



## Statement of Intent / Code of Conduct



At Swing Tyne we love dancing and everything associated with dance. Everyone should feel absolutely comfortable and safe at any of our events. This ranges from dancers of every level of experience, through to lovers of swing music, friends, carers, guardians or intrigued onlookers.

Harassment or bullying will not be tolerated and by attending any of our events in any capacity (whether you are an international teacher, a DJ or a first time dancer) you agree to treat all participants with care and respect and to abide by our code of conduct. We want every person to feel comfortable at any of our events and we hope that this document plays a role in fostering a safe and comfortable place to dance. Please, however, be aware that Swing Tyne events are often held in places open to the general public. While we strive to make a safe community, we do not know everyone and we may unfortunately get people who behave badly.

### **1. There is room for all of us on the dancefloor**

We welcome all dancers and music lovers regardless of gender/gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, physical appearance, religion or employment status. We encourage all dancers to have the choice of leading, following or both. The choice is completely left up to the individual. You may want to clarify with someone which role they would like to take when you ask them to dance as many dancers enjoy both leading and following and would be happy to take either role.

### **2. Respect others**

Be respectful, do not be inappropriate. Do not use sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, racist, ageist language. Remember that no means no.

### **3. Look out for each other and your community**

We are a community and let us ensure we love every step we take while at the same time looking out for those around us. If you feel harassed or are made to feel uncomfortable please contact a member of Swing Tyne's Committee, the teachers or DJ immediately. They will point you in the right direction. If you see someone who looks uncomfortable or upset, ask if they are ok and if they would like you to report any unwanted behaviour to the Committee on their behalf. The **Getting Help** section below outlines our procedures. Where harassment is found, people may be asked to leave, may be banned from other events and the police may be notified at our discretion and as guided by the complainant and evidence available.

### **4. Your personal boundaries are paramount**

Always respect personal boundaries. Partner dancing can involve close contact with others. Thus, consider your own personal hygiene before attending along with ways to stay fresh during events. Respect for each others' personal space is a must. If someone tells you that you are making them feel uncomfortable, respect their requirement for space.

### **5. You can say no**

If someone asks you to dance and you do not want to, you can say "no thank you". You do not have to offer an explanation but should be polite when doing so. If you feel uncomfortable dancing with someone then you can stop dancing with them at any time, even halfway through a song.

## **6. Be ok with people saying no**

If you ask someone to dance they say no, respect their decision and ask someone else. No one is obliged to dance with you, and no one should feel obliged to accept a dance if they do not feel like it. There are many reasons why a dance may be declined and there is no need to speculate or gossip.

## **7. Feel free to be diverse**

Feel free to be inclusive. You may ask anyone for a dance: lead or follow, teacher or absolute beginner. While it is great dancing with friends, consider asking others to dance: social dancing will improve your skills and it will help make the community more welcoming and friendly. Please be mindful about not pestering and being okay if someone says no.

## **8. Play safe**

Have your own style, but consider how your attire will hold up to movement and turns. Many events are licenced, but match your ambition with your sobriety. Keep your eyes open on the dance floor and try not to bump into others around you. Aerials, lifts and drops may be great in a practice session or competition but should not be carried out on a busy social dance floor. Remember your partner may have an injury that you are unaware of and even dipping a partner might hurt them. If your partner is hurting you unintentionally, please take care of yourself and let them know.

## **9. No unsolicited negative feedback**

Unless you are teaching the specific class or someone is hurting you, please do not offer unsolicited advice or instruction in either classes or socials. Please recognise that the person with whom you are dancing may be concentrating on a number of things already. Similarly, the teachers of that class may deliberately ignore certain mistakes, if they are trying to teach other principles that lesson.

If you wish for feedback, please establish this before dancing with an individual (this applies both in a class rotation and in socials). This may open an opportunity to give two-way feedback, but remember that just because you want feedback, the other dancer may not.

If you have concerns, please talk to a Committee member or teacher. For example, almost all dancers have experienced someone who is unintentionally yanky or has an awkward hold. No topic is too small and coming to us directly can help to minimise unfair gossip and hearsay. Rumours rarely inspire positive action, so talk to us early on and we will figure out the next steps together – possibly with elements of future lessons being tailored to improve everyone's connection and hold!

If, however, someone does do something well, tell them! Do not reserve compliments for advanced dancers.

## **10. Apologies (accepted)**

Accidents happen. Apologise if you bump another person on the dance floor. Apologise if you bump your dance partner. Apologise if you accidentally touch an area of the body that is private, sexual, or just totally out of the realm of legitimate holds or moves of the dance you are participating in. Apologise if you crush someone's toes. The level of apology may range from an apologetic smile and wave mid-dance to saying something, depending on the seriousness of the incident.

## **11. Enjoy the dance**

Accept that none of us are perfect. You do not have to apologise for fluffing steps. Instead, adjust the way you dance to suit each dance partner. For leaders, this may involve, for example, choosing simpler moves for beginner follows, and leaving space for improvisation for advanced follows.

## 12. Getting Help

If you are injured and require medical attention or if you feel unsafe or threatened and would like to make the organisers aware of inappropriate behaviour, discrimination or harassment, see any Swing Tyne Committee member. If you are unaware of the Committee, please speak to the teachers or DJ.

Swing Tyne has a dedicated Welfare Officer, Jan Porteous. If you would like to make a complaint or pursue a concern, please contact: [welfare.swingtyne@gmail.com](mailto:welfare.swingtyne@gmail.com) or fill in our welfare web form (which permits anonymous submissions). The Welfare Officer has been mandated by the Committee to investigate complaints in confidence and independently of the Committee, if the complainant desires. Only the Welfare Officer monitors the welfare email account and webforms. If you wish for the whole Committee to be aware of an issue you can use the [ne1canswing@gmail.com](mailto:ne1canswing@gmail.com) contact details. No concern should be considered too small to raise. Swing Tyne and the Welfare Officer is committed to working with complainants to find a safe space to raise concerns.



Jan Porteous  
Swing Tyne Welfare Officer

Please be aware, depending on the issue, to facilitate an investigation it may be necessary to report:

- a) details of what occurred;
- b) details of when and where the occurrence took place;
- c) any witness details and copies of any witness statements;
- d) names of any others who have been treated in a similar way (provided that those people consent to their names being disclosed);
- e) details of any former complaints made about the incident, including the date and to whom such complaint was made; and
- f) an indication as to the desired outcome.

If the Welfare Officer or Committee consider the situation to be more serious than their experience can deal with, we will take appropriate action to refer the issue to appropriate professionals and act on their guidance.

## 13. Sexual Harassment

The [Equality Act of 2010](#) outlines the definition of sexual harassment under UK law.

Owing to the severity of the issue, we strongly encourage anyone who has experienced any sexual harassment to report it to the police. The committee will also provide any assistance that you may require. The official advice is to dial 999. You can also report a crime online at any time via the [Northumbria Police Website](#) and it can be at any time after the offense has happened.

If you would like impartial advice, we recommend contacting a group such as:

- [Support Line](#), for all victims of rape and sexual assault: Tel 01708 765200;
- [Survivors UK](#), male rape and sex abuse: Tel 0203 5983898;
- [Angelou Centre](#), black-led women's support centre: Tel 0191 226 0394;
- [Rape Crisis Northumberland](#), for all victims of rape and sexual assault: Tel 0800 035 2794;
- [Good Night Out](#), campaign to end sexual harassment and assault in venues, bars, clubs, pubs and festivals across the world.

#### **14. Other Support Groups**

A list of support groups for issues including: gender/gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, physical appearance, religion or employment status can be found at [Stop Hate UK](http://www.stophateuk.org). They can be reached 24 hours a day:

- By phone: 0800 138 1625;
- Webchat: go to [www.stophateuk.org/talk-to-us/](http://www.stophateuk.org/talk-to-us/) ;
- Email: [talk@stophateuk.org](mailto:talk@stophateuk.org) ;
- Text: 07717 989 025;
- For people who are deaf, or have speech or hearing impairments there is in an online form at [www.stophateuk.org/talk-to-us/](http://www.stophateuk.org/talk-to-us/) ;
- By post: PO Box 851, Leeds, LS1 9QS.

#### **15. A note on history**

There has been much debate regarding whether Lindy Hop and other swing dances have been (culturally) appropriated from the African-Americans who first created the dances. We would, therefore, encourage anyone interested in swing (dance and music) to take the time to learn about its history. For example, Lindy Hop has roots in Harlem at a time of racial segregation. Swing Tyne recognises the incredible contribution made by dancers like: Freda Washington, Frankie Manning, Pepsi Bethel, George "Shorty" Snowden, Norma Miller, Al Minns, Leon James, and others. Similarly, we are indebted to inspirational musicians like: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Chick Webb, Lionel Hampton and Benny Goodman.

The 1920s and 30s saw great creativity. Alongside Lindy Hop, Collegiate Shag and Balboa further swing dances were invented such as: the Jig Trot, LA Swing, Early Carolina Shag, St. Louis Shag. Collectively these share elements of the same DNA, taking many influences from: Jazz and pre-jazz dances (like the Apache and Two Step); ragtime dances (like the Charleston, Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear, and Breakaway); and from ballroom dances (like the Foxtrot).

At Swing Tyne many moves whose DNA can be traced to the 1920s and 30s are taught and danced and our DJs play music from this era. However, dance evolution has continued and across the swing scene, including Swing Tyne, moves influenced by (e.g.) West and East Coast Swing, Jive, Rock and Roll, Latin and other dances are found. Similarly, music has evolved and DJs do not just play pieces from a historic time capsule. Recognising these influences, a technically accurate description of the dances at Swing Tyne may be 'Modern Lindy Hop', 'Modern (Collegiate) Shag' and 'Modern Balboa', however, currently within the global swing scene the dances are overwhelmingly used by their 'parent' names (ie Lindy Hop, (Collegiate) Shag and Balboa). It is a testament to the creative nature of vernacular dances that we may never be able to exactly define, where one dance ends and another begins, but we encourage all to learn about the history of dance. This way we may gain an important understanding and respect for the cultural heritage of swing.

#### **16. Final thoughts**

Thanks for reading this far, it shows us that you take these issues seriously. Swing Tyne have spent a long time discussing these issues as a team and it is a continual learning curve for us. We will happily listen to any suggestions you have so we can continually improve and monitor this part of our community. We love swing and welcoming people to our community in the North East. Nothing is more important to us than ensuring our dancers feel safe and can love their dancing and the community of incredible people.