FRONTLINE dance

PERFORMANCE. HEALTH. COMMUNITY.

ANNUAL REPORT
April 2025 - March 2026



Welcome to FRONTLINEdance's 2025–26 Annual Report

This year has been about connection and belonging.

At FRONTLINEdance, d/Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent people, hospital patients and people with long-term health conditions are leaders, dancers, artists, participants, office staff, board members, volunteers and audiences.

We work with heart, skill and inclusive practice, creating participatory and performance programmes in communities and healthcare settings.

As makers, we explore how contemporary dance can be relevant, thought-provoking and rooted in lived experience. We co-create and co-produce with people across different ages, backgrounds and experiences. Our work brings people together, reduces isolation and loneliness, sensitively explores difficult topics, brightens days, nurtures creativity and talent, and builds confidence, connection and a sense of belonging.

FRONTLINEdance is a not-for-profit organisation, based in Stoke-on-Trent. It was established in November 2001 by Mike King and Rachael Lines and is a company limited by guarantee with no shareholders. We are proud to be an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (2023–2028), with public funding playing an important part in making our work possible.

Over the past 24 years, we have developed and refined our approach to inclusive and accessible dance. We create safe, positive spaces where people can take part, develop and thrive. Our members have described FRONTLINEdance as a "lifeline", a "highlight of their week" and somewhere they feel they belong. Participants tell us that being part of our work has increased their confidence, self-worth, joy, motivation and positivity. That we have turned their dreams into reality.

This annual report celebrates and reflects on our work from April 2025 to March 2026. It shares what we achieved, the difference our work made, and the people, partnerships and experiences that made it possible.

The 'Shout Abouts!' have been created by Dana Jundi, a freelance evaluator we have been working with over the year. She attended many events, held evaluation days, collated feedback directly and indirectly from the data we record, looked back into our archives, and worked closely with the Artistic Director to ensure accuracy and the correct narrative was being shared.

Statement from the Chair of FRONTLINEdance: Lesley Goodburn

This year has been an exceptional one for FRONTLINEdance. While our roots remain firmly in the City of Stoke-on-Trent, our reach continues to grow nationally. Our work continues to take place in hospitals, schools, places of worship, community buildings, outdoor spaces and theatres, ensuring that dance and creativity is easily accessed by all.

Working alongside disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, we take a rights-based approach to inclusion and dance. Dance sits at the core of our practice, but all art forms contribute to how we work and what we offer. Access is not an add-on — it is part of the organisation's DNA. The lived experiences of our workforce and participants drive our artistic activity, which is co-designed with our Artistic Director and CEO, Rachael Lines, to ensure relevance, authenticity and artistic quality across contemporary dance, live music, creativity, poetry, art and costume design.

For me, it has been a privilege to take on the role of Chair in December 2025, having first joined the organisation as a Director in January 2025. In FRONTLINEdance terms, I know I am still a relative newcomer, but it has been an honour to contribute to an organisation with such a powerful legacy.

One of my personal highlights came in November 2025, when more than 100 nurses, consultants, care workers and allied health professionals sat in complete silence during a screening of our performance of *Holding On* at the Hospice UK conference in Liverpool. That silence — charged, emotional and deeply respectful — was created by a performance exploring grief, loss and bereavement following the death of a loved one. To witness professionals who work daily in palliative care respond with such stillness and connection was profoundly moving.

The FRONTLINEdance team is made up of employees, freelancers and volunteers — administrators, operations staff, dance artists, musicians and managers. Our Artistic Director / CEO, Rachael Lines, co-founded FRONTLINEdance almost 25 years ago. We have recently welcomed new staff members, and although FRONTLINEdance remains a small company, it is one that is growing, evolving and firmly focused on fulfilling its future ambitions.

This year we also received confirmation of extended funding as a National Portfolio Organisation supported by Arts Council England. Securing funding through to 2028 gives us the stability, resources and confidence to continue advancing our plans and ambitions.

Our creative and artistic work this year has included many highlights, including:

- *Holding On*
- *Explorers in Training*

- *Advanced Training Programme*
- *Breakthrou'*
- Residency in partnership with University Hospitals of North Midlands
- *Uproot!*
- *Moving Together*

Details of all projects follow in the Annual Report, with further information available in our Evaluation Reports and on our website.

Our Board is made up of volunteers who generously give their time, expertise and professional guidance to ensure FRONTLINEdance remains accountable for its funding and continues to deliver meaningful impact. This year, the Board has focused on building strategic plans that will support FRONTLINEdance to be thriving, still challenging perceptions of dance and disability, and still making a profound difference to people lives.



Thank you to our management team, staff and artists, and to all our participants. My thanks also go to my fellow Board members, especially Sophie Humphries and Helen Mulford, who conclude their tenure with us this year. Helen also served as Acting Chair following the death of our previous Chair, Mark Crank — thank you for your leadership and dedication during that time.

In November 2026, FRONTLINEdance celebrates 25 years. We all look forward to celebrating all that has been achieved and to the next twenty-five years and to witnessing the continued impact the organisation will have on people's lives.

Statement from the Artistic Director and CEO: Rachael Lines

At the end of every year, as we look ahead to what comes next, we take time to reflect on what has been achieved—both artistically and organisationally. This annual pause allows us to appreciate the structures, relationships, and practices that have enabled our progress, and to recognise the resilience that continues to define our community. Each year brings new learning, fresh challenges, and compelling reasons to adapt. Yet, what remains constant is our commitment to move forward with purpose, authenticity, and collective strength.

We also pay close attention to where our community feels championed, valued, and genuinely included—and where it does not. These insights guide our decisions and give shape to the work we undertake. They remind us that progress is never accidental; it must be intentionally cultivated.

As FRONTLINEdance enters its next chapter, we are placing a strong emphasis on sharing the wealth of knowledge we have accumulated over the last 25 years. Our experience, learning, and evolving practice have generated valuable insights that can support both individuals and organisations—whether they are embedded within the arts sector or operating outside it. We believe this sharing has the power to transform how d/Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent people (dDDN), and those with long-term health conditions (LTHC) engage with arts and culture. Not only should dDDN and LTHC communities be able to access the arts with ease; they should have opportunities to grow, to influence, and to thrive.

This is the foundation of our current transition. It marks the closing of last year's activity and the launch of a new, energising phase. Next year we will be dedicating time to widespread knowledge exchange. Through a dynamic series of webinars, workshops, film sharing's, cultivation events, talks, and presentations—delivered both online and in person—FRONTLINEdance will amplify its presence, deepen its digital reach, and extend its offer. Our goal is to strengthen public awareness, increase confidence across the sector, and support greater understanding of disability and the arts.

Because our work is rooted in multiple sectors—arts, health, community, and the wider third sector—we will continue to collaborate across boundaries. This cross-sector practice is not incidental; it is essential. It ensures that FRONTLINEdance remains grounded, relevant, and deeply connected to the lived experiences of the people who shape our work. Our direction is guided by our dDDN and LTHC community and workforce, who remind us daily that slower, more thoughtful processes often lead to richer, more sustainable outcomes.

A major priority for the year ahead is strengthening our foundations. The past few years have required immense resilience from our leaders, staff, and collaborators. After significant challenges and personal loss, we are beginning to feel a renewed sense of stability at the core of the organisation. As we welcome new staff who joined us toward the end of Year 3 of our NPO funding, our focus is to ensure they feel supported, equipped, and confident in driving our shared ambitions forward. Their development and integration are central to realising the bespoke, innovative plans that define our roadmap.

We are also exploring the creation of a formal consultation, advisory, and mentoring service. This would allow FRONTLINEdance to combine income generation with meaningful advocacy, helping to advance a more equitable cultural landscape locally and nationally. Despite progress, barriers persist in our region—and new ones continue to emerge. Through our Advance Training Programme (ATP) initiatives, and with a longer-term view to collaborate with other dance companies, we aim to support career longevity for dDDN dancers. Our goal is to ensure fair, supported pathways into employment and to offer positive, well-resourced experiences where access needs are fully understood and genuinely met.

Artistically, in 2026/2027 we will have focused time on developing our current performance work and embedding creative access. We will also work alongside local venues to transform their spaces into inclusive, accessible environments. Accessibility should never be an afterthought. It must be embedded into the fabric of every cultural experience. All our activity—creative, participatory, or developmental—is designed so that d/Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent people and those with long-term health conditions can take part with ease, dignity, and joy.

Above all, FRONTLINEdance remains driven by a single, unwavering mission: to ensure that Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire become places where dDDN and LTHC communities can access and enjoy arts and culture freely and fully, and where they are supported not just to participate, but to thrive.

I am very grateful for the dedication, skill, talent, contribution, support, thinking, creativity, and joy the board, employees, freelancers, volunteers, participants and their parents/careers give to FRONTLINEdance each week. Equally to our partners, funders and other stakeholders for helping make things happen.



Thank you!

Rachael Lines, Co-Founder, Artistic Director & CEO.


OVER
200+
DAYS
570
ACTIVITIES
DELIVERED
2,939
ATTENDANCES
RECORDED


THE BREAKDOWN
327
HEALTH &
COMMUNITY
WORKSHOPS
108
TRAINING AND
ADVOCACY
134
LIVE
PERFORMANCES
11
SCREENINGS
OF OUR FILMS


3140
engaged with FRONTLINEdance
as participants, audiences, and workforce

People – Known Characteristics

We are proud to work with a diverse community. These figures show the known characteristics of people we have engaged with.

A more inclusive brighter future

Total number of known dDeaf, disabled and neurodivergent / Long Term Health Condition

1,572

A diverse community stronger together.

Selected **d/Deaf/ hard of hearing** on our monitoring form

31

Selected **Disabled** on our monitoring form

389

Known Long Term / Chronic Health Condition

1,094

Selected **Neurodivergent** on our monitoring form

104

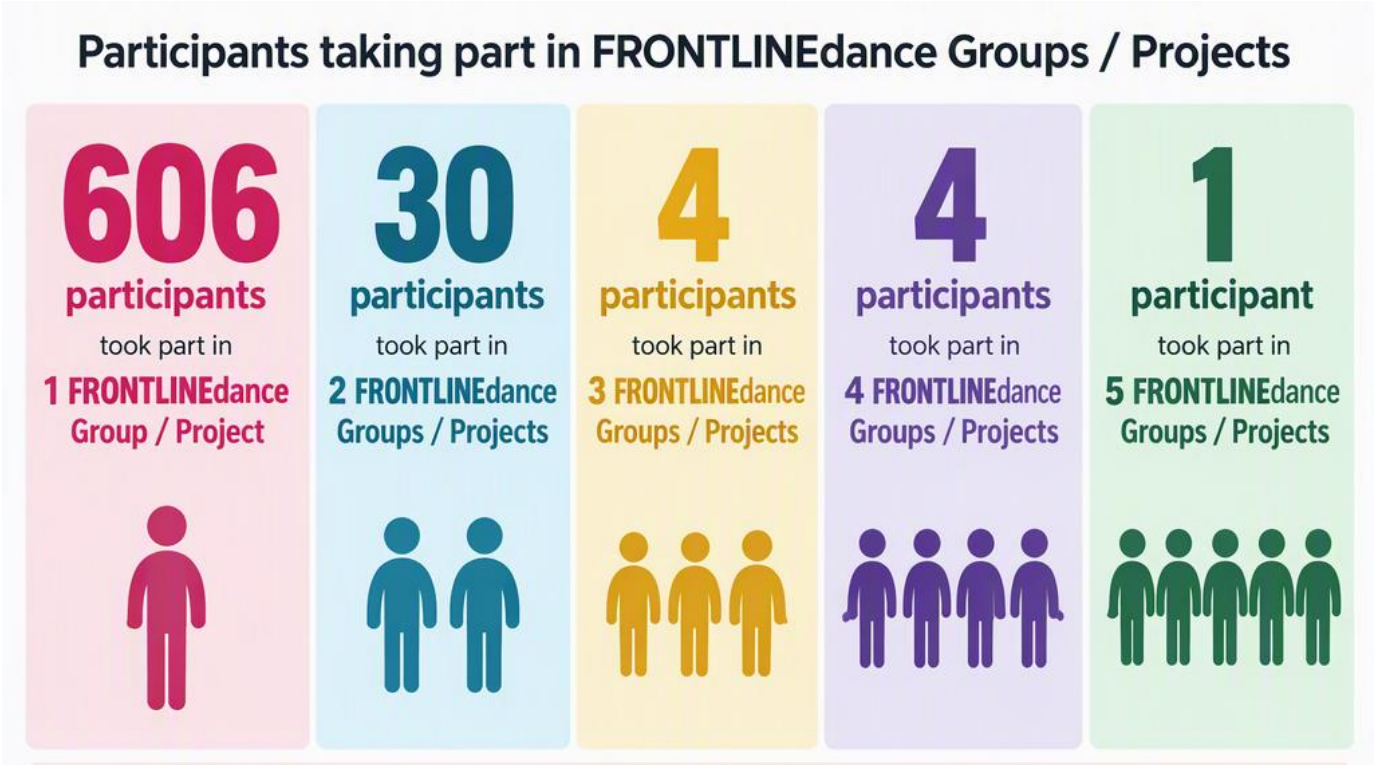
Selected **Wheelchair User** on our monitoring form

50

Selected that they identify as **global majority or ethnically diverse**

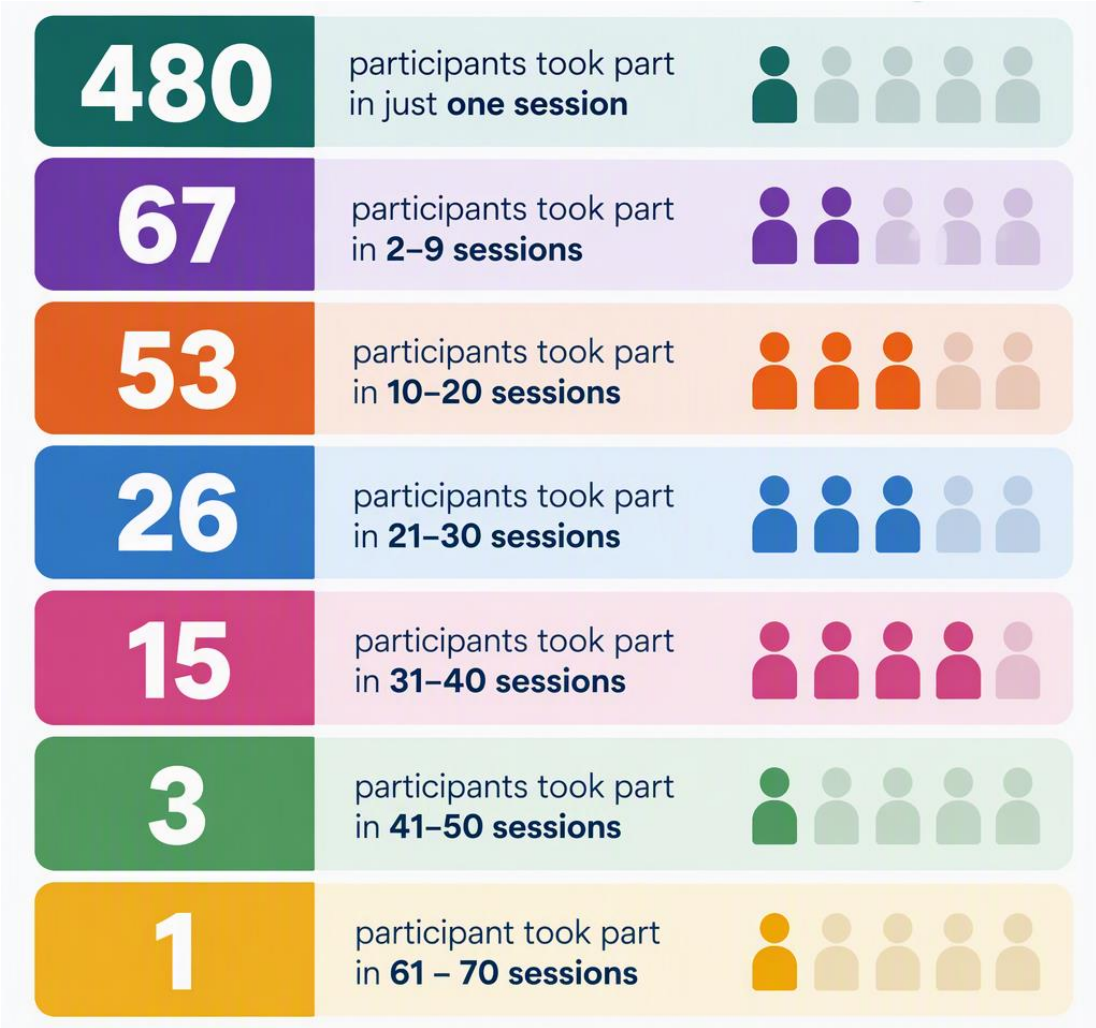
60


644
Recorded Participants
2435
Recorded Audiences
61
made up our workforce:
Staff / Freelancers / Volunteers / Board


Participants taking part in FRONTLINEdance Groups / Projects
606
participants
took part in
1 FRONTLINEdance Group / Project
30
participants
took part in
2 FRONTLINEdance Groups / Projects
4
participants
took part in
3 FRONTLINEdance Groups / Projects
4
participants
took part in
4 FRONTLINEdance Groups / Projects
1
participant
took part in
5 FRONTLINEdance Groups / Projects

How often people took part

From one-off sessions to ongoing involvement, our participants have engaged in a variety of ways.



FRONTLINE dance

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SHOUTABOUT

UPROOT!



Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

PM AG

City of Stoke-on-Trent

UPROOT!

In 2025, Stoke-on-Trent based **FRONTLINEdance** collaborated with participants on its Summer Programme to animate with history, music and dance, a section of Stoke-on-Trent's Living Heritage Trail, highlighting seven culturally significant locations.

By referencing its heritage and reimagining its future, FRONTLINEdance's inclusive and intergenerational cast of 30 performed newly- created work at the locations and spaces between the Spode Rose Gardens and Cauldon Park and named the new work UPROOT!

UPROOT! delivered a deeply inclusive and co-created dance performance programme that generated significant personal, social and cultural impact for disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled dancers, as well as for audiences and families. The evaluation evidence shows that the project was not only artistically successful, but transformational in how disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled dancers experienced themselves, each other and their relationship to Stoke-on-Trent's heritage.



"My child is very aware of what she CAN'T do. Here, she is fully aware of what she CAN do. You have no idea how much that changes a person."

-PARENT

Dancers consistently described increased confidence, self-expression and a strong sense of belonging. Disabled and neurodivergent dancers reported feeling valued as creative contributors rather than accommodated participants. Parents and carers observed lasting changes in wellbeing, independence and social confidence, often describing these shifts as life-changing and extending beyond the life of the project. One family cited the opportunity for a mother and daughter to perform together for the first time as the 'highlight of their year!'

The project's co-creative approach was central to its impact. By embedding disabled voices in decision-making across choreography, costume, ideas, themes, storytelling and access, UPROOT! created conditions for genuine creative ownership. This autonomy supported high levels of engagement, artistic development and pride, and reinforced the importance of accessible, community-led practice in inclusive arts delivery.

UPROOT! also strengthened social connection and community cohesion. Dancers formed meaningful relationships across age groups and abilities, while staff and artists developed deeper inclusive practice and leadership skills. Audiences engaged positively with the performances, responding to the visibility of disabled performers in public heritage spaces and to the shared sense of celebration and civic pride.

The evaluation confirms that UPROOT! met and exceeded its stated aims. It made heritage more accessible through flexible formats and BSL signing as part of the art itself; empowered people to engage with place and history; embedded co-creation throughout delivery; and achieved meaningful public engagement. While challenges around venue accessibility and logistics were identified, these provide clear learning to inform future delivery rather than detract from the project's success.



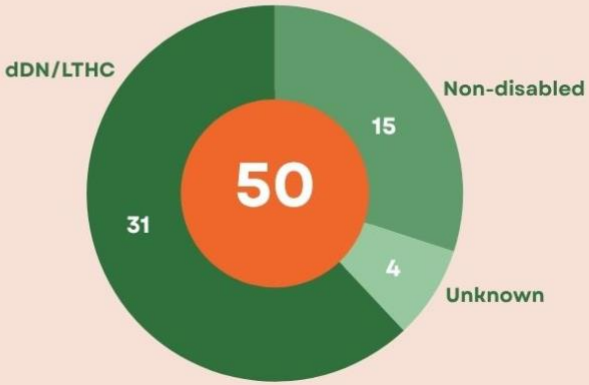
UPROOT! demonstrates the power of inclusive, co-created arts practice to shift confidence, identity and belonging, while reshaping how heritage is experienced and who it is for. The project has established a replicable blueprint for inclusive practice for future heritage and arts collaborations, exemplifying FRONTLINEdance's rights-based approach to inclusion, where accessibility is not an add-on but a fundamental asset that informs every artistic decision.

Its impact is lasting, deeply human and rooted in the lived experiences of those most often excluded from cultural narratives.

An in-depth evaluation report of UPROOT! can be requested by contacting **hello@frontlinedance.co.uk** or follow us on socials **@FRONTLINEdance1**.



NUMBERS AT A GLANCE





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SHOUTABOUT

CONNECT & COLLABORATE



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Funded by UK Government

CONNECT & COLLABORATE

In early 2026, FRONTLINEdance brought together nine disabled artists across dance, poetry, film, writing, sound, drama and theatre-making for six sessions and a public webinar. The programme was an opportunity for disabled artists to connect, explore and collaborate, with no pressure to produce an output. This was a deliberate choice in a sector that normally pays for outputs. The decision to pay for presence and process represented a different set of values.

A financial contribution was offered to each artist to support their time, access costs and expenses. This was not a commission fee. It was a recognition that attending, being present, bringing knowledge and lived experience and participating in the process has professional value in itself.

It was important that this programme happened in Stoke-on-Trent to bring national artists to the area, to FRONTLINEdance, and to connect local disabled artists with work happening beyond the locality.

The access-first approach began before the first session. Artists shared access riders in advance which were used to shape every session. Check-ins happened at the start of every session and after every break. Access needs were shared anonymously and discussed collectively, including honest conversations about access clashes, when one person's needs are in direct tension with another's. Physical spaces were prepared with care. Rest was built in without explanation required.

Access was not an interruption to the work, it was the work.

The programme brought together artists at different stages in their careers, from emerging to established. Artists travelled from across England to take part, and a diverse range of lived experience was present in the room.



IMPACT

DROPPING THE MASK

Artists described dropping the mask and the removal of their usual pressure to 'overperform to 110%' just to be taken seriously as liberating and refreshing. Masking costs energy that would otherwise go into making. For many disabled people, the process of requesting accommodation becomes a source of anxiety and exposure that ends up overshadowing the practical requirement itself. This programme shows that when that process is removed, the need turns out to be manageable and no longer a defining feature of the professional encounter.

THE T&Cs OF LIFE

The phrase 'T&Cs of your life' captures the invisible contract that disabled people carry into every new professional relationship. Drafting it, presenting it, managing reactions to it, and then often watching it be ignored is a struggle that builds across a career. Here, those terms were read and accepted before artists arrived, and it transforms the working day. Access literacy is not a given. It develops through experience, and through being in environments that model it. For some, Connect and Collaborate helped them discover and articulate those needs for the first time.

PERMISSION TO REST

For artists managing chronic fatigue, chronic pain, mental illness or the sustained energy cost of masking, rest is a necessity not an indulgence. The programme built rest into its rhythms deliberately, with flexible pacing, quiet spaces, contributing from a laid-down position and an expectation that people would care for themselves without needing to explain or justify it.

PEER LEARNING

The depth of learning that occurred between artists through proximity to people with different conditions, strategies and histories was significant. This knowledge transfer is dependent on disabled artists having time and space to be in community with each other. The Give and Gain exercise made visible just how much expertise exists within this group. The sector is failing to draw on this knowledge.

'ONE OF' RATHER THAN THE ONLY ONE

For many artists, professional life has meant being the only disabled person in the room. This programme changed that. Being together de-shamed needs that had previously felt like personal failings. Several artists described feeling validated by the individual connections they made and by being part of a collective.

PROCESS OVER PRODUCT

"Disability is messy so why should art be tidy? Without tidiness I can be bold and braver. Having the privacy and freedom to go big first is important." The creative work and the conversation fed each other. Neither was a detour from the other. In a small number of days, the group produced a film piece, a movement performance, the seed of an audio gallery and the early stages of a three-artist collaboration now being developed toward a residency. The sector commissions for tidiness. This programme shows what is possible when you don't.

WHAT THE ARTISTS SAID

"Being a disabled writer can sometimes feel isolating. Being connected with other disabled artists has helped me feel a stronger sense of identity and belonging."

"I saw beyond their needs and saw their incredible talents. They have helped me become braver about expressing my needs."

"I am transforming my whole practice. It's an exciting time."

"Never done this before: I laid down on a beanbag and rested without holding the conversation up - and still felt completely involved."

"There are people here who get it."

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

9 artists	**7** art forms
2 online group sessions	**4** in-person group sessions
3 emerging collabs	**1** public webinar

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SHOUTABOUT

HOLDING ON



Photo credits: Jenny Harper Photography

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

HOLDING ON

This FRONTLINEdance digital and performance project was co-created with, and performed by, those who have lived experience of cancer, grief, loss and bereavement.

FRONTLINEdance invites audiences in to share their loss and bereavement with that of the Company's, to show that while grief is a universal weight, we do not have to hold it alone.

Co-creators and audiences were encouraged to contribute by telling us the names of loved ones they have lost, which were then dyed and inked on the fabric that formed the dancers costumes, turning personal grief into a collective and moving memorial. These names continue to be part of the performance as the company tours the work, and new names get added.

The story of Holding On is one of profound human connection. Guided by a cast whose lived experiences brought a unique weight to every movement, the project continues to explore the delicate subjects of grief and saying goodbye.



"The choreography was extraordinary. The dancers and musicians carried layers of loss, love, exhaustion, tenderness and endurance with such beauty, clarity and restraint. It captured grief in its many forms - personal, professional, silent and shared - without ever simplifying it. It was deeply moving."



IMPACT

EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

With music by composer and multi-instrumentalist, Greg Hall, and featuring an intergenerational, inclusive cast, Holding On powerfully and harmoniously weaves together connection and emotive dance. It provides a soft entry point for the difficult conversations society often avoids. Audiences described it as a "visceral experience" that validated their personal histories of loss - a reflection that mirrors what they hold inside.

VISIBILITY AND INCLUSION

The all-female intergenerational cast was a combination of professional and community dancers, bringing together a diverse group with a shared experience. By FRONTLINEdance's nature, disabled and non-disabled dancers make up the creative team. This visibility strengthens the diverse narrative of universal grief, with skill, strength and versatility.

ENVIRONMENT

By performing in places of worship, community centres, a conference centre, a college theatre, online, and purposefully translated on hospital wards, the project removed barriers and made high-art genuinely inclusive and accessible.

SOCIETAL NEED

The need for a range of voices to be heard, beyond the immediate cast, was fulfilled with a group of women from across the UK and Canada connected to Seth's Legacy - all of whom had lost family members to pancreatic cancer, including the Artistic Director who was grieving the recent loss of her mother. It provided a vital sense of belonging within a larger support network as well as in the artistic work itself. Their experiences are with the cast and their voices are heard in the soundtrack, translating to audiences each time the work is shared.

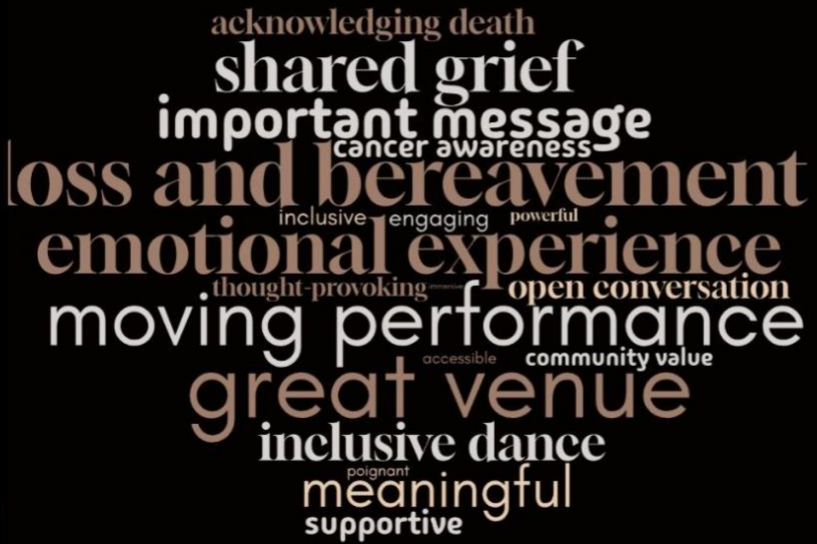


LEGACY

Holding On has provided the blueprint for high-quality, inclusive art for a healthier and more connected society. Part of this work has since been recreated for bespoke performances in clinical settings across North Staffordshire, feeding into the work FRONTLINEdance performs in hospitals.

The cast are currently developing the work, including creating three bespoke performances for visually impaired, Deaf and Learning Disabled audiences.

Holding On is available to book in a range of formats. Please see the Tour Pack for more information and contact touring@frontlinedance.co.uk



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SHOUTABOUT

UHNM RESIDENCY



U·H·N·M charity

You Make the Difference. We Make it Count.

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1680 people reached

908 patients engaged

226 individual sessions

589 short performances

22 days of delivery

HEALTH OUTCOMES

Movement and interaction can speed up recovery.

GETTING PEOPLE MOVING

FRONTLINEdance used music, dance and touch, with an artistic and creative approach, to facilltate pain-free and non-medical engagement with patients.

BREAKING THE MONOTONY

Presence from the company reduced boredom, pain, loneliness and worry and instead bought calm, and enjoyment to the patients, staff and and settings.



ARTISTIC IMPACT

Deep connections were felt and witnessed throughout the project.

LIVE, RESPONSIVE, PRESENT

Every session was shaped around the people in the room, creating a bespoke artistic experience on every ward.

HONESTY AND CONNECTION

A dancer acknowledged her own experience of chemotherapy with patients sharing the origions of the movement material. A nurse was moved to tears watching a patient 'come alive'.



SOCIAL INCLUSION

Hospitals are made up of lots of different people from all backgrounds and lived experiences.

REMEMBERING THE PERSON

The work inspired patients and staff to talk about their lives, rather than the illness. This helped to restore a sense of identity for patients.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

The performers brought a rare moment of respite for the whole team, supporting staff wellbeing and a sense of community on the ward.



75% of artists who delivered this residency identify as disabled, neurodivergent or living with a long-term health condition.



“IT CREATES A PALPABLE CHANGE - RIPPLES OF A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FELT BEYOND THE ARTISTS' DEPARTURE, OFTEN LASTING UNTIL THE END OF THE STAFF SHIFT”

- GEMMA THOMAS, PROJECT MANAGER - ARTS, UHNM CHARITY

RECOVERY

Ward physios identified the residency as a bridge to formal rehab. Patients moved naturally and joyfully, warming up bodies and minds for clinical treatment.

WELLBEING

Replacing "hospital time" with "creative time" lifted the psychological weight of long stays. A patient with dementia who repeatedly called for help was calmed entirely through music.

ENVIRONMENT

Curtains were opened and patients talked. A ward of strangers became a community. "The whole room is buzzing now. Everyone is talking to each other. It was so quiet before."

CREATIVE HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL!

This residency provides a robust, holistic, creative approach and evidence-based case for the continued integration of the arts in hospital care.

FOR PATIENTS

The residency transformed "hospital time" into "creative time", providing individual and group connection, a needed psychological escape, restoring identity and acting as a bridge to formal rehabilitation.

FOR STAFF

The "buzz", calm and energy brought to wards provided a vital mental and physical reset. Staff listened, watched, moved, and connected, often removing some of the weight that was felt.

FOR ARTISTS

Navigating a clinical environment developed artists' capacity to hold sensitive creative spaces, building flexibility and the emotional intelligence needed for creative health work.

FOR VISITORS

Seeing loved ones, smile, engage, and presenting more like their typical selves restored hope and contentment. It provided time for them to pause, breathe, enjoy and find different things to talk about.



"I FORGOT WHERE I WAS FOR A SECOND. THAT'S THE BEST GIFT YOU COULD GIVE ME."

- PATIENT

"YOU'VE CHANGED THE DAY. IT WAS JUST A LONG WAIT UNTIL DINNER - NOW IT'S A MEMORY"

- PATIENT

"I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER KNOWING THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN WHEN I'M NOT HERE. HE'S BEING CARED FOR AS A PERSON."

- FAMILY MEMBER

FURTHER RESOURCES

frontlinedance.co.uk
uhnmcharity.org.uk

SHOUTABOUT

Moving Together FRONTLINE dance 2025-2026



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

IMPACT

BELONGING

Bringing people together is one of Moving Together's aims, and it is what participants talk about most. For some, the group is one of the few places they still connect with other people. One participant said they feel seen and that they now matter to others. For people whose social lives have narrowed through disability, health or retirement, a weekly group where they are accepted without explanation makes a real difference to how isolated they are. Asked for the best thing about attending, almost every answer was about other people: the community, the laughter and being part of a friendly group.

IMPROVED MOBILITY

Participants describe improved mobility and fitness, better agility, supple joints and less pain. People leave uplifted rather than aching. They feel confident the movements won't damage their joints, so they can keep active instead of worrying about injury. Participants know they can stop if something hurts and the facilitator shows them other ways to do a movement when they can't manage it.

IMPROVED MOOD

Participants describe the sessions as uplifting, good for their mental health and "a break from everything else on the agenda". One participant values being able to laugh rather than feel silly when they can't remember the routine. A Norton participant said the sessions bring you out of your comfort zone and make you feel confident. Every 2026 survey respondent said they feel more confident about doing new things, and nine of the eleven said they had done things they didn't know they were capable of.

IMPROVED MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE

The group gives participants the motivation they struggle to find on their own. It keeps them moving and gives them a regular slot in the week to look forward to. Having a regular session they enjoy means exercise becomes something they want to do rather than something they have to push themselves into. Every 2026 survey response said the person planned to keep coming.

As an autistic adult, I feel welcome and included, where I haven't elsewhere.

They uplift me, oil my joints and help me move better.

Since becoming disabled my social connections have disappeared one by one. This is the only place I feel welcome as I am.

Lovely to have something to look forward to in my week.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

120 participants

79% new to FRONTLINEdance

100 sessions

53% living with a longterm health condition

23% disabled

5% d/Deaf or hard of hearing

4% neurodivergent

3% wheelchair users

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ADVANCED TRAINING PROGRAMME



Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government



- 70 disabled and neurodivergent people took part.
- Aged 16-21, except for two that were older. Focused on two cohorts – Newfriars College | Investment in three ATP students from previous years
- Performed the Explorers in Training 10 times over 6 days to special schools and libraries reaching at least 235 people
- Partnered with Coventry University to research new inclusive ways for the dancers to think and acknowledge progression in themselves and others. To introduce new methods for the dancers to think about movements – through colour and sounds for example, whilst giving them and us new methods to articulate what's working for them and what isn't for our ATP dancers

FRONTLINEdance's Little Explorers show was a truly captivating experience. The children were mesmerised by the movement and storytelling of the performers, whose use of dance, gesture, spoken word and expression held their attention throughout. The addition of scarves and paintbrushes and shakers brought the stories to life in a way that was both magical and age-appropriate, perfectly aligned with the EYFS.

- Hassel Primary School at NUL Library

Inclusive. Relaxed.
Fun. Active. Engaging.
Beautiful. Heartwarming.

- The Meadows Special School

Funny! Fun! Enjoyable!
Interesting. Engaging.
Sensory. Active. Calming
and exciting!

- Marshlands Special School

SHOUTABOUT

Breakthrou'

FRONTLINE dance

2025-2026

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government





Breakthrou'dance is FRONTLINEdance's weekly inclusive dance programme which has been part of FRONTLINEdance's week since 2002. Dancers find connection, support and confidence through these sessions, and they tell us that it continues to be an important part of their week. Performances and celebrations through the year.

It runs on a Pay What You Can basis, with access support built in.

- 5 Groups meet during term-time: Junior, Youth, Adult x 2 & Family
- Pay What You Can
- Transport & Buddy Scheme

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

65 participants

32% new to FRONTLINEdance

66% disabled people

28% living with a long term health condition

25% neurodivergent

20% wheelchair users

9% d/Deaf or hard of hearing

Connection

Breakthrou' is often the main social interaction of the week for participants. When a weekly class is one of someone's main social contacts, missing it means missing people.

Keeping moving

Participants are clear this is inclusive physical activity they wouldn't get elsewhere, so the physical benefit alongside the creativity, artistry and comradery adds to their week. Dance supports a wide range of physical benefits; mobility, strength, stamina, co-ordination.

Calmer, happier, gald and proud

Families describe how their children come home happy and positive after a session and that they are included in everything .Youth dancers said they left feeling calm, relaxed, glad and proud. The wellbeing effect is a result of the inclusive approach and the sense of belonging that is created which is wrapped around the sessions as well as within them.

Support for carers

Sessions reach two groups at once: carers take time for themselves confident their child is safe and enjoying the activity. Saturdays, FRONTLINEdance provides activity for parents too, where one parent links the physical benefit directly to being able to keep caring, so the impact carries on into home life.

Improved confidence and ability

94% of survey respondents said they did things they didn't know they were capable of. Parents describe confidence growing alongside social skills: the children are growing in confidence about being with other people as well as about dancing.



Formal thanks to the whole team who have be involved between **April 2025 – March 2026**

Board:
Lesley Goodburn (Director/Chair), Rosemary Smith (Director/Treasurer), Patsy Corcoran (Director), Helen Mulford (Director), Sophie Humphries (Member) and Janet Jowett (Director)

Artistic Team:
Artistic Director & CEO: Rachael Lines
Dance Artists: Katie Albon, Charlotte Arnold, Amy Harrison, Amy Tomson, Kayleigh Price, Helen Yeomans, Beth Hope, Angela Fessi, Lucinda Palmer, Connor Elliman, Milly Best, Freya Davis, Billy Read
Musicians: Greg Hall
Film Makers: Mark Anderson, Junction 15, Jay Gearing
Costume Designer: Ilona Alkaili – Alyamani
Photographers: Natalie Willatt, James Disney

Connect & Collaborate Team: Brannon Yao, Kayleigh Price, Holly Thomas, Louise Stones, Shaun Fellows, Melanie Osbourbe, Stuart Waters, Lucy Haighton, Caroline Butterworth

Creative Enablers and Access Staff:
Creative Enabler - Matt Byatt, Shannon Whetnall, Laura Husselbee
BSL Interpretation - Steve Bostock, Steph Lehrle

Office Staff & Management
Jasmine Man – People and Operations Manager
Suzanne Lines – Operations & Administration
Amy Tomson – Programme Development
Colin Williamson – Project Manager
Sophie Rushton - Office & Project Assistant
Melanie Whitehaed-Smith – Freelance Project Manager, Touring
Dana Jundi - Freelance Evaluator
Helen Willmott - Freelance Company Development & Senior Producer
Kirsten Tranter - Freelance ATP Research & Project Manager

Volunteers: Ben Wilson, Ash Lee, Rachael Lines, Suzanne Lines, Sophie Jones, Sophie Rushton.

Other contributing Artists:
Lucinda Jarrett, Melanie Pappenheim, Neus Gil Cortés, Ben Glover, Stuart Waters and Willy Elliot

Event First Aider: Paul Seargent

Thank You to our funders and partners.

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

Made possible with Heritage Fund

City of Stoke-on-Trent

U·H·N·M charity
You Make the Difference. We Make it Count.

PMAG

NSCG Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group

Rosetta Life

Newfriars College

Coventry University

HospiceUK

RMP CARE



Norton Community Church

NHS Midlands Partnership University

Staffordshire Sight Loss

appetite

University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust

Venues we hired:

the Dudson centre

The Grocott Centre (Burton Community Hub)

The Happy Feet Studio



The Northfield Centre

Newfriars College

RESTOKE

Tunstall Methodist Church



Read the report and want to give us your feedback then follow this link?



For more information, to join our team, to work with us, have an idea on how we can be partners?
Then please contact: Rachael Lines (she/her) | Artistic Director / CEO |
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