



Above: Lisa Craddock.

The art of moving people

The last two editions of *Animated* have featured articles about the shape of a proposed Professional Framework for Community Dance; and published definitions, core values and a professional code of conduct for community dance – both developed from *Making a Move*, the Foundation for Community Dance's three-year consultation project.

In this edition, **Lisa Craddock**, Programme Manager for Professional Development at the Foundation, introduces the National College for Community Dance – a major new professional development initiative for the community dance sector

Spring 2009 sees the launch of the National College for Community Dance - a sector-led learning programme, delivering pathways to professional practice and career-long continuing professional development (CPD) in community dance and a 'home' for the Foundation's own CPD programme. With funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we are able to pilot this new approach to CPD for dance artists working in a wide range of community settings.

The College will bring together a series of new professional level courses, extensive online information and resources, networking and seminar events. The national college is not a static entity, building or another layer of bureaucracy. It is a concept intended to offer flexible, inclusive and inspirational learning opportunities.

We will be working with and for the sector in our pursuit to inspire, develop and sustain life-long careers in community dance - and we invite you to take part in the national college to make it a richly diverse forum for

debate with genuine collective activity and reflection for community dance to strengthen professional identity and quality of community dance practice.

On joining Foundation for Community Dance (FCD) in December 2008 I found the debate stirring in conversations with colleagues was built around quality and community dance. What does this mean and how is it measured? Are dance artists articulating competencies in ways that are useful to them? In the pursuit of developing safe practice, where does this leave the art and content in community dance?

Our concern is to support dance artists to understand not just how to deliver a safe class, but also, to re-visit their excitement about their art form as it develops with people, keeping their dance refreshed and responsive. For the more experienced dance artist, the refreshment may come in a different form, through opportunity to debate at the right level about quality practice and compare practice across art forms and other

professional sectors. Experienced dance artists can both give inspiration to other sectors through physical leadership and high-level communication as well as learn from sectors such as business, health, or social care. Crucially for our sector however, experienced dance artists are able to inspire developing community dance artists and through the national college we aim to enable those legacies to be passed on. As enthusiasm grows for participation developing the community dance workforce is key.

The increasing demand for regulating and accrediting community dance practice is being driven by the expectations of employers, education institutions, local authorities, funders and crucially by government policy. The community dance workforce is unified in its desire to apply its varied dance forms to working with people, yet divided in terms of experience and accredited qualifications. There are many new challenges to be faced and embraced.

The Foundation has listened to the sector and its needs through extensive consultation. Responding to this, the national college offers a structure whereby individuals, organisations and institutions can actively take part in developing national framework together with a vision to improve standards of practical delivery in community dance.

Our research revealed three key features articulated by the sector as essential considerations for any future CPD initiative:

- Recognition that the sector is under resourced and so needs to deliver flexible modes of CPD
- Recognition that practitioners need to develop different skills at different stages in their careers
- That both practitioners and employers want to see clear articulation of skills, knowledge and understanding recognised in other sectors and wherever possible accredited.

The National College will position community dance nationally at the

forefront of developments in quality assurance, training and professional standards, strengthen professional identity and career development in community dance, and identify the existing CPD opportunities that are already available in the sector and creating a national CPD map.

Who is the National College for Community Dance for?

The College aims to meet the needs of:

- Dance artists, teachers and practitioners
- Employers and dance organisations committed to the delivery of quality community dance
- Providers of CPD to community dance practitioners
- People working in other professions interested in developing dance practice.

How will the National College for Community Dance deliver?

Over the next 18 months the National College for Community Dance will deliver:

- Summer School programme (4-8 August 2009)
- Seminars, debate and conferences
- Members Networking Meetings
- Online CPD map and search engine with national and local pathways to CPD relevant for you
- Online learning materials, dissemination and discussion forums
- An extensive online library of Animated, the community dance magazine
- Development of professional standards in community dance practice with and for the sector
- Development of Higher Education related courses as the foundation works in consultation with De Montfort University to support accreditation of prior learning for very experienced artists and practitioners.

The learning outcomes of the Summer School courses will be tested during the pilot year for accreditation in their own right, and to contribute to future Higher Education accreditation – and with partners across the dance sector >



through the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP), the Foundation will lead the development of professional standards and strategy for accreditation of community dance. The national college will provide a testing ground for action research in developing professional standards.

Our ambition is to increase the involvement of the community dance sector in the delivery of the national college, and collaborate with other CPD providers locally, regionally and nationally to create a recognised professional framework for community dance. The pilot phase is being delivered and tested in collaboration with four partners: Dance City, Dance South West, De Montfort University and East London Dance.

We have published a pamphlet Invitation to Participate, which sets out the various ways that you can get involved with the college. These include:

- Taking part in the national college as a course participant, engaging online and taking part in networking events and seminars
- Telling us about the CPD programmes your organisation provides, and get them added into the online CPD map
- Over 100 development partners, organisations and individuals across the UK who act as our critical friend, support the foundation's work on the national college and professional framework for community dance. This network is essential for ensuring the national college is relevant and meets need.

Only together through creating a collective voice for community dance which is respectful of the variety of practice that dance successfully delivers, can the national college achieve its aims in developing a truly inclusive practice that produces high quality dance work that moves people to creative action.

To make your move please **visit** www.communitydance.org.uk/nationalcollege

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