Why is Move Together different?

The focus on creativity and dance means that participants move for their own benefit, with a sense of agency, empowerment and acceptance. Everyone in the room is welcomed as a creative being and a dancer.

“I can take the sessions at my own pace, and the group allows me to feel ok about that and supported. They give me energy, even if I have none before the session.”

Comments include:

“Nothing is prescribed, I can work within my own limits and move at my own level, whatever that might be on that particular day.”

“Always mindful of everyone’s needs.”

“I can come even when I am struggling and it’s accepted without the need to explain.”

“Sensitive approach of Sam and Miranda”

“Mix of choreographed taught sections, free movement, paired and group work, reflection. Fun and there is a lot of laughter!”



Case Study

What other effects have the sessions had on overall Physical Activity?

“I was very nervous at the beginning and breathing was hard. Now I don’t use my pump as it is much easier.”

For those whose movement is becoming more limited as a result of their advancing cancer, the sessions have enabled them to be more mindful in their movement.

For some, the Move Together sessions are the extra support and motivation needed to move more.

And others report feeling able to move more and extend the number of ways they are being active.

Interestingly others reported resting better. Feeling calmer and being able to sleep without medication.

Many reported that they considered not attending due to tiredness, pain etc but said they were glad they came and felt better for moving. Because of the acceptance and inclusivity of the sessions they felt able to attend regardless of feeling unwell.

How do participants feel after sessions?

“I am definitely more relaxed after the sessions. I feel able to cope better with the amount of pain I have. Sam and Miranda make you feel valued and supported.”

Feelings include:

Freedom, joy, safety, happiness, fun, relaxed, less self conscious, less pain, able to cope, have an energy I didn’t have before, valued and supported, encouraged and celebrated, motivated, positive.

Added Value

The Move Together sessions were supported by Newquay-based Dance Artist, Miranda Howard. We asked Miranda for feedback on her experience working with Dance Centred and concluded that the project provided the following added value.

Continuous Professional Development

“It has been incredibly valuable to work alongside a more experienced practitioner. I have learned more in this way than on any kind of theory-based training course. I have learned from participating in the tasks as well as observing. I have learnt from the content that Sam has prepared, how she adapts it to what is needed in the moment, and how she manages the group dynamic.”

Creating work for other locally based businesses & environmental impact.

“It seems fairly obvious but having regular, paid dance work is crucial in being able to maintain any kind of creative and community dance practice. It is part of my community dance company’s sustainability policy to base the majority of our work in and around Newquay to minimise transport emissions and build relationships in our community. I was able to cycle to the sessions, and it felt important in connecting with the group that both myself and Sam are based in Cornwall.”

Creating a supportive artist network.

I have had a fairly long, unwanted break from dance work due to Covid and was actually at a point of wondering if it was possible to continue working as a dance practitioner at all within the demands of family life. This project has reminded me how important and powerful this work is, and helped me be able to continue with my community dance company and freelance work.

Case Study

Sharing best practices for future work

“Running activities targeted at specific groups as well as trying to offer inclusive sessions that can adapt to a wide range of people - I realised that some of this group would have found it difficult to participate in even the most inclusive open level classes.”

What we would do differently next time

Allow more spaces for sign up now we know that participants will struggle to make every session widening the opportunity for participation.

Messaging for sign up - Change our language for that of the participants and their experiences.

For example, speak to participant worries and fears and share the experiences of past participants. Include some professional information about Sam and Miranda

Include Jugs of water in the room

The parking for the Heron Centre is problematic – it is expensive and the machines are frequently not working. This is sometimes a barrier to the women

participating and can cause significant stress. Attempts to report this and to explore a way forward with the Parking Department Operations Manager (eg organise permits for participants) have been unsuccessful. This needs to be taken further for the autumn sessions, perhaps with a view to obtaining permits.

Use new links with partners and supporters to spread the word in our community engagement.

What next?

We have a waiting list of 18 participants ready to sign up for the Autumn sessions starting in September 2022 running for 10 weeks, which includes all the women who took part in the pilot.

The women have arranged to keep meeting up on a Monday morning during the summer in order to keep the momentum going until we re-start in September – calling it Breakfast Club they are planning to meet on a Monday morning, have breakfast at the Heron Centre café then go for a walk.

Sessions are set to continue on at Newquay running x2 hours a week instead of 1.5 hours. Participants requested more time, particularly for relaxation and found 1.5 hours wasn't enough.

