



OUR IMPACT

2020/21



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

Flamingo Chicks' Agents of Change

WELCOME

2020 was a challenging year for so many, yet at Flamingo Chicks we have been incredibly heartened by the resilience that shone through in our community. The strength, camaraderie, care and creativity within our network of families, our team and volunteers, our supporters and, of course, our Flamingo Chicks, was an inspiration throughout.

When I started Flamingo Chicks, 7 years ago, it was borne from a frustration at the lack of physical and wellbeing opportunities for my daughter who has cerebral palsy. From day one, with over 200 applicants for the first 15 spaces in our class, it was clear just how important the vision behind Flamingo Chicks was. As I reflect on how Flamingo Chicks has navigated the immense challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and not just survived, but thrived, I am reminded of those early days. It's the special elements within Flamingo Chicks that have seen us grow from the first Bristol-based class, to a national force championing inclusivity across 31 weekly classes and hundreds of workshops spanning the length and breadth of the country.

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 children. It is this community

of teachers passionate about inclusion, the dedicated volunteers and supporters who back us and our ideas so wholeheartedly, who make it possible for a tiny team to have a huge impact – whether that is taking our Agents of Change to speak at the United Nations in New York or launching pioneering new virtual classes, watched by over 250,000 families across the globe!

Flamingo Chicks, with a dusting of our trademark magic and sparkle, will continue to make waves and grow. This last year has shown that our work is needed now more than ever. I hope you enjoy reading our 2020 impact report and share our excitement as we look forward to a brighter 2021.

#BalletNotBarriers

Katie



FLAMINGO CHICKS BY NUMBERS

OUR REACH

♥ 14,830

children have danced with us!

31 weekly classes, 100+ yearly workshops and 4 tours

CHAMPIONING INCLUSION

- 36% boys
- 23% non-disabled children
- 16 dance teachers, specialising in inclusive techniques

x27

Agents of Change youth advocates



HARNESSING THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

250,000+

views of our pioneering virtual classes

EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERING



Over 4,000 hours of volunteer time donated, the equivalent of £60,000 based on UK average wage!



540+

Intergenerational volunteers

6 Awards
including the Queen's
Award for Voluntary
Service!

8

Global Chicks
outreach
projects

£145,600
income



OUR MISSION: WHY WE'RE HERE

Flamingo Chicks aims to combat inactivity and isolation among disabled children and their families and support disabled children to realise their full potential.

Tackling inactivity

- Inactivity is twice as prevalent among disabled people (41%) compared to those without a disability (PHE, 2018)
- 37.5% of adults with a learning disability are obese (NHS digital, 2019)
- Children and young people with disabilities are more likely to be obese than children without disabilities and this risk increases with age (PHE, 2014).

Supporting mental health

- Almost half (47%) of parents with disabled children have visited their GP due to anxiety and 57% have been prescribed anti-depressants (Scope, 2014)
- 7.2% of children (approximately 4.4 million) have diagnosed anxiety (NHS Digital, 2018).

Combating isolation

- 1 in 3 disabled people feel there's a lot of disability prejudice. 1 in 3 people see disabled people as being less productive than non-disabled people. (Scope, 2018)
- Over half of disabled people reported feeling lonely, rising to over three quarters (77%) for those aged 18-34 (Sense, 2017)
- 87% of parents of disabled children aged zero to five have felt judged by members of the

public when they go out with their disabled child (Scope, 2018)

- 83% of parents of disabled children (and 100% of dads) reported they felt socially isolated before joining Flamingo Chicks.

The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on disabled children

- The pandemic has hugely impacted the mental health of disabled children and families: almost 50% of disabled people are experiencing worsening mental health, with loneliness and isolation on the rise (Mencap, August 2020)
- Physical activity among disabled people declined sharply due to the pandemic, posing a long-term threat to physical health (Sport England, 2020). Just 23% of disabled people are able to complete 30 minutes of activity, 5 times a week, due to accessibility issues.

“There is so much online content out there BUT it is extremely hard to find physical activity resources for disabled children.”

Stephanie Wheen, Paediatric Physiotherapist

OUR MISSION: WHAT WE DO

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.

"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

"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 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 on-demand
- Helping Mums look after their physical health with Mummy and Me running events
- Social events: from chocolate tasting to stand-up 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 craft 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



PILLAR THREE

Exceptional intergenerational volunteering

We are a volunteer-led organisation, with 547 volunteers embedded in all aspects of our organisation. Volunteers of all ages and experiences offer their time and skills across a wide range of roles: from fundraising committee members, to dance helpers, to operations support. Our volunteer community are incredibly important to us and we offer training and development opportunities to support them in their roles: from Beginner's Makaton to working with children with special needs.

91% say volunteering at Flamingo Chicks has a positive effect on their mental health

94% said it had made them re-evaluate what disabled children/adults were capable of

54% of volunteers learnt Makaton with Flamingo Chicks and 69% feel they are now better communicators!

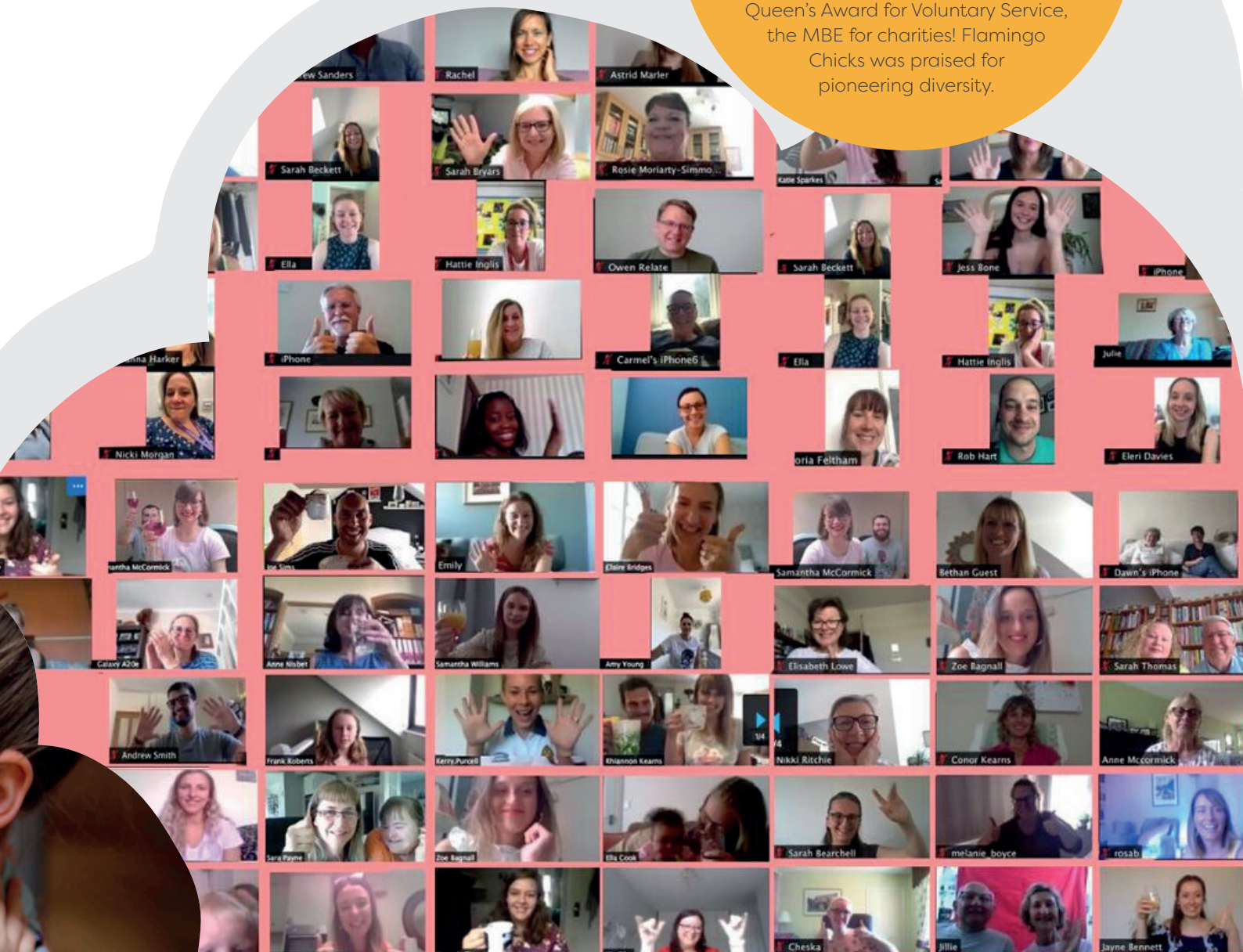
Flamingo Chicks' 2019 Volunteer Survey



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

THE MBE FOR CHARITIES!

In June 2020 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.



PILLAR FOUR

Global outreach

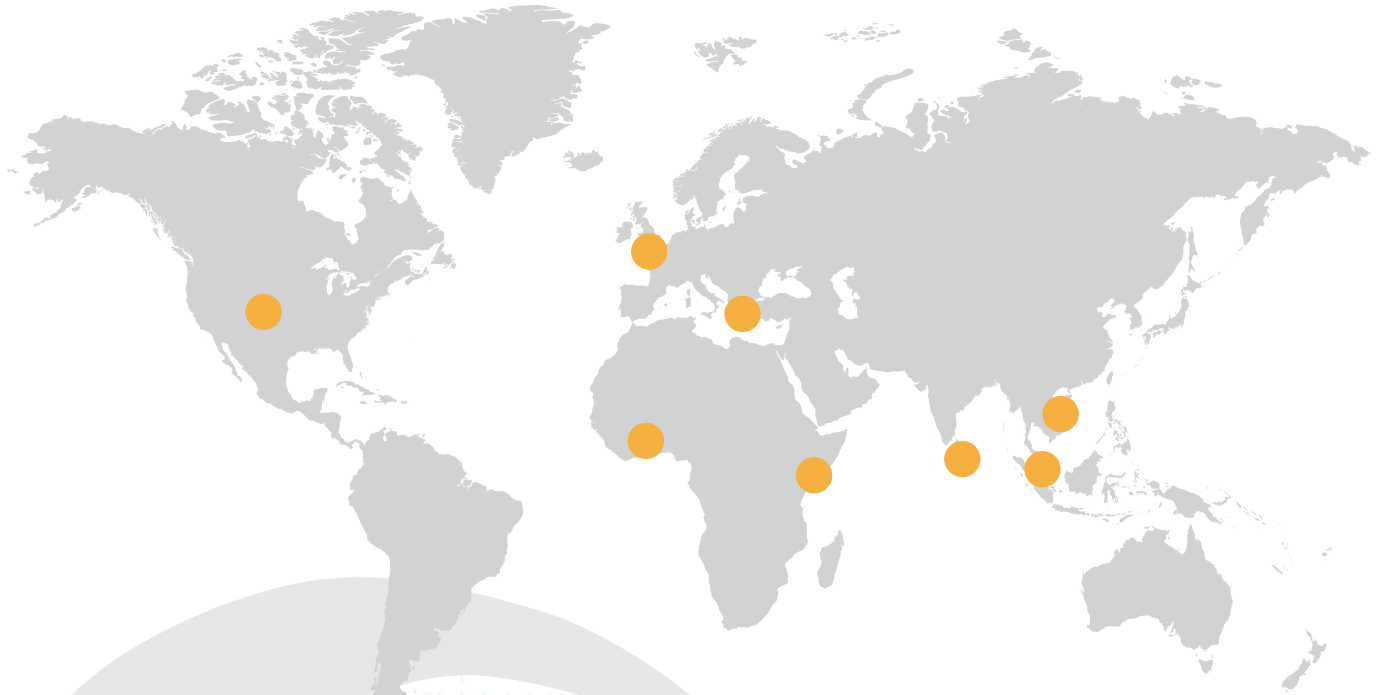
Global Chicks is an outreach project sharing tips, best practice and upskilling organisations working with disabled children across the world.

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



The United Nations, New York



THEORY OF CHANGE

The Barriers we're breaking down

For various reasons, including lack of adjustment/adaptions, attention and funding, 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 27 disabled youth advocates act as a school council 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

Impact

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

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



COVID-19 RESPONSE

Flamingo Chicks knew that families would need our help more than ever during the pandemic so quickly rose to the challenge, adapting and evolving with incredible results – reaching more children and families than ever before.

Very early on it became clear that Covid-19 would be a long-term challenge for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities with so many support services and activities paused, cancelled or inaccessible. It became clear that the services we were providing were unique, filling a gap in accessible online physical and recreational activities.

While in-person classes were paused, our team created a series of first-of-their kind virtual classes with themes exploring the worlds of science and ballet. Using animation, visual and sound effects, Makaton signing and Widgit symbols, the classes were a lifeline for families struggling to find accessible activities.

“During the pandemic it become clear there is a significant lack of accessible arts content but this is where Flamingo Chicks comes in. We have been sharing your resources to over 2000 people with complex disabilities across the UK, outreaching to all of our services. The feedback has been amazing! Your resources have made a huge impact on the Sense community.”

Sunney Sharma, Arts and Wellbeing Manager -
Sense, the national disability charity

In the autumn we were able to return to regular classes through a hybridised delivery with classes taking place over Zoom and in-person where safe to do so. Since then, we have been able to keep dancing throughout changing restrictions.

Harnessing technology and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically influenced our work with some hugely positive benefits: we have seen our reach dramatically increased, both geographically and in the number of children we reach; our volunteering programme is now more inclusive with greater flexibility and accessibility; our Agents of Change youth leadership programme has doubled in size, and we have welcomed truly incredible guests to join us for regular sessions.



2020 HIGHLIGHTS

DECEMBER 2019 -
JANUARY 2020:

10 hospices

'Little Butterfly' Christmas tour of children's hospices in 2019 engaged 10 hospices, from Wiltshire to Yorkshire.

 250,000

APRIL

We launch our first of 13 virtual dance classes to keep disabled children moving during lockdown – complete with accompanying science and craft activities! These have reached 250,000 views to date!



MAY

£13,500

Our May 100 fundraising campaign raises £13,500 with over 250 participants from across the UK taking part – socially distanced of course!



JANUARY

250

mums and their children joined us for our Mummy and Me run

"You are a life-line in these difficult times. Believe me."

Maria Marshall, mum



JAN - FEB

400+



Over 400 children join us for some intergalactic exploration through inclusive dance workshops, funded by the UK Space Agency.

JUNE

Flamingo Chicks is awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for charities. We held a nationwide Zoom celebration for volunteers, hosted by CEO and Founder Katie Sparkes and Patrons Rosaleen Moriarty-Simmonds, OBE and Joe Sims, Actor.

SEPTEMBER

Flamingo Chicks is back dancing! We begin our Recovery and Resilience term with classes taking place over Zoom and in-person where safe.

27

27 Agents of Change meet for monthly sessions with guests including Paralympic Gold Medallist and Strictly Star Will Bayley, and stars of CBeebies' Swashbuckle Richard David Caine and Joseph Elliott.



"I loved meeting such interesting people! I really enjoyed making friends with Agents of Change from other parts of the country too."

Liam, aged 14

NOVEMBER

We launch brand new Stretch and Breathe guided sessions for parents and carers during lockdown.

♥ 2,500

Over 2,500 children danced with us across classes and workshops in 2020, and 250,000 through our virtual classes. We have also welcomed 9 new settings to the flock, including new classes at Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Royal London Hospital which will be starting in early 2021!

AUGUST

Our Agents of Change take part in a unique 2-week Summer Club on Zoom, with incredible sessions and guests including CEO of Paralympics GB, Mike Sharrock and Nasa Space Scientist Anna Horleston.

"Stretch and breathe was 30 minutes of self-care each week in the middle of a massive emotional storm. All parents of SEN children would benefit from this opportunity to take a moment to themselves to recharge and take a few minutes to focus on themselves"

In the news

We've hit the headlines this year clocking up a vast amount of 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 have pioneered inclusive techniques to measure our impact:

- Three-tiered questionnaires completed using pens or textured sound switches
- Use of Makaton and Widgit symbols in signage and questionnaires
- Group data collection (using mechanisms such as wall thermometers)
- Observations, oral testimonies and stories of change
- Peer evaluation (a project for 2021, working with the Curiosity fund from Children in Need and the Wellcome Trust)
- Sensory and tactile evaluation techniques

Learnings:

Multiple communication modes

creativity mixed with communication aids such as Makaton, Widgit symbols, music and animation have been essential to ensure we stay fully accessible while delivering online.

Communication paddles

traffic light paddles (red, orange and green) with feelings faces have become an invaluable communication tool, particularly when a session leader is speaking and participants may be on mute but need assistance (a raised red paddle). The paddles help participants communicate independently and share feelings.

2020 results

Improved physical competencies

This includes physical engagement and improvements in areas such as core stability, balance and dexterity.

96% of children showed increased physical competencies and improved physical wellbeing*

*across an average of 13 sessions

Increased confidence

84% of children feel confident after dancing with us

Increased interest in the wider world

Linked to the term's core theme e.g. sport science, the science of sound

76% of participants learnt something new about sound and 74% found science fun and exciting!

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.

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 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 Coalition for Efficiency (advising on evaluation techniques), The English National Ballet and the 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. With our volunteers, we took part in a tree planting session in Bristol to offset our carbon footprint and our Trustee Board meet 3 times a year virtually to reduce travel.





NEXT STEPS/ FUTURE VISION

By 2023 we
want to create a
community of more
than 5000 children and
families accessing
our services each
year...

As we look ahead, our priorities for the future will see us continue to grow and support disabled children and families as we navigate the pandemic and our exit from it.

Stability

We know how important a friendly face and a known activity can be. We will continue to support our Flamingo Chicks' community through regular classes and workshops, with core themes of resilience and confidence.

Harness what we have learnt

Through using technology and delivering remotely, we will continue to reach more disabled children, connect isolated volunteers and support parents and carers. By our 10th birthday (2023) – we want to create a community of more than 5000 children and families accessing our services each year, where ALL children can enjoy the life changing benefits of being active, feel part of a community and break down barriers to inclusion.



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

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2020 – 'the MBE for charities'

TSB Pride of Sport - Community Award 2016

Leading Facilitator of Inclusive Physical & Virtual Activities -
2021 GHP Social Care Awards

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

A Point of Light Award from the Prime Minister - recognising
our work in championing inclusion 2015



This report was kindly funded with support from
The Funding Network.

All children's names featured have been anonymised.

@flamingo_chicks @flamingochicks @flamingochicks

Flamingo Chicks is a registered charity no. 1187604