

let's dance

local supporter's guide

Helping you get families
and children up and about
through dance



Created in partnership with



let's dance with change4life

Let's Dance is another of the exciting initiatives from Change4Life, the nationwide movement to help us all live healthier, happier and longer lives.

This toolkit has been prepared to help everyone who works with families and children aged 5-11 to encourage them to dance. Dancing is one of the most enjoyable ways to ensure a healthier lifestyle, and this guide is full of tips and ideas to inspire you. You'll find plenty of activities and suggestions inside, everything from organised dance events to simple dance games that can be enjoyed at home. The whole idea is to get everyone up and about and having fun.

Dancing is a spontaneous and highly enjoyable way for children to be healthy – they burn energy, strengthen their bones and reduce the risk of developing obesity. But there are plenty of other benefits too. Dancing builds children's confidence by encouraging them to interact with others, it helps develop their imagination - and makes them feel good. It's almost impossible to dance (or watch dancing) without smiling.

Plus, there's something for everyone – solo dances, partner dances and group dances in so many different styles. It's easy to learn or make up your own dance steps, it doesn't have to cost a thing – and can really increase the enjoyment of music. Most of all, it's fun - and the whole family or class can join in.

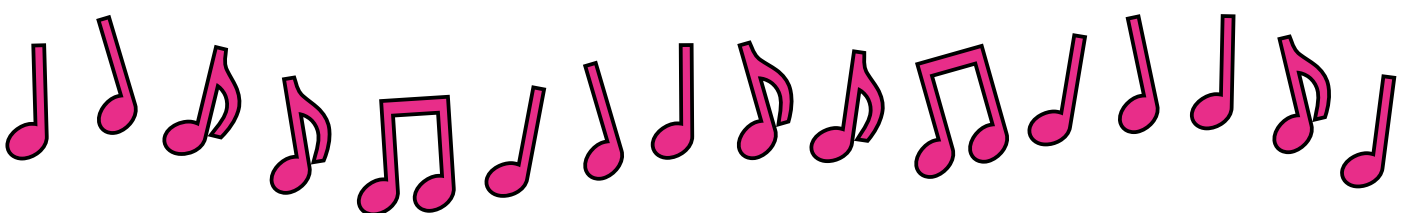
A nation of dance partners

A whole range of dance activity is taking place throughout the country – making it easy to stay inspired. Some of our partners include the National Osteoporosis Society and Fitness League.

New to Change4Life?

It's the nationwide movement which aims to help everyone, especially children, to eat well, move more and live longer. Find out more by reading the '[Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide](#)' [here](#).

Note: This guide has been written for local supporters from a wide range of professions and backgrounds. When referencing this guide, please follow the professional guidelines of your particular industry or association.



dancing your way to health

Modern life has made things very comfortable for us – so comfortable, in fact, that most of us spend far too long being sedentary. This means we often don't burn off the energy we are consuming – and, for children, this could lead to an unhealthy weight, and a risk of developing serious illnesses like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer later in life.

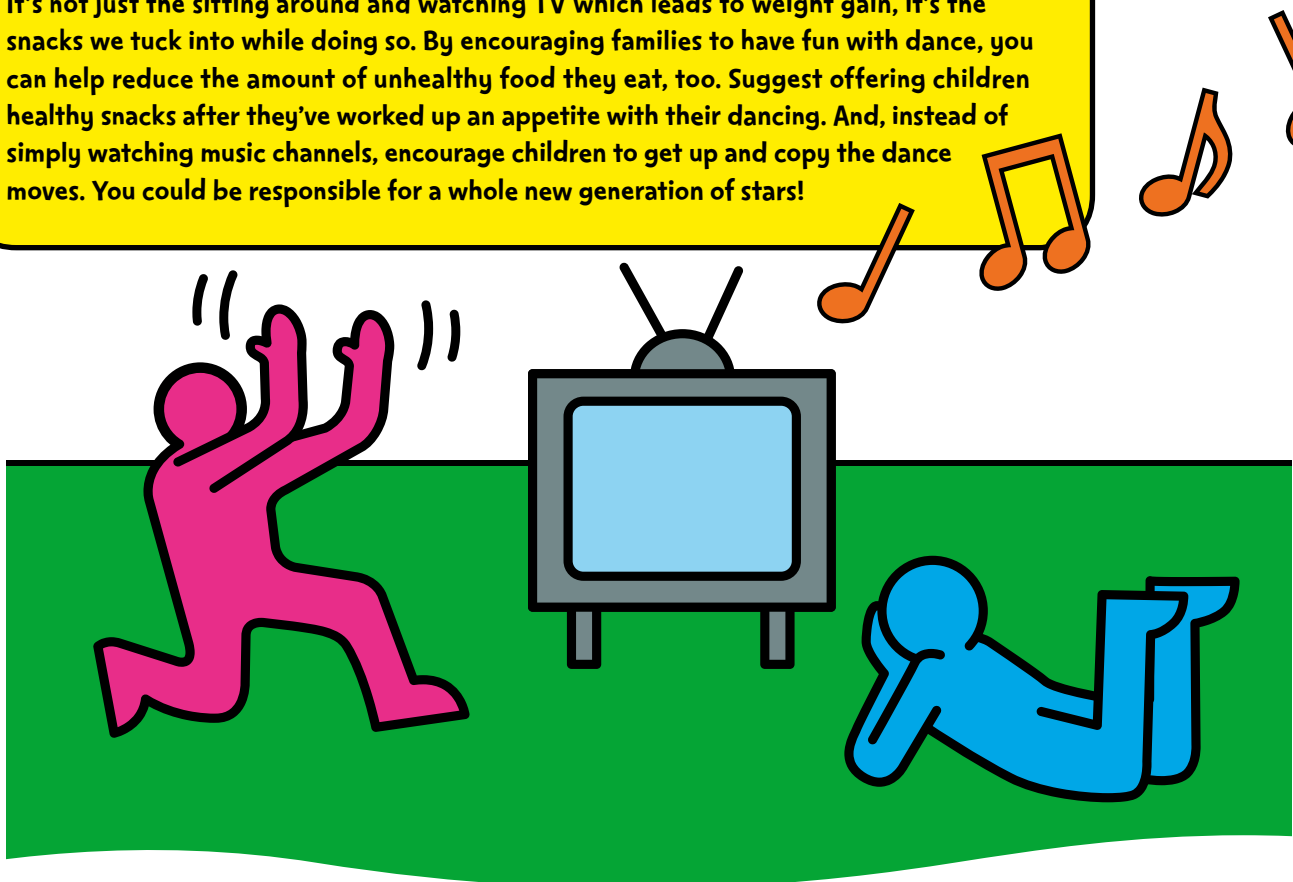
But dancing can help! It's a particularly effective way of burning energy because it's often done in short, intense bursts. It's easy to fit into the recommended 60 active minutes a day for children and can count towards their 5 hours of PE and sport per week. And at the same time as burning calories, it builds bones – making them healthy and strong.

Before starting any physical activity it's a good idea to do a warm up and some gentle stretches, and to have a cool down at the end. Try marching on the spot, and a few jumps and shakes of the body, tensing and releasing muscles in time to the music.

Finally, all that wiggling of hips and moving around works up a healthy appetite. So don't forget to encourage parents to give their children healthy snacks when the dancing is over, if they're hungry. In fact, dance is the perfect way for children to be occupied while mum or dad makes the tea.

Sitting and snacking?

It's not just the sitting around and watching TV which leads to weight gain, it's the snacks we tuck into while doing so. By encouraging families to have fun with dance, you can help reduce the amount of unhealthy food they eat, too. Suggest offering children healthy snacks after they've worked up an appetite with their dancing. And, instead of simply watching music channels, encourage children to get up and copy the dance moves. You could be responsible for a whole new generation of stars!



so much more than exercise

It's not just the health benefits which make dancing a great idea, it's also a fantastic way to encourage mental and emotional development in children.

Even very simple dances help children to develop their sense of rhythm, balance and co-ordination. Young children learn how to judge distances and understand the different ways in which their body can move. Dance requires concentration and discipline, and even counting skills should improve as children count their steps and beats of music.

In many respects, dancing is very similar to active, free play. It encourages children to use their imagination and creativity. They follow rules, but also have space to innovate and try things out. And, because they have to communicate and co-operate with others, their ability to form relationships is enhanced too.

The huge choice of dance styles means children can choose the ones they like, and so build a sense of identity, while learning to use music and movement as a form of expression. So it's a great way to get children up and about when they are not in the mood for traditional sports.

And let's not forget that dancing is easy and fun. It lifts the mood and is a great way for children to release pent-up energy and feelings.



how can you help families dance with change4life?



What's stopping many families from dancing? Very often it's just a little worry or uncertainty that's getting in the way. This next section helps you to provide some solutions that may be stopping families from dancing together and help convince them it's a great idea.

“I just don't have time”

The spontaneous nature of dance means you don't have to plan it. Suggest families dance while in the kitchen making dinner, or instead of sitting still listening to their favourite music. Almost any activity can be made into a dance – setting the table, sweeping the floor and so on.

“I can't afford the dance classes or expensive outfits”

All you need to dance is a person – there's no need to worry about buying props or outfits. Children can have fun at home or in school just by using their imagination. Most homes have a dressing up box which can be raided, too. Suggest that children can ask for anything special they want, such as ballet costumes, as a birthday or Christmas present.

“Isn't dancing mainly for girls?”

Some cultures may disapprove of girls dancing, but most feature dances for both sexes. And it's usually something young boys love too – from an early age they enjoy all types of dance from ballet and ballroom to streetdancing and modern. If they love music, it's really easy to get boys up on their feet.

“I'm no good at dancing. How do I teach my kids the steps?”

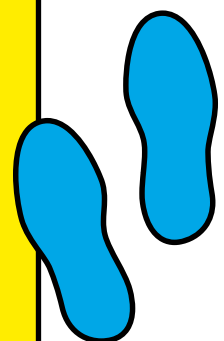
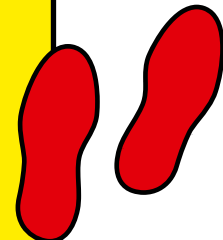
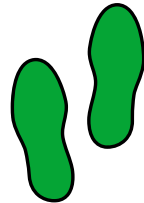
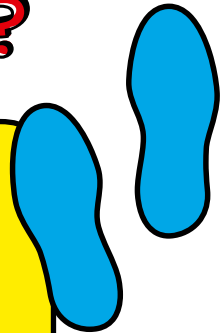
Dance is all about having fun and enjoying the movement and rhythm it brings. See if someone else in the family likes dancing and ask if they can get involved. There are lots of suggestions in this toolkit too. Remember, dance can be as free and imaginative as you like – in many ways, it's more like a game. Have a look at page 11 for some ideas on easy, fun dances to try at home.

“I feel self-conscious about dancing with my kids”

You can do it all in your own home. And the more you dance, the less self-conscious you feel. Adults can try a few simple ideas to get everyone started, then encourage the children to put on a show.

“What about all the noise?”

It's normal for children to make noise while playing and having fun. But you could plan their dance activity at certain times of the day, or get them to practice steps while singing the music in their heads.



“My children are too young to follow dance routines”

Dancing can be as free and imaginative as you like – for young children, it’s often fun to make up characters and bring them to life through movement. Have a look at some of the suggestions on page 11.

“I’m not very imaginative. How do I give my children ideas?”

Most children love watching music videos. They could simply copy the routines they see, or get together with their friends to come up with new dance steps. Dancing is so much fun that children only need a small amount of encouragement to make it part of their everyday play.

“I don’t want to encourage my kids to listen to pop music”

Suggest making a set of bongo drums out of old containers – all you need is rhythm. Or get them to dance along to classical music. Whatever the music the rest of the family enjoy, children can have fun making up dances.

“Dance is already a big part of my culture”

That’s fantastic – encourage families to include the children as much as possible. And also to explore the vast number of dance styles from around the world. It’s fun to compare and contrast them. Imaginative dance and play are also great for children to explore, and help with their development.

A dance day keeps the boredom away

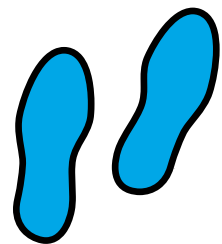
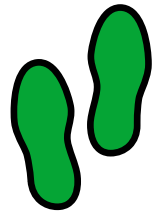
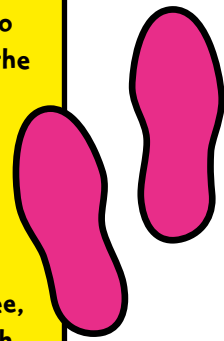
From ballet and ballroom to rock ‘n’ roll, cheerleading and modern dance, there are so many types to try. You could suggest that children learn a different one each week of the school holidays, and organise a ‘back to school’ show with their friends.

Dance for all families

At Change4Life we believe that all children should be encouraged to dance. Some of the dance activities outlined in this guide may not be suitable or practical for all families. But many of them can be adapted to suit individual families, including children or parents with disabilities.

The perfect treat

Encourage parents to take their children to a dance class or a show. It could be the start of a lifelong hobby. Or there’s live drumming and street dancing. Many films are based around dance and can be a great source of inspiration – suggest *Happy Feet*, *Billy Elliot*, *The Red Shoes*, *Footloose* and *High School Musical*.



ideas for solo dancing



The great thing about dancing is you can do it on your own, and whenever the mood takes you. All children will need is some music, and a mirror is useful for practicing their favourite moves. Ballet is perfect for boys and girls, alike. Tap is really good fun and there's plenty of inspiration to be found in old movies. Street dancing is a superb way to build body strength and makes the perfect party piece. You can find out more about these dance styles from the Activity Sheets that are part of this toolkit.

Fun dances to try

Do "The Locomotion" making 'choo choo train' motions.

"YMCA"

Y - Arms outstretched and raised

M - Made by bending the elbows from the 'Y' pose so the fingertips meet over the chest

C - Arms extended to the left

A - Hands held together above head with their fingertips touching



Finding the music

Most of the time, you can find plenty of music in the home - raiding parents' and grandparents' music collections adds to the fun. Many animated films have great music for children to dance along to, or just pick a favourite radio station or music channel on TV.

DIY dancing

Choreography isn't as hard as it looks - all you need are a few simple moves, repeated over and over to music with a good beat. Repetition is at the heart of every dance style, so you can limit the moves to 2 or 3, if you like.

Most music falls into a 1,2,3 or 1,2,3,4 beat. Listen to your chosen music a few times first, then try out some simple forward and back steps. The Box Step forms the shape of a box on the floor and is a great one to try:

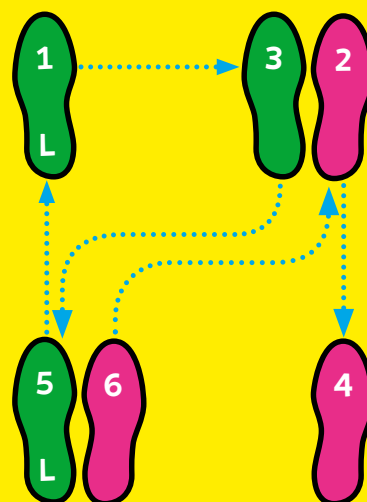
Begin with the left foot and proceed as follows.

First half-box: Forward-side-together

Second half-box: Backwards (with left foot) -side-together

You can vary this as much as you like - try creating different shapes on the floor with your feet. You can spin a partner, hold them by the waist or link arms. And why not add in a few star jumps and leaps!

Once you have a very simple routine, try slowing it down, or going faster and faster.



START/FINISH

ideas for dancing in pairs

These dances are perfect for brothers and sisters, or best friends - one is the leader, one the follower. Get them to take it in turns for twice the fun.

Put on some rock 'n' roll music and get children to swing, or explore the rhythms of Latin America with a jive or samba session. Whatever kind of music you have there are all sorts of fun moves for 2 to try. You'll find plenty of ideas in this toolkit by checking out the different activity sheets.



Fun dances to try

"The bump"

The main move of the dance is to lightly "bump" hips on every other main beat of the music. As the dance progresses, they can bump arms, legs etc...

Try it to some funky music.

"The Do-si-do"

Dancers begin facing one another, then move forward and pass right shoulders. Without turning, each dancer moves to the right passing behind the other dancer. Then moving backwards, each passes left shoulders returning to the starting position. This works well with Country and Western music.



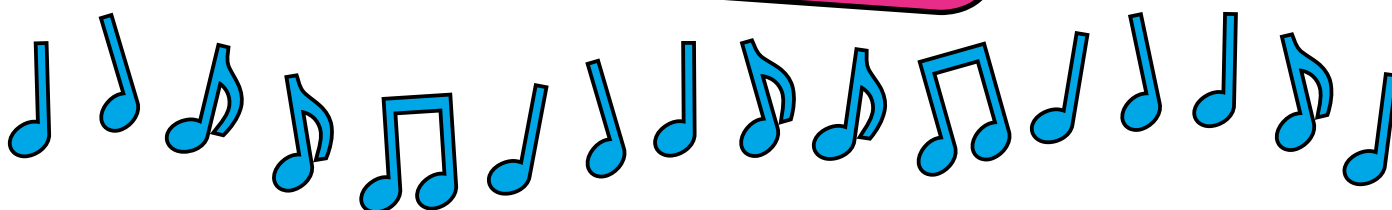
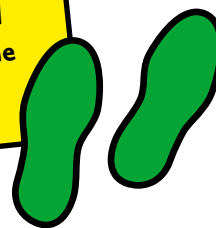
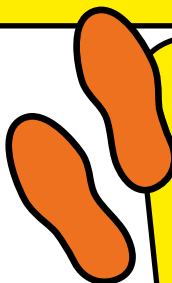
Dance to learn

If you're a teacher you can easily build dance into lessons - teaching children about the different parts of the world from which dance styles originate. They can find out about costumes, traditions and famous figures. Why not get children to teach the rest of the class a dance from their own culture?

Safety

Like any form of play, dancing can be very energetic. Make sure the room is clear of objects with sharp edges or things children can trip over. If children are dancing without shoes, and especially if they're in tights, you'll need to ensure they won't slip on the floor.

A little warm up is important, to avoid the risk of pulling a muscle or feeling sore afterwards. Plus, it's a great way to get everyone excited and ready to dance.



ideas for dancing in groups

Encourage children at home, school or in your local community groups to have some fun and get to know each other better. These fun dances are perfect for kids' parties – they don't cost anything and keep the children entertained for hours.

Fun dances to try

The "Bunny Hop"

The dance is a variation on a conga. Participants dance in a line, holding on to the hips of the person in front of them. They tap the floor 2 times with their right foot, then with their left foot, then they hop forwards, backwards, and finally 3 hops forward to finish the sequence, which continues throughout the song. The first person in the line leads the group around the floor.

The "Hokey Cokey"

You put your left leg in
Your left leg out
In, out, in, out, shake it all about.
You do the Hokey Cokey and you turn around
That's what it's all about...

On 'you do the Hokey Cokey' each participant joins his/her hands at the fingertips and rocks them from side to side.

Everyone links hands for the chorus:

Whoa, the okey cokey,
Whoa, the okey cokey,
Whoa, the okey cokey,
Knees bent, arms stretched, ra ra ra!

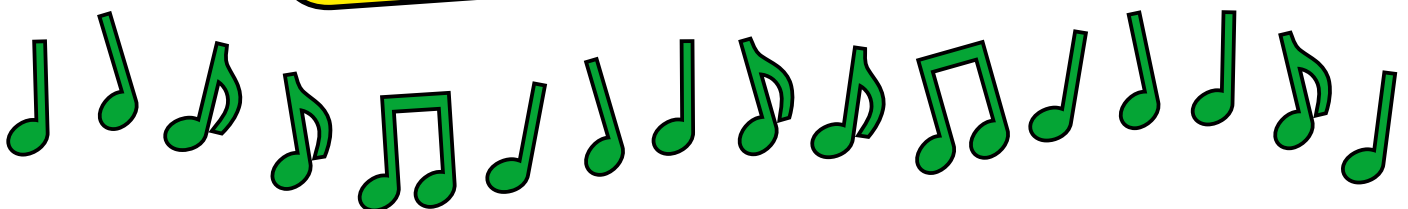


Organising a dance event

As a Change4Life supporter, you might want to organise your own dance event. It's as easy as finding a venue, deciding on the dance activities, putting up some posters and checking out the safety regulations.

Take a look at the **Get Organised Guide 2009**, which you can download as a pdf from www.playday.org.uk. The section 'Getting the details right' covers everything you need to plan regarding child supervision, fire precaution and first aid; food and drink; insurance; licenses and permits; risk assessment and waste disposal.

Your local authority may also have a guide to planning events, with local contact details and procedures – have a look at the Directgov website at www.direct.gov.uk



healthy eating is important too!

Medical evidence suggests we need to keep an eye on what we eat as well as how much energy we burn through activity if we want to prevent fat building up in our bodies. So when you talk to families about dancing, you could also remind them of the importance of eating healthily too.

Don't worry if your usual work or activities focus on keeping active and you don't feel confident talking to parents about eating healthily. You don't need to become an expert in a new subject. All we ask is that you tell families that both activity levels and diet are important, and direct them to where they can find out more.

A good place to suggest is [here](#) at the Change4Life website where they can also find out about Breakfast4Life, designed to help them get the best start to the day.

If you look after children and are involved in choosing snacks for breaktime, try to include those that are low in added sugar, salt and fat, such as fruit, breadsticks and rice cakes, rather than sweets, biscuits, chocolate or cakes.



get dancing at home

The real beauty of dance is that there is no need to spend money on kit or even leave the house. So it's perfect for rainy days or when mum and dad are really busy.

Here are some ideas for dance activities for younger kids at home:

Zoo-Guess-Who

For 2 people or more

A game based on the idea of charades with movements of zoo animals.

Take it in turns to move like an animal while the others guess what they are:

Snake – slither on the floor

Rabbit – quick, small jumps with hands on the floor

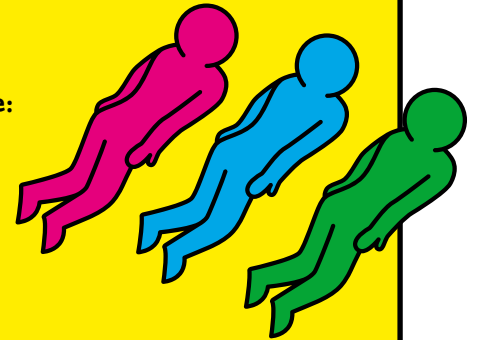
Kangaroo – big bounces where you try to hit your bottom with your feet

Lion – prowl with the largest steps you can take

Cheetah – run on the spot as fast as you can

Tiger – stretch and arch your back

Put on some music and get them to join the moves together to make a great animal dance or carnival.



Stop and go, musical statues

For 2 people or more

Make sure the music has a good beat, and let the children have a go at stopping the music too.

Heart Beat Hop

For 2 people, under 7s with an adult

For this you need a caller and a dancer:

Put on some fast music. The caller calls out the number 1 or 2 in rhythm to the music:

1 – dancer has to dance to the music on two feet, making patterns and so on

2 – dancer has to hop in patterns.

The caller changes between 1 and 2 as often as they like.

If the caller shouts 3 it is the end of the game and the dancer has to make a pose with three parts of their body on the floor. The caller has to take up the pose, and the dancer gets to call the numbers.



Funky Leader

For 2 people, under 7s with an adult

Put on some music with a good beat. Clap your hands then high-5 each other in rhythm with the music.

The 'Funky Leader' has to try and trick their partner by doing high-5s up, to the side, down low.

Anywhere the partner has to work hard to reach. When the partner has reached 3 high-5s successfully it's time to swap roles.



Your Dance Space

For more than 2 people

With some friends agree to make up a new move or dance step each. Then meet up and put them together to make a new dance. Give it a name of your own and show it off at a home disco.

Dance Challenge

For more than 2 people

Adult help will be required. Set up a 'talent show' evening at home. Give the children challenges – for instance, the dance has to feature 4 different jumps or you have to start by running in a circle and so on.

Make sure you have a variety of music with a good beat.



Discover more information

There are lots of Change4Life resources which you may find useful. They're all available online, but some are also available as a printed pack for those who don't have internet access.

Making a Change4Life

Change4Life encourages families to make 8 changes around diet and physical activity for a healthier future. Read more about these changes, why they're important and tips on helping parents make them in the 'Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide' [here](#).

Talking about Change4Life

Our research shows that some ways of talking about the issues surrounding Change4Life are received better by parents than others. Get tips on how to explain things to parents, plus more ideas for ways you can support the campaign, in the 'Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide' [here](#).

The research behind Change4Life

Read more about the research behind Change4Life in the Department of Health's 'Consumer Insight Summary' [here](#).

FREE Change4Life resources

Lots of colourful resources are already available for you to use with families, including posters, leaflets and game sheets. Download them [here](#).

We're releasing more toolkits like this one to support different activities. Look out for Breakfast4Life, Bike4Life, Walk4Life, Swim4Life and Play4Life [here](#). If you haven't already, please [register](#) as a local supporter and we'll tell you when new toolkits are available. You'll also get access to all the Change4Life logos for you to use on your own communications.

Contact us

The 'Partners & supporters' area of the website has information, ideas and resources for local supporters including:

- case studies
- partner tools
- FAQs
- useful links

Not online? Call the local supporter helpline on **0300 123 3434**.*

Useful links and further resources

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Dance Champions Group | www.dancechampions.org.uk |
| Youth Dance England | www.yde.org.uk |
| National Osteoporosis Society | www.nos.org.uk |
| Fitness League | www.thefitnessleague.com |



Eat well Move more Live longer

*Calls to 03 numbers should cost no more than geographic 01 or 02 calls, and may be part of inclusive minutes subject to your provider and your call package. We're open from 9am to 8pm, 7 days a week.