

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre – Trustees Report 2024 -2025

As a charitable arts organisation, Fallen Angels exists to support people in recovery from addiction and mental health adversity, through the medium of movement and dance theatre.

We believe dance is enriched by including a diverse range of participants and by placing recovery stories centre stage in the recovery process. The creative arts are accustomed to speaking the language of the soul and through dance we aim to provide effective processes to improve well-being, enable self-discovery, offer personal growth and achievement and rebuild social networks, contributing to sustained journeys of recovery.

To achieve these aims Fallen Angels delivered 371 participation sessions, including weekly workshops in Chester as associate company with Storyhouse and in Liverpool, with the development of a new partnership and move to the Everyman Theatre.

Projects undertaken during the year included an 18-month partnership programme with Theatre Porto in Ellesmere Port, which culminated with a celebration and performance.

Empowering women to gain confidence, the Movement for Women programme delivered two projects, one in partnership with Tomorrow's Women based in Chester and another at Trinity Hall in Blacon.

In Greater Manchester a 10-month project in Salford entitled 'Recovery and Motion' commenced with a collaboration and sessions taking place at the University.

A new six-week outreach project was also undertaken with the drug and alcohol support service, VIA, in Northwich.

In total over 211 individuals were engaged in these recovery projects.

Highlights of the year included a collaboration with the Royal Ballet and New Note Orchestra (an award-winning recovery orchestra based in Bournemouth). As part of the Royal Ballet's community and outreach programme entitled "Creative Exchange", the project, culminated in a sharing of a dance and music performance open to the public called 'Inertia' and provided insights for the audience into the collaborative process. This exchange reached new audiences and raised the profile of recovery arts.

September saw the launch of a large digital project that premiered 'Samadhi' (a highly original and immersive digital dance installation). The preview was held at Cheshire Visual Arts Space and was followed by an extended exhibition for Greater Manchester recovery month at the Turnpike Gallery in Leigh. The exhibition called 'Beyond the Surface', celebrated 10 years of Chester's Fallen Angels impactful work in Wigan Borough and the launch event helped change the conversation on substance misuse and recovery. The exhibition ran for eight weeks and included films, costume, artworks,

photography and associated workshops which provided opportunities for healthcare, mental health and addiction recovery professionals to gain insights into art, movement and recovery work. The exhibitions attracted over 2231 visitors.

A new area of work was undertaken during this year, with the University of Chester Nursing Department, who commissioned Fallen Angels to deliver 18 days of work for 360 attendees on student placement days, aiming to change the perception that addiction is a choice and to understand that it is a health condition. The days provided information about stigma and the use of language, opened conversations about addiction and included practical movement and creativity. The feedback received from participants was valuable in shaping the work.

We continue to track, document and evaluate the impact of our work through various methods, including participation surveys and testimonials, external impact and engagement data and press and social media.

During 24/25 Fallen Angels worked in the areas of Chester, Liverpool, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Leigh, Manchester Central, Salford and London.

In total: 371 participation sessions were held, 211 individuals were engaged in recovery projects, 49 outreach sessions were delivered, 17 performances attracted 841 live audience members, 80.5k social media contacts were made and over 1,794,000 potential online press and media reach, including the BBC, The Mirror, Cheshire Live and Manchester Wire.

The impact and quality of our work was also recognised nationally. Fallen Angels were nominated for and won two awards at the One Dance UK National Awards evening, The Dance Change Maker Award and The Community Champion Award.

Recognition for what we achieve is rooted in the authenticity and social value of our work which is communicated through the voices of those with lived experience.

‘Fallen Angels makes me feel that I can achieve more than I ever felt possible’.

‘The body stores an awful lot of trauma. That first session brought me to tears, something had happened deep within me, and the feeling of freedom and relaxation was something new and lovely for me’.

‘Fallen Angels is a safe space and an accepting space for me to move and heal at my own pace. It gets me out of my head and into my body’.

Feedback from two Angel Voice volunteers, who speak directly at board meetings, provides Trustees with valuable insights into programme strengths and areas for development.

The Board warmly welcomed a new trustee, Fiona Ross who has more than 20 years' experience of developing policy and public engagement strategies in dance and is passionate about making a local impact through dance.

Trustees work towards ensuring the organisation achieves high standards of accountability, transparency and sustainability. We continued to develop a strong set of policies and procedures and completed a new Volunteer policy.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme brought in a lived experience project funded by Cheshire West Voluntary Action, initiated by CWVA Tyra Goodwin Lived Experience Consultant the angels and trustees developed further the "Angel Voice" in Liverpool and Chester. With an additional training session covering aspects of unconscious bias.

During this year, 6 Volunteer Angels achieved a Level 2 mentoring qualification which equips them to use their skills to support new participants.

Looking to the future, work will include:

For the Chester group, a plan to take the audience on a journey through the eyes of one of the angels who is registered blind and explore her experience of moving and performing.

For the Liverpool group using metaphor of water as a powerful way to explore and share their lived experience in recovery, which started through Alan Watts writing and a participant's artwork.

Recovery artists from the hub groups in the next year will be experience development by exploring the body's natural language with acclaimed choreographer Russell Maliphant. Ideas from these areas of work will be realised in performances.

We will continue to explore new ways of generating income to ensure free access to workshops for everybody in recovery.

The work we deliver relies on securing funding from a variety of sources, so thank you to all the grant givers, trusts, foundations and individuals who have funded Fallen Angels, without you, we simply could not continue.

None of the work we achieved in 24/25 would have been possible without the great people we work with, our partners, artists, volunteers and supporters. The unwavering commitment of our Board members and our Patron and last but not least, a wonderful staff team, led by Claire and Paul.

This report demonstrates the impact your vision and creativity has had on so many lives. Thanks to you all.

