

## Local Charity Nominated for Film Awards

Thursday 26 October, 2017

Local charity DanceSyndrome are celebrating after a double nomination at the national Charity Film Awards.

The Charity Film Awards were created to demonstrate that, in a modern world, film-making is a really powerful tool for charities to communicate the value of their work and to celebrate charitable video that can inspire, incite to action, excite and change behaviour.

DanceSyndrome is a multi-award winning dance charity, based in Lancashire, that 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 dancer 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 philosophy is that disability should never be a barrier to following your dreams.

This ethos has been captured by two independent film-makers in two very different films, both of which have been nominated for awards.

Preston based student Jennifer Smith created an inspiring piece of videography called "DanceSyndrome: Dream, Believe, Achieve", which addressed the issue that there are 1.4 million people in the UK with a learning disability and 50% of those people experience chronic loneliness. DanceSyndrome has had impressive results at counteracting this trend, with participants regularly reporting improvements in health, confidence, social skills and, ultimately, happiness. The film, which has already won a Mencap Journalism Award, shows that DanceSyndrome focuses on ability rather than disability and strives to make sure everyone is included. Workshops are lead by trained Dance Leaders with disabilities, demonstrating that disability doesn't need to be a barrier to leadership or inclusion. Through dance, participants are encouraged to follow their dreams, believe in themselves and they will achieve happiness!

The second film, Superabled, is an emotive and thought-provoking film that gives real insight into the valuable work of small charities. Filmmaker Natalie Kennedy spent several weeks following DanceSyndrome Founder Jen Blackwell as she went about her daily activities. She interviewed Jen and her friends and family about the impact of being involved with the charity and the result is a touching and heartfelt story about love, friendship and inclusion. The film highlights the long term value that small charities like DanceSyndrome can add to the lives of the people that they work with and considers what the impact would be of taking that away. It also addresses the day to day challenges of running a small charity, such as the competition for major funding and the difficulty of raising money through fundraising when there are so many worthy charities needing help.

The films will judged in two phases, firstly by a public vote from 27th October to 15th December, which will determine a short list of entries for each category, then a panel of expert judges will vote independently to choose winners from the short list. The winners will be announced at a red carpet award ceremony in London in March 2018.

DanceSyndrome Managing Director, Dawn Vickers said "DanceSyndrome is so lucky to have had the opportunity to be involved with both of these amazing film-makers. Both films are incredibly powerful and really help us to show people how important our work is and to help people to understand why we exist as a charity. We really hope that the public will love these films as much as we do and go out and vote for them in the public vote!"

The films are both available to view through [www.dancesyndrome.co.uk](http://www.dancesyndrome.co.uk) and on social media, with links to the voting pages.

### ENDS

For more information about DanceSyndrome, please contact Sarah Calderbank, Business Development and Administration Executive on 07597 942494 or email [sarah@dancesyndrome.co.uk](mailto:sarah@dancesyndrome.co.uk)

[www.dancesyndrome.co.uk](http://www.dancesyndrome.co.uk)

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/dancerleddisabilityinspired](https://www.facebook.com/dancerleddisabilityinspired)

Twitter: @Dancesyndrome

More information about the Charity Film Awards can be found at <https://www.charityfilmawards.com/>

DanceSyndrome was established in 2009 by Founder and Creative Director Jen Blackwell. Jen has Down's syndrome and wanted to follow her dream of being a dancer and Dance Leader. The DanceSyndrome ethos is that everyone has the right to follow their own interests and passions, whether they have a disability or not. DanceSyndrome offer dance leadership opportunities to people with learning disabilities and empower them to co-lead high quality inclusive dance workshops which are delivered to disabled and non-disabled participants across the North West.

The hard work and innovative approach of DanceSyndrome Founder and Creative Director Jen Blackwell was recognised when she was chosen as the winner of the Inspirational Woman of the Year award at the Enterprise Vision Awards in September 2015.

DanceSyndrome's Dance Leader Team were recognised at a national level winning the Sporting Chance Award at The National Learning Disability and Autism Awards in July 2016.

DanceSyndrome was recognised as Not-for-profit of the Year at the Red Rose Awards 2017.

DanceSyndrome are funded by Spirit of 2012 and Big Lottery funding.

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