# DanceSyndrome Keep Calm and Carry on Dancing Despite Coronavirus

**Thursday 19 March, 2020**

Dance Leaders from Lancashire based charity DanceSyndrome will be offering free online dance sessions to combat isolation and keep people active during the Coronavirus outbreak.

DanceSyndrome is multi-award winning dance charity that usually delivers inclusive dance workshops and dance leadership training, as well as inspiring performances that demonstrate a focus on ability rather than disability. The charity was founded by Jen Blackwell, who happens to have Down's syndrome, because she found it difficult to find opportunities in community dance due to her disability. DanceSyndrome's ethos is that disability should never be a barrier to following your dreams. Dancers with and without disabilities work together to inspire people to see what can be achieved when we all become more inclusive.

On Tuesday the charity was forced to close the doors of their weekly workshop sessions for the health and safety of their participants, staff and volunteers. 68 weekly sessions were cancelled in total, their Level 2 dance leadership training has also been postponed and they have lost several major paid performance opportunities, amounting to a significant loss of income for the charity.

The DanceSyndrome team responded positively though and immediately began working to come up with a creative solution to the prospect of self-isolation. Everyone was determined that they wanted to carry on dancing, so they have come up with a way to offer online sessions to keep people fit and healthy while they remain at home.

From Monday 23rd March DanceSyndrome sessions will be released at their usual times on the charity's Facebook and YouTube channels, but they will remain live so people can take part at any time that they choose.

The sessions will be adapted so that people can take part safely from the comfort of their own home (even from an armchair) and will be suitable for everyone. People of all abilities and disabilities will be able to participate, including children who are off school and elderly people who are social distancing. The aim is to keep people active, boost mental health and take your mind off the outside world!

As with all DanceSyndrome activities, the sessions will be disability led, driven by Dance Leaders with learning disabilities. DanceSyndrome Founder Jen Blackwell and her fellow Dance Leaders will be delivering the sessions remotely from their own homes in collaboration with professional Dance Artists to offer high quality online dance sessions.

DanceSyndrome Founder Jen Blackwell said "We need this nasty virus to go so that we can get back together again. Until then I have faith in my dancing family who are all very brave and resilient. I love them all. DanceSyndrome is my life and we'll share our dancing online with the world!"

DanceSyndrome Managing Director, Dawn Vickers said “We engage with over 150 participants and volunteers each week and we know how valuable dance is to them for their health and wellbeing and to prevent them from becoming isolated, so closing sessions was a very difficult decision to make, but health must always come first.

"I'm so proud of how our team have responded to this challenge! The team were determined to adapt quickly and creatively so that everyone can carry on dancing whilst remaining safe in their own homes. We hope that our online sessions will help people to stay physically and mentally well until we can all be back together in our regular dance sessions.”

She added "One of the positives that has come out of this situation is that we have seen businesses of all sizes offering their services to the public for free for the benefit of their health, whether it's e-books, learning packs for children, virtual museum tours or dance sessions. We know times are hard for everyone at the moment and we want to help in any way we can.

" We'd love you to join in with the dancing but also join in with the conversation on social media - tell us what you enjoyed about the sessions, send us photos and videos of yourself and your family joining in, talk to other people who love dance on our channels. We may need to be physically distanced but we can still be socially connected online!"

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A full list of DanceSyndrome's online sessions can be found at www.dancesyndrome.co.uk/online-dance-sessions/ If you join in with the sessions and enjoy them, please consider making a donation to help this small charity to survive in these difficult times.

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