

Damn It! Dance It! | SBRI Social Ventures | South East (England)

With investment and support from UK Research and Innovation's Healthy Ageing Challenge, this project is helping to increase levels of physical activity in older people, improve wellbeing and challenge age-related stereotypes.

Problem

Ageism in society means that older people are marginalised, leading to loneliness, isolation and disengagement. This, in turn, can lead to significant physical and mental health problems. There is a lack of appropriate opportunities for older people to contribute, feel valued and find a renewed sense of individual identity.

Inspiration

"We empower others, release their creativity and offer them a voice, so that being older is valued as a creative, fulfilling and liberating stage of life."

– Sian Stevenson, Creative Director.

Solution

DamnIt! Dancelt! helps sustain physical activity in older people, supports their social connections, and challenges age-related stereotypes in a new and innovative way. The work takes place in public spaces and is shaped by participants themselves. It is an inclusive and flexible approach, inspiring increased physical activity, personal growth and long-term engagement. Participants learn new skills, take increasing control over their own groups, and go on to make and present performances in public.

Beneficiaries

The project benefits a wide range of people of different ages, body shapes and abilities, as well as those experiencing mental health challenges and/or isolation. Trained facilitators work in open areas like shopping centres or libraries and draw people in as they pass by, overcoming the concept of "hard-to-reach" communities.

Impact

The impact of this activity has been increased levels of physical activity, greater social connectedness and improved wellbeing. Participants have increased in confidence, felt a greater sense of achievement and purpose, and are motivated to exceed other people's expectations. The activity helps prevent cognitive decline, improves wellbeing, and places older people in the heart of their communities.

Potential

"An effective, peer-led approach will validate participants and bring about long-term change. Investment in the facilitator team would enable the project to be rolled out nationally in multiple pro-social contexts."

– Sian Stevenson, Creative Director.

Get in touch

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