



# OUR IMPACT

## 2021/22



“We are fighting for a fair future for disabled kids. We want to dismantle barriers to inclusion”.

Flamingo Chicks' Agents of Change

# WELCOME

2021 has seen the strength, kindness and creativity within our community shine! Despite the continued challenges presented by Covid-19, we've responded to the surge in demand for our work, increasing workshop delivery by 43% and regular classes by 25%.

The lack of physical and wellbeing opportunities for my daughter, who has cerebral palsy, was, and remains, my inspiration for Flamingo Chicks. Now more than ever, inclusive opportunities for all children to enjoy movement are crucial, especially with many disabled children behind the Covid recovery curve.

What started as a single class has grown into a vibrant community and a growing movement for change. From Glasgow to Guildford and Cambridge to Cornwall, children can now enjoy the fun and freedom of Flamingo Chicks. 44 new settings have joined the Flock this year, including Royal London and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospitals. We've also hit our goal of working with every single Children's Hospice in the UK!

We've grown our team of teachers to 20 and appointed a new Assistant Head of Dance. We remain passionate about volunteering particularly encouraging first time, disabled and socially isolated older volunteers. We're privileged and proud that over 500 people gave their time to support us this year.

2021 also saw 5 sparkly new awards added to our trophy cabinet! After a long wait due to Covid-19, we received our Queen's Award For Voluntary Service - then went on to win another 3 new awards! I was also awarded an MBE

in The New Year Honours for services to the community, disabled children and their families. All of these are wonderful recognition of the dedication, passion and team work that makes Flamingo Chicks so special.

Our Agents of Change (our Youth Council) have matched passion with personal experience to campaign for a fair future for disabled people. In 2021, their voice was louder than ever, carrying out accessibility audits, interviewing VIPS and entertaining a host of celebrity guests. We remain in awe of their tenacity and drive to break down barriers to inclusion.

At our core, Flamingo Chicks is a community, a growing movement of people wanting changes to be made in the way our society treats disabled people. Whether that's taking our Agents of Change to speak at the United Nations in New York or launching pioneering virtual classes watched by 250,000 families across the globe!

**We hope you enjoy reading our 2021 impact report!**

*Katie*

Katie Sparkes MBE



# FLAMINGO CHICKS BY NUMBERS

## OUR REACH



20,000

In 8 years, we've gone from 15 children to 20,000!



In 2021: Workshop delivery increased by 43% and regular classes by 25%. We saw 5581 children in our sessions through:

- 55 regular groups
- 136 yearly workshops

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

250,000+

views of our pioneering virtual classes

## CHAMPIONING INCLUSION

- 36% boys
- 18% non-disabled children
- 20 dance teachers, specialising in inclusive techniques

x31

Agents of Change youth advocates



## EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERING



Over 4,162 hours of volunteer time donated, the equivalent of £64,677 based on UK average wage!



506

Intergenerational volunteers

12 Awards including the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and an MBE for our Founder!

8

Global Chicks outreach projects

£147,159 income  
an increase of 4% from last year



# OUR MISSION: WHY WE'RE HERE

**4 in 10** parents of disabled children say their child rarely or never has the opportunity to play with non-disabled children.

[source: mumsnet]

Flamingo Chicks combats inactivity and isolation among the 880,000 disabled children (8% of the child population) and their families. We support disabled children to realise their full potential.



## Tackling inactivity

**7 out of 10 disabled people** want to be more active

[English federation of disabled sport]

**23% of children** with learning disabilities are obese

[NICE]



## Supporting parental health

**83% of parents** and **100% of dads** of disabled children felt socially isolated before joining Flamingo Chicks

[FC research]

**Only 4%** had sufficient support to care for their disabled child safely

[Disabled Children's Partnership]

**87% of parents** of children aged 0-5 have felt judged by members of the public when they go out with their disabled child

[Scope]



## Combatting isolation

**180 disability hate crimes** are reported every day in the UK

[Disability Matters]

**4 in 10 parents** of disabled children say their child rarely or never has the opportunity to play with non-disabled children

[source: mumsnet]

**77% of disabled 18-34 year olds** feel lonely

[Sense]



## The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on disabled children:

Despite lockdown easing, too many families still cannot access life-changing services, still are facing grave mental health challenges, and are still more socially isolated than the rest of the population.

As members of the Disabled Children's Partnership, we've contributed to its report on the pandemic and disabled children, 'Then There Was Silence' [September 2021]. Findings show a huge increase in urgent referrals to children's mental and physical health services, plus 80% of parent/carers still having anxiety despite the easing of restrictions.

**Nearly three quarters** of disabled children have seen progress regress both in managing their conditions and their overall development

**9 in 10 disabled children** feel socially isolated, with three quarters (76%) seeing no improvement over the course of 2021 despite lockdown measures easing

**7 in 10 siblings** still socially isolated despite restrictions easing

**60% increase in referrals** to paediatric emergency mental health services. Paediatric Pain Management clinics were **reduced by 84%**

# OUR MISSION: WHAT WE DO

“Flamingo Chicks helps my stiff muscles loosen and helps me to relax. I get to dance even though I am in a wheelchair.”

Delilah, Flamingo Chick

At Flamingo Chicks, we're breaking down barriers to inclusion and fighting for a fairer future for disabled children and their families. We do this through five core pillars: inclusive dance classes, parent/carer support, intergenerational volunteering, global outreach and youth-led advocacy.

## PILLAR ONE

### Inclusive dance classes & workshops

Through our three dance interventions: Flamingo Chicks (for children), Flamingo Dance (for adults) and Hatching Chicks (aimed at disabled mums and mums of disabled babies), we provide inclusive physical activity that caters for ALL. Our classes are unique: founded in core dance principles with communication aids such as Makaton signing, as well as adapted movements and multisensory elements, our classes support both the physical and emotional health of participants.



## PILLAR TWO

### Parents & carers support

Our parent/carer peer support network offers a lifeline for parents and carers by providing opportunities to connect with each other. We provide:

- Wellbeing activities: guided relaxation sessions, accessible and on-demand
- Free access to NHS recommended 'Companion App'
- Support to Mums; looking after their physical health with Mummy and Me running events
- Social events: from chocolate tasting to paddleboarding
- Respite during classes: offering an hour of respite for parents and carers to sit back and connect with each other
- Regular resource-sharing: from resilience tips to inclusive activities.

**87%** of parents feel less socially isolated after joining the Flamingo Chicks community

**76%** were more able to cope with the demands of caring for a disabled child

“I had a pregnancy-related stroke shortly after the birth of my first baby. Hatching Chicks has been the most incredible experience for me. It gave me a place to rebuild my confidence and in particular my wobbly balance, testing out what my new body could do.”

Sonia, mum to Amir



## PILLAR THREE

### Exceptional intergenerational volunteering

We are passionate about volunteering as a learning and development opportunity and have 506 amazing volunteers supporting our work. We particularly encourage first time volunteers, to inspire a life-time of volunteering, socially isolated older volunteers and also disabled volunteers – as great role models for our Flamingo Chicks.

We offer training and opportunities to support them in their roles; from beginners Makaton to public speaking.



**100%** of Volunteers felt proud to be part of Flamingo Chicks

**74%** said volunteering at Flamingo Chicks had a positive effect on their mental health

**85%** said it has made them re-evaluate what disabled people are capable of

**66%** of volunteers learnt Makaton with Flamingo Chicks

[Flamingo Chicks' 2021 Volunteer Survey]



The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service

### THE MBE FOR CHARITIES!

Our volunteering programme was recognised at the highest level and we were awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for charities! Flamingo Chicks was praised for pioneering diversity.



Peaches Golding OBE CStJ, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant who presented our award also joined the Flock as a Patron!

## PILLAR FOUR

### Global outreach

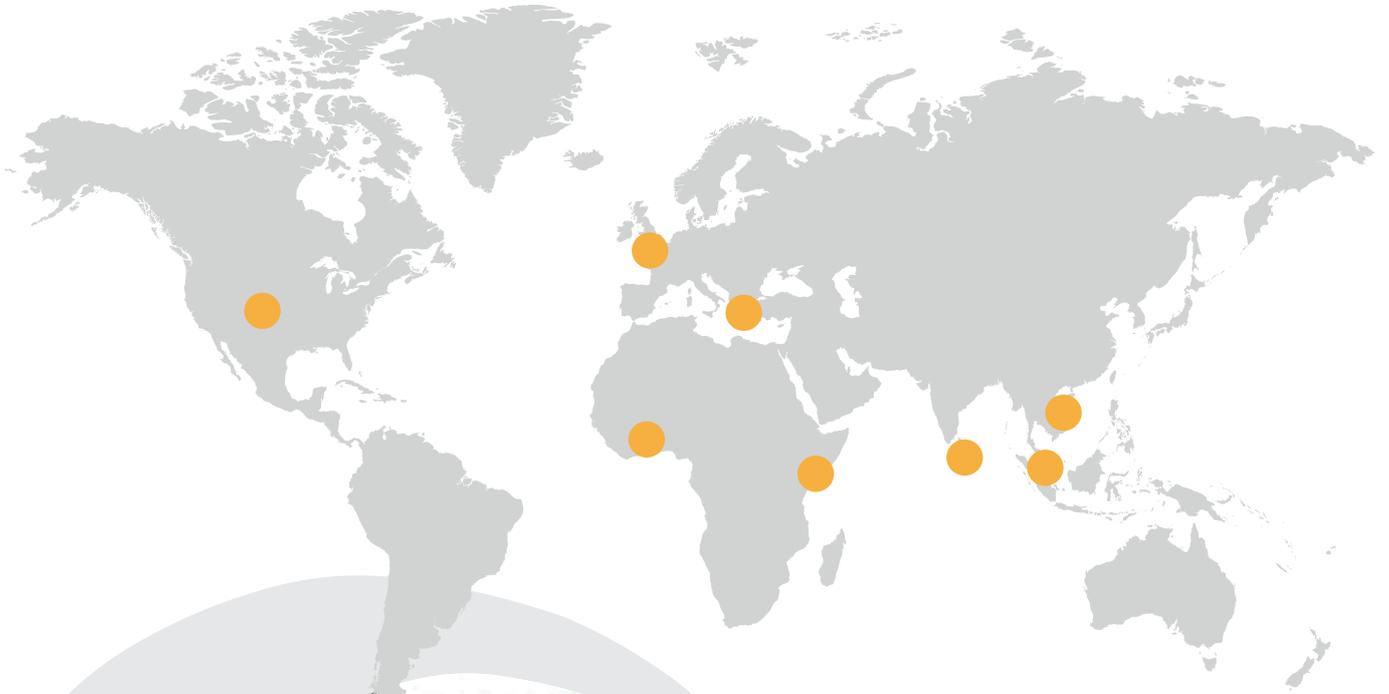
Global Chicks is an outreach project sharing tips, best practice and upskilling organisations that work with disabled children across the world.

There are between 93 and 150 million disabled children worldwide (Their world, 2021). Many of these children live on the margins of society, excluded from school and living in poverty. They are also often overlooked by policies, plans and targeted support programmes.

From Ghana to Vietnam and Singapore to refugee camps in Greece, our outreach teams have delivered Flamingo Chicks' workshops to hundreds of children worldwide and supported local organisations to develop their own activities and grow!

**“How did you come up with such a wonderful dance? I have never seen anything like it! Such colour, pomp and great moves! Thank you very much - you have left us highly inspired. You are great instructors! We will continue practising your wonderful dance.”**

Lucy - Safe Centre for children with special needs, Nakuru, Kenya, following an outreach session led by Flamingo Chicks' Volunteers.



Cape Coast school for deaf and blind children, Ghana

## PILLAR FIVE

### Advocacy

#### Agents of Change

Leading our movement to champion inclusion and disabled children's rights are the very people Flamingo Chicks exists to serve – disabled young people. We call them our Agents of Change. They work towards dismantling barriers to inclusion so that schools, health facilities, public transport bodies and others encourage disabled children to participate alongside their peers. Our Agents of Change meet regularly for workshops underpinned by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. They already have an impressive speaking record, including the UN HQ in New York and the House of Commons, and have advised power-houses like the Science Museum in London.

**“When I’m older I want to work in law to help advocate for disabled people’s rights”**

Alisha

**“We believe that inclusion & understanding of people with disabilities is essential to a fair and flourishing society.”**

Sameer

**“We are trying to get the young generation to build this earth as disabled friendly.”**

Asha





# THEORY OF CHANGE

## The Barriers we're breaking down

Disabled children do not have the same access to physical and social activities and are segmented from enjoying these activities with their peers.

As a result of this exclusion there is a lack of awareness around disabled children, their capacities and their right to decide and advocate for their own futures.

## How we're doing this

Providing fully inclusive dance classes and activities gives disabled children the chance to participate in activities that can combat stereotypes around what disabled children and their bodies can do.

The activities can also help combat inactivity and obesity among disabled children.

Dance and creative experiences not only enable people to live more physically active lives, tackling obesity and enhancing health, they also promote empathy, friendship, and support children and young people to process the world around them.



### Start

Parent, school, community group, hospital or hospice engages with Flamingo Chicks and takes part in a Flamingo Chicks class

### Inputs

Flamingo Chicks dance classes  
Flamingo Chicks HQ

### Activities

**Classes** Flamingo Chicks classes engage disabled and non-disabled children in ballet, movement and active learning

**Volunteering** intergenerational volunteering supports the delivery of classes; our extended community also engage in fundraising and campaigning activities to promote and support Flamingo Chicks

**Peer support** Parent/carers engage in peer networking and receive support as part of the Flamingo Chicks community

**Agents of Change** Our peer-led panel of 31 disabled youth advocates act as a school council and inform our decisions and undertake advocacy, campaigning and training activities

**Advocacy** Flamingo Chicks raises awareness about social isolation, inactivity and exclusion and the challenges facing disabled children and their families

### Outputs

#### Breaking down barriers to inclusion

Disabled and non-disabled children enjoy social and recreational activities together

The challenges facing parents and carers are more widely understood  
Exceptional volunteering links different communities and generates awareness around disability

Disabled children are empowered to fulfil their potential

#### Tackling isolation

Disabled children enjoy social and recreational activities with their peers, families and siblings

Parents feel connected to a support network and involved/included by the community

Teachers and volunteers are supported by the Flamingo Chicks community and proactively engage in inclusive activities

#### Improved physical and social activity

Disabled children engage in physical, social and recreational activities  
Disabled children learn transferable skills including teamwork, creativity and public speaking

Parents/carers and wider society re-evaluate the physical capabilities of disabled children

### Impact

Disabled children enjoy the right to participate in and access services that enable them to reach their full potential

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

"We can't thank you enough for the joy you've brought us. We love your creative dance classes. We have made new memories and friends."

Refuge Families & Team

JANUARY 2021:

♥ 4,400

children take part in our new calming class designed to reduce anxiety.

MARCH:

14 

children dance on BBC Morning Live with Oti Mabuse.

APRIL:

578+

parents and carers take part in our new Stretch and Breathe classes.

SPRING/SUMMER:

We celebrated the Olympics and Paralympics with Japan term!

48%

Vicky Heales joins the team - our new Assistant Head of Dance - and helps us increase delivery by 48%

£ MAY:

£27,701

Best ever May 100 'everyone active' campaign with £27,701.50 raised and almost 1000 people getting active.

JUNE:

Presented with the Queens Award For Voluntary Service, the MBE for charities!



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Our first intergenerational volunteering forum designed to onboard more socially isolated volunteers.



## JULY:

Peaches Golding OBE CStJ, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant joins us as Patron.

## SEPTEMBER:

Our first production post-Covid! 'Smooch' an amazing street parade in collaboration with the ParaOrchestra.

## AUTUMN:

Launch of 2 new hospital settings Royal London and Great Ormond Street – one being research based looking at the impact of dance on children who have cerebral palsy.

## DECEMBER:

Christmas spectacular Children's Hospice Workshop with Cbeebies star Joseph Elliott. This also sees us reach our goal of working with all 54 Children's Hospices in the UK!

## AUGUST:

We launch our Associate Artists Spotlight, highlighting diverse talent.

## OCTOBER:

Our Agents Of Change win Youth Leadership Programme of the Year – Prestige Awards 2021.

A series of workshops with the domestic violence charity Refuge.

## JAN-DEC:

# 12 VIPs

Agents of Change take on 12 VIPs across a range of sectors from the United Nations to sustainable finance and climate change.

"I'm proud of being an Agent of Change. We break down barriers to inclusion, challenge what's possible and showcase our vision of a fair future for disabled kids."

Laura, aged 14

54

### In the news

We hit the headlines clocking up press coverage for our ground-breaking virtual classes. Estimated reach across television, digital media and radio was over 26.6 million viewers, readers and listeners!

sky news



this morning



# MEASURING SUCCESS

At Flamingo Chicks, we're making sure ALL voices are heard, so when evaluating our projects we pioneer inclusive techniques to measure our impact. We also share these widely with others to enable them to capture all voices effectively and accurately.

## 2021 evaluation highlights

### Improved physical competencies

**71% of settings** saw levels of physical ability (mobility, balance and core strength) improve and **29% saw significant improvement**.

### Increased confidence

**89% of settings** saw young people's confidence and resilience improve, during or following our sessions.

### Increased interest in the wider world

Linked to the term's core themes which in 2021 were Japan and The Ocean.

**82% of participants learnt something new** and 76% found the science topics explored fun and exciting.

Before Flamingo Chicks classes, only **22% were very engaged** in physical activity. After our intervention, this **rose to 78%**.

Special thanks to Alice Wang from UCL University for independently verifying our evaluation data.

“During the early phase of the pandemic it became clear there was a significant lack of accessible arts content but then we found Flamingo Chicks! Alongside our Sense Arts, Sport and Wellbeing Programme, we widely shared Flamingo Chicks' virtual classes and online resources to over 2000 people with complex disabilities across the UK, outreaching to all of our services and local communities - the feedback was amazing!

Whilst life is starting to resume normality for some, many families in the Sense community remain behind the Covid recovery curve, still experiencing isolation and anxiety. That's why we're so grateful to have connected with Flamingo Chicks - who continue to offer communities a safe outlet for self-expression, which positively impacts on physical and emotional wellbeing. In fact, so much so, we now have regular classes both online and in person at our Woodside Family Centre. Flamingo Chicks have had a great impact on the Sense community.”

Sunney Sharma, Arts and Wellbeing Manager - Sense, the national disability charity supporting Deafblind people and those with and complex disabilities.



‘Magic Makaton’  
Using the sign and  
symbol programme  
Makaton

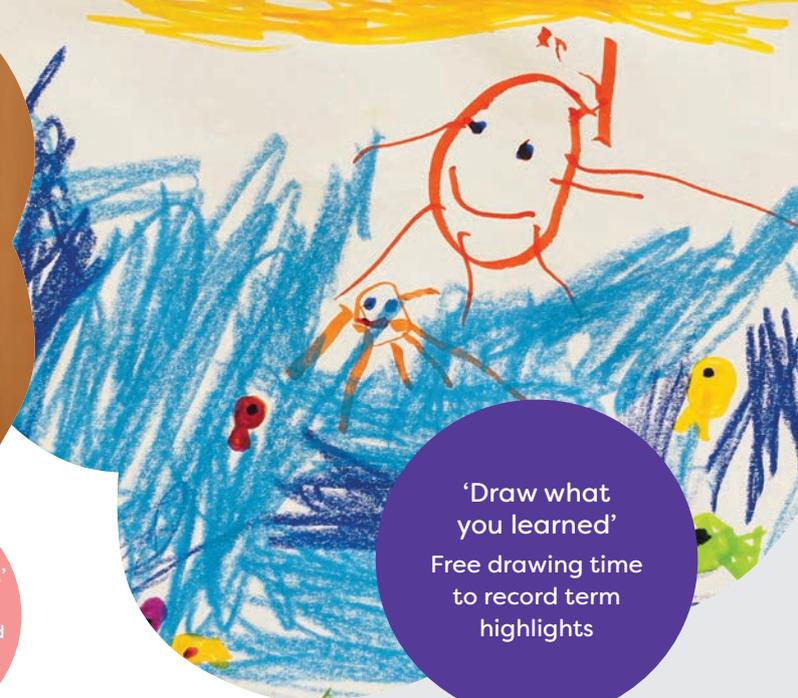
'Sensory Scales'  
Tactile and creative  
ways to score  
activities



'Impact Pool'  
Playtime with tactile  
items to test knowledge  
retained and explore  
topics in depth



**'Passport to Success'**  
A themed passport to complete at the end of term

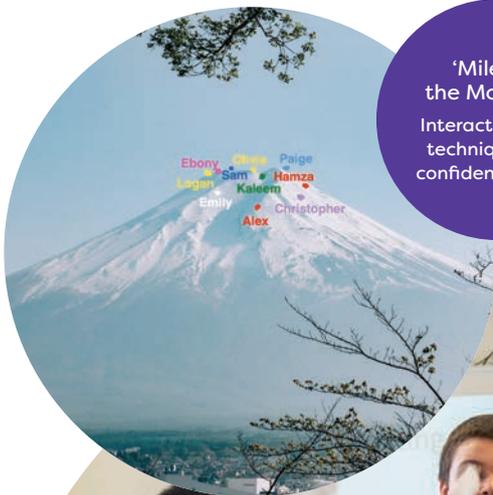


**'Draw what you learned'**  
Free drawing time to record term highlights

- Three-tiered questionnaires with textured sound switches
- Use of Makaton and Widgit symbols in signage and questionnaires and activities
- Group data collection
- Peer evaluators
- Sensory and tactile evaluation techniques
- Gamification to encourage participation
- Celebration sessions – capturing moments of joy
- Observations, oral testimonies and stories of change



**'Traffic Light Paddles'**  
With emotion faces to help convey feelings



**'Miles up the Mountain'**  
Interactive Zoom techniques as a confidence gauge



**'Confetti Ceremony'**  
To gauge happiness

# WHERE WE WORK

We run regular classes across the UK in settings such as special schools, children's hospices, hospitals and community groups. We also deliver outreach workshops across the UK and the world!

## OUR FLOCK

- Regular Classes
- Taster Workshops



# HOW WE WORK

We are committed to being a representative organisation that champions inclusion and fights for a fairer future throughout.

## Our team

**Our teaching team:** our teachers are specialists in inclusive dance practice and bring a plethora of skills to Flamingo Chicks. They have extensive experience working across the arts, including theatre and music and working in a variety of settings, such as private dance schools, care homes and professional dance organisations.

**Our board:** we are passionate about ensuring our board is diverse and represents the community we serve. Board members are trained in disability awareness, undergo DBS checks, complete NSPCC Child Protection training and follow the Charity Governance code.

**Our Patrons:** Flamingo Chicks is immensely proud to work with our Patrons Peaches Golding OBE CStJ, Mark Smith, Tamara Rojo CBE, Rosaleen Moriarty-Simmonds OBE, Joe Sims and Claudia Fragapane. As champions, their support enables us to reach new communities and audiences, motivates our team and provides powerful, memorable opportunities for our community.

## Our practices

**Accessibility:** we are committed to ensuring our way of working is inclusive: our board meetings are live-captioned and recorded so they can be replayed, and we have a buddy system to support new additions to the team.

**Collaboration:** we work with many partners to ensure we are providing the best service possible. Some of our partners include: The ParaOrchestra, Flying Seagull, The Coalition for Efficiency (advising on evaluation techniques), English National Ballet and Northern Ballet (who provide incredible behind-the-scenes opportunities and experiences) plus annual roundtables bringing together health, education and social care professionals.

**Environmental sustainability:** we're committed to looking after the environment we live and work in. We take part in tree planting sessions to offset our carbon footprint and our Trustee Board meet 3 times a year virtually to reduce travel.





# WHAT'S NEXT

By 2023 we want to create a community of more than 6500 children and families accessing our services each year.

Feedback from our community has always shown the huge need for our work but Covid has heightened this even further. We are planning exciting things for 2022, a step change in how we work to reach even more children – to keep innovating and pushing boundaries!

First up we'll be launching a new dramatic performance production called MEN-TOUR. Two of our talented dancers, who both have lived experience of chronic illness or impairment - will create and tour a unique workshop for disabled children to participate in breaking down gender barriers, with the male dancers providing relatable role models for disabled dancers of any age.

We will also be working towards launching a new performance arm of Flamingo Chicks. The genre of ballet offers a real richness in storytelling, characterisation, music, costume and props and we will explore this in more detail, along with providing a host of exciting performance opportunities – showcasing what our children CAN do. We want to enable them to share in the joy and wonder of performance, motivating others

with their incredible stories and successes.

Whilst we are growing rapidly and now reaching 5000 children a year, there are 880,000 children in the UK. We are determined to scale, enabling us to bring our inclusive techniques to a much greater number of disabled children right across the UK.

Crucial to funding our work will be our annual fundraising event, The May 100. Set to return in Spring 2022, we will make it bigger and better than ever before, challenging hundreds of people to get active whilst helping sustain our work.

**Thank you so much for your continued support and here's to an exciting year ahead.**



# KAMILLA'S STORY

Kamilla originally came to Flamingo Chicks 2 years ago, joining us at a local sports centre where Flamingo Chicks held fortnightly classes. In March 2020, the Covid-19 lockdown brought these to a halt. But this didn't stop Kamilla from dancing with us! To support Kamilla and families like hers, Flamingo Chicks shared our 10-week online virtual class programme with the family: it was a welcome addition to their home schooling!

Kamilla's mum said: "It was something familiar to our daughter and she saw the familiar face of her teacher too, which was reassuring and exciting for her. She engaged at varying levels, sometimes dancing to the majority and sometimes just watching the graphics and listening. As we could put it on when we wanted, we could go back to it or repeat as she wanted. Overall it helped her immensely and provided another aspect of learning during lockdown. As parents thrown into home schooling it gave us a readymade 'lesson' along with the added art and great science projects."

Kamilla is now back dancing with us regularly through Zoom classes, joining in alongside friends from her original sports centre group. Kamilla's mum really noticed the positive impact of the classes: "Lockdown 2 came along when we were a few weeks into classes on Zoom. Kamilla prefers Zoom classes as she loves it being 'live' and seeing her teacher and friends and the interaction. After week 2 of Zoom classes she asked me to step back and likes to be independent in the class. This reflects the classes prior to Covid-19 where I am able to let her dance without me, in the care of the teacher and support staff. It is wonderful

to see her re-gain her independence and confidence after such a difficult year."

Lucy, a Zoom volunteer for Kamilla's class says: "It's been great to see Kamilla and catch up every couple of weeks - it's such a strange time but our dance sessions help us all to forget and focus on the joy of moving and dancing together. Recently we've been working on creating our own choreographed sequences and Kamilla's confidence during these 'spotlight' moments really shines!"





# OLIVIA'S STORY

Olivia has cancer. Following chemotherapy Olivia is hearing and balance impaired. She's been dancing with Flamingo Chicks since the very beginning. Here, the people in her life explain the impact of Flamingo Chicks to Olivia:

Olivia's teacher notes how Olivia grew with confidence and physical abilities through classes: "Olivia has grown in confidence markedly since the beginning of her time with us. She was previously a little shy and her movements quite small. She now introduces herself confidently and is keen to tell the class all about her week, speaking loudly and clearly with lots of smiles. She communicates well with her friends despite her hearing difficulties and is happy to work with a partner. No longer needing to hold hands with her helper means she can work independently. Olivia can achieve first position with arms and feet, she can bend her knees and achieve a plié, she can turn on demi pointe, do a curtsy and demonstrate different dynamics (eg sharp hands or soft fingers)."

Olivia's parents have seen the difference first-hand: "It is incredibly heart-warming to see our little girl, who has been through so much, glow with such delight at being the centre of attention for something other than her cancer. Olivia absolutely loves Flamingo Chicks - it gives her the opportunity to do something she wouldn't be able to do normally and we've seen a marked progress in her confidence and physical ability."

Olivia is also one of our Agents of Change youth advocates. "Olivia is a wonderful member of the Agents of Change and it's been lovely seeing her on Zoom over the last few months! As well as taking part in the activities, it's been great to see her re-connect with her friends from class that she perhaps hasn't seen in a while. Olivia's friendships and support in the group is clear to see and I'm looking forward to her confidence growing even more over upcoming sessions." Rhiannon, Agents of Change Project Manager

"It is incredibly heart-warming to see our little girl, who has been through so much, glow with such delight at being the centre of attention for something other than her cancer."

# A MULTI-AWARD WINNING CHARITY

- MBE for our Founder, Katie Sparkes - The Queen's New Year Honours 2022
  - Innovation In Dance Award - One Dance UK 2021
  - Best family arts activity - Fantastic For Families Awards 2021
  - Youth Leadership Programme of the Year - Prestige Awards 2021
  - Inclusive Physical & Virtual Activities - 2021 GHP Social Care Awards
- The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2020 - 'the MBE for charities'
  - Dance People Entertainment - Community Services Award 2020
- Best Disabled Children Inclusion Initiative - GHP Social Care Awards 2018
  - Bristol Life Magazine - Education Award 2017
- The Independent Newspaper - 'Happy List' of 50 inspirational people whose kindness, courage and selflessness make our country a better place to live - our CEO 2017
  - TSB Pride of Sport - Community Award 2016
- A Point of Light Award from the Prime Minister - recognising our work in championing inclusion 2015



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The Funding Network.

All children's names featured have been anonymised.