

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT COMMITTEE

ARTS DEVELOPMENT: DANCE

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY DANCE, May 2004

1. ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY DANCE

The Foundation for Community Dance is the national development agency for community dance. We work across the UK and internationally to support increased access to and participation in dance.

Established in 1986, the Foundation is a membership organisation with 1,285 individual members, and 301 corporate members - representing in excess of 4,200 professional dance artists, teachers, organisations, companies and managers.

Our central premise, and that of our members, is that every body can and does dance - and through the act of dancing, creating dances, performing dances and developing a critical stance in relation to those dances a number of essential human benefits follow: creativity and focussed expression, self worth and personal development, social skills and responsibilities, improved health and well being and cultural and community identities.

To support our vision of the development of high quality community dance for all, our current work covers four areas of activity:

- **Information, Support and Guidance** to artists and employers
- **Professional Development** opportunities for community dance artists and others working in the sector
- **Strategic Development** of community dance, including employment initiatives, diversity, disability, conferences and publications
- **Advocacy, Representation and Research** to profile the sector in England, the UK and Internationally

The Foundation for Community Dance receives annual funding from Arts Council England, with additional financial support from Arts Lottery funding streams, the New Opportunities Fund, and the European Social Fund.

The information in this submission is focussed on community dance in England. The research figures quoted in this document are taken from Mapping Community Dance (Foundation for Community Dance, 2000) except where specified. This research will be repeated in 2004 and published in 2005.

2: THE CURRENT STATE OF COMMUNITY DANCE

2.1: Overview of Community Dance in England

In 2000 the Foundation completed a mapping exercise of the sector to identify amongst other things the scale and range of community dance activity taking place across England. The research focussed on dance activity led by professional community dancers and organised by dance companies and

agencies: in other words dance activity receiving some form of subsidy from public finances, locally, regionally or nationally.

It is important to note that we did not include: participation in dance as a social activity (calculated by First Leisure to be one million people between the ages of 18 and 30 dancing in their nightclubs every week); those learning dance in private schools and clubs run by members of the dance teaching societies (Royal Academy of Dance, ISTD etc); those learning dance within the curriculum of state education, and those dance activities deemed to be purely recreational.

The infrastructure for community dance in England consists of individual artists working within non-arts focussed organisations, freelance dance artists, small-scale dance companies and independent agencies, the community and education departments of large-scale companies and venues, local authority arts development departments, and the network of local, regional and national dance agencies. We estimate this sector employs a minimum of 4,200 individuals.

Our research established that:

- **4.78 million people participated in community dance activity**
- **There were 73,203 opportunities to participate delivered by 1,879 organisations, individuals and companies**
- **The total audience for the work was estimated to be 10.36 million people**
- **Community dance reaches the widest range of people:** the research provided hard evidence that community dance reaches people from the ages of three to ninety three, engages people of all abilities, and from every cultural and economic background.
- **Community dance is based on the principle that everyone can and does dance:** therefore community dance activities were, largely, open to all. However, practitioners were making special efforts to reach particular sectors of the population and delivering activities tailored to their needs and contexts – these groups included disabled people, older people, culturally diverse people, people within the criminal justice system, people using health and social services and people regarded as socially excluded.
- **The four central characteristics of community dance are:**
 - Learning the art of dance – its technical skills and how to perform it
 - Making dance as artists – with an emphasis on creativity and artistic development
 - Using dance as a vehicle for personal and social development and to build/recapture community identity and sustain cultural traditions
 - Using dance to better understand issues and ideas of concern to the participants
- **The three main pathways through which access to community dance is structured are:**
 - Regular weekly classes/sessions and workshops
 - Long-term groups with a performance focus
 - Short to medium-term projects leading to performance - dependent on a range of funding opportunities

2.2: Access, Participation and Progression

- **Community dance increases access to dance opportunities:** 78% of activity attracted new participants, 66% new audiences; 57% of participants came from urban areas, 23% from rural areas.
- **Community dance places diversity and equality of opportunity at its heart:** 23% of activity targeted disabled people, 25% targeted people from culturally diverse backgrounds; 24% was aimed at young people (11 – 18) and 14% at adults over 50; 27% targeted socially excluded people.
- **Community dance is responsive to the personal, social, cultural and creative need of participants, and recognises that different people dance for different reasons:** to engage with dance as an art-form, find a sense of self or belonging, sustaining cultural tradition and identity, make new friends and relationships, keep fit, develop creativity, frame their expressive voice and making meaning, bring pleasure and enjoyment into their lives.
- **Community dance is a key route to progression and a bridge to professional training and employment:** what appears to be consistent is that when people are engaged in and by dance they seek to improve and progress, whatever style, form or cultural tradition within dance they are working in. This is as true of the learning disabled youth group established as part of the education programme of Birmingham Royal Ballet as it is of older people working in the former mining communities of the North East, or a group of young men in Peterborough. Other research indicates that nearly 35% of young men entering professional training in contemporary dance gained their experience and ambition within community dance (*A. Tomkins, pub. Animated 1997*).

2.3: The Benefits of Community Dance

- **Our Mapping Research demonstrated that practitioners identified four main benefits/outcomes for dance stemming from their work:**
 - Development of the art form of dance
 - Increased and wider participation and audience
 - New artistic partnerships – other arts and new contexts and venues
 - New sources of funding and new employment prospects
- **and four main benefits/outcomes for participants:**
 - Enhanced art form skills
 - Improved health and well being
 - Enhanced personal and social skills
 - Enhanced sense of community cohesion
- **The participants featured in our film documentary Dancing Nation (pub. 2001), identified the following from their own involvement in community dance:**
 - Concern for quality and pride in achievement
 - An important focus for their lives
 - An opportunity to learn new skills and gain new insights
 - New ways of relating to others based on respect and valuing difference
 - Support in making positive contributions to the community
 - A safe, healthy outlet for frustrations and for overcoming barriers to participation
 - An equal concern for people and art
 - Value for the individual

- **Independent research with the sector confirmed a common range of benefits. As an example, detailed research on the impacts of community dance in a specific community - Dance United's work at HM Prison Styal in 2003 (The Unit for Arts and Offenders, Doing the Arts Justice:, May 2004). - found that:**
 - In addition to the technical dance skills the women developed skills in: concentration, patience, team working, relaxation, self expression and insight into their own creativity
 - Valuable experiences identified by the participants included building friendships, enjoyment, finding out about creative abilities, working with professionals, feeling good about self, trust, new interests, concentration/relaxation and increased discipline
 - Personal development outcomes identified by both staff and participants included: increased ability to mix, less judgemental attitudes, expression of feelings/different side of self, improved self image and self care and a greater sense of connection to their own feelings
 - Social welfare outcomes identified by staff and participants included: breaking down barriers and defences, promoting a positive sense of identity, forgetting problems, communicating feelings/experiences that they could not express through words alone, cooperation, fitness and health, sense of confidence and own capabilities
 - Prison staff noted that some participants 'seem different', the women became more caring towards each other, more animated and changed in physical stance and posture

2.4: Community Dance as Artform

- **Community dance has worked within the traditions of dance as an art form rather than as just a social and/or recreational activity:** art form skills, creativity, performance and developing critical awareness are central to the work. Many of our members see it as an arena for experimentation and opportunity to develop dance as an art form as they engage with new ideas, new people, new venues and new audiences. Over 80% of all community dance activity leads to a performance some of which are small scale or intimate 'sharings' for friends and family, whilst others are large scale, high profile and spectacular.
- **Community dance is an arena where diverse forms of dance from other national cultures and from popular culture have been supported, cultivated and emerged into the mainstream:** it was and is the place where African People's dance, South Asian dance and disability dance were given space and provided opportunity for the professional development of artists, when higher education and more formal professional training was not available and where they had a direct link to a community as audience.
- **Professional choreographers use community dance to learn or extend their craft in working with community dancers:** internationally recognised choreographer Wayne McGregor of Random Dance, for example, continues to choreograph with community groups and sees it as part of a continuum of the work he makes with professional dancers. Working with community dancers often affords work to be made on a scale not possible within the small to middle-scale professional sector.
- **Community dance practice and provision recognises an astonishingly broad diversity of dance styles and traditions:** we identified 42 different forms in our Mapping Research, including Ballet and contemporary dance, folk dance, African People's Dance, South Asian classical dance, popular social dance, as well as a range of 'national' dances.

2.5: Community Dance and Young People

- **There are many routes for young people to access and progress within dance:** within the curriculum of state education provision, provision by private dance teachers affiliated to teaching societies such as the Royal Academy of Dance, prevocational and vocational training, university courses at undergraduate and graduate levels, self taught and community and youth dance.
- **Community dance offers children and young people activities that are appropriate and suited to their needs, learning styles and aspirations.** in addition it provides opportunities that are targeted to different groups based on gender, cultural diversity and disability. In recent years there has been an increasing number of projects where children and young people have worked alongside adults in inter-generational work, thus embedding them within their communities more fully and building bridges between their experience and that of older generations.
- **There is a need for those working with young people to embrace a multiplicity of models of progression in content, approach and dance style taking account of where young people come from, how they learn and where they want to go:** for some young people, personal and social development are more important than dance and those working in the field need to identify value and support these kinds of progression in addition to the development of dance skills

2.6: Community Dance, Education and Life-Long Learning

- **Dance practitioners are an important resource for supporting dance within schools:** individuals, and companies such as Ludus Dance Company specialise in work relating to other curricular areas. Other practitioners have, for example, been working with Creative Partnerships to develop initiatives in schools, and some offer INSET training for teachers.
- **Community dance provides an important strand of extra-curricular dance opportunities for young people that complement other areas of learning:** this includes regular classes for all ages, opportunities to perform and youth dance groups. Importantly, community dance offers continued engagement with dance where this has not been possible within a particular school.
- **Community dance offers the opportunity for people to continue learning throughout their lives:** there are an increasing number of opportunities for adults to participate in and perform dance. The work of companies such as Attik, Green Candle Dance Company, From Here to Maturity Dance Company, and that of individual practitioners, demonstrate that age is no barrier to learning.

2.7: Community Dance and Social Inclusion

- **There is a strong tradition within community dance of practitioners choosing to challenge the boundaries of who can dance and seeking to build connections with communities who are perceived to be outside the mainstream of economic, cultural and social life of the country:** our research demonstrated that over 27% of all activity was specifically targeted at these groups. Arts Council England established the Dance Included initiative in 2002 to support specific work in this area and six projects were supported and included work within the criminal justice system including young offenders, older people, homeless people and young people at risk. Primarily our members seek to be as inclusive as possible. For example RJC

Dance Company known for their work in 'urban' dance are genuinely reaching young people from a wide range of communities in Yorkshire for their community work.

- **Community Dance seeks to overcome the barriers to access and participation experienced by excluded groups:** particular attention is paid to such issues as travel, cost, timing, expectation, venue, availability and physical access. Some initiatives reach specific sectors of the population who might not be able to attend at particular times or feel comfortable being part of an open access group.
- **Community dance is not restricted to taking place only in traditional arts venues:** 65% takes place outside of traditional arts venues thus ensuring it has as wide a reach as possible, such as leisure centres, youth clubs, church halls, community centres and social care environments.

2.8: Community Dance, Sport and Active Lifestyles

- **Dance, sport and physical education have been linked for many years:**
 - There is a clear relationship between dance as an art form and dance as a movement and physical education activity within the national curriculum of state schools
 - There is a Dance and Movement Division within Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR)
 - There have been a number of projects in recent years to involve more boys and men in dance and more girls and women in sport. Including a successful initiative in Yorkshire in the late 90s including dance in the training programmes of Premiership football clubs
 - Dance Leaders in the Community qualifications that still are being promoted within the community dance sector as well as by members of the Movement and Dance Division of CCPR (these were established in the 1980s as a collaboration by the Arts and Sports Councils to parallel Sport Leaders in the Community Awards.)
 - There are a number of professional and amateur sports that include 'artistic interpretation' as part of the framework for awarding marks
- **There is however an innate tension between the two fields of dance and sport - dance as an art form with a focus on expression, creativity and interpretation versus skill-focussed competitive games and individual prowess:** that being said, dance is a physical activity and many of the benefits are consistent with other physical activities – increased stamina, strength, improved physical, mental and social health. With a greater public concern for health and fitness and tackling such issues as obesity, cardio-vascular health, osteoporosis, depression and social inclusion the positive benefits of physical exercise with all sectors of the population has been more widely recognised. In this context dance has an important contribution to make.
- **Dance can and does attract people for whom competitive sport is not an attractive proposition:** community dance has an emphasis on inclusivity and progression rather than 'fixed standard' therefore has a significant contribution to make, as long as it is not simply seen as an alternative health regime.

2.9: Community Dance, Health and Healthy Communities

- **The Foundation for Community Dance undertook some Action Research to look at the contribution of dance to health and well-being. Over 100 responses from initiatives across the country identified five key ways in which community dance was contributing to wider health agendas:** managing illness, care of the sick or frail, health education and promotion, community development and offering alternative lifestyle choices. Community dance

practitioners and organisations work with Health Action Zones, community regeneration initiatives as well as individual GPs.

- **Community dance practitioners have developed their skills and knowledge and are applying it within health-based contexts:** specialist agencies such as JABADAO offer extensive training and research opportunities, whilst some long-standing community dance projects have grown from specific health initiatives, such as Dance for Life in Bradford, which started out as a teenage anti-smoking project. Dance projects in hospitals – such as the Hospital Schools project in Birmingham – use the best of community dance to provide activity and inspiration within the hospital and post-hospital dance opportunities.

2.10: Economy and Investment

- **The economic strength of community dance is the diversity of funding sources:** just 35% of activity receives regular or annual funding from Arts Council England. Other sources of public funding include: Grants for the Arts, local authority arts and non arts funds, the National Lottery, arts and not arts sources, other government departments, and European funds. Trusts, Foundations and some sponsorship also supports community dance activity, though these are far from being a reliable source.
- **Sustainability of financial support remains a fundamental issue for the future of community dance:** an over-reliance on short term project and public funding – and a continued willingness by the sector to produce high quality work within limited resources, and therefore suppressing realistic costs – makes planning for longer-term stability, sustainability and the evaluation of long-term impacts difficult.
- **This work is generating wide interest internationally and the DfID has recently recognised the importance of culture within the development agenda:** community dance practitioners from the UK with the support of the British Council and in partnerships they have developed themselves, are currently making positive contributions in Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America as well as across the newly enlarged EU.

2.11: Employment, Professional Development and Capacity

Routes to employment in community dance include:

- Several university dance departments include community dance as either a component of their courses or as a degree pathway and there are now a number of postgraduate courses specialising in community dance or where it is offered as an option
- University of Birmingham and Birmingham Royal Ballet offer a route up to and including Master's Degree level in Dance in Community and Education targeted at practising dancers working with the company
- Opportunities for people working within dance companies to engage with the community and education projects undertaken by the company and 'learn on the job'. Many companies take this work extremely seriously and ensure that new dancers are properly inducted, undertake team teaching, and are offered mentoring to support quality work
- A number of dance agencies and local authorities run Dance Leader in the Community Awards, largely accredited by the Open College Network
- A small number of companies and agencies that offer apprenticeship schemes for people wanting to work in communities

- Other companies/organisations and individual community dance practitioners have developed specialist areas of work – cultural diversity, disability, health and aging for example that have become a focus for professional development opportunities
- **As in other sectors within dance, individuals working in community dance operate a portfolio of employment and some have established their own organisations as small companies or sole trader businesses to more effectively sustain themselves and their work:** dance companies, dance agencies and local authorities employ staff specifically to undertake work in community contexts with a variety of titles – amateurs, dance development worker, dance outreach worker etc. There are a growing number of opportunities for employment within the health service and the voluntary sector where the benefits of dance are being more widely recognised.
- **One of the most significant things about the community dance sector, is that whilst there are a number of people for whom the work is their main employment there is considerable interplay between their work and that of performing companies and dance agencies committed to widening access and participation and developing routes for progression:** of particular note is work in the field of disability dance. Very few higher education courses have until the recent impact of the Disability Discrimination Act been geared up to accept disabled people. Therefore opportunities for disabled people to gain access to higher level training and develop professional careers in dance has been left to companies such as CandoCo and community based dance groups such as Amici in London, Anjali in Oxfordshire and High Spin in Brighton to provide access to training and performance opportunities.
- **Salaries and pay within community dance continue to be poor:** the only industry standards are Arts Council England's guidelines for Artists Residencies which recommends £150 per day or a pro-rata equivalent of £20,000 per annum for residencies of two or more consecutive weeks. In recent research only two community dance artists were earning in excess of £20,000 per annum (Source: Gibson, R. (2003) *Research into Payscales in Dance. Dance UK/Foundation for Community Dance*). Recent correspondence from one of our members expressed disappointment that full-time permanent posts to undertake community dance development were still being advertised at the £15,000 mark. The continued issue of low pay remains a serious challenge to the retention of skilled and experienced workers within the community dance sector.
- **Continuing Professional Development in the Sector:** there is a range of opportunities to continue to develop the professional skills of people working in community dance and ensure work of the highest quality. The Foundation for Community Dance, in partnership with Dance UK and The Place Artist Development are working with the national network of arts organisations, Creative People to support all those working in the arts to become better at what they do. This partnership is called Work in Dance, and has its own web site workindance.com to provide the range of information advice and guidance tailored specifically for people working across the dance sector.

In addition, the Foundation has developed a framework of skill areas for the professional development of the sector, this includes: art form skill development, professional responsibility and duty of care, capacity building and management and context specific skills and knowledge.

We have established Duty of Care courses nationally that look at professional responsibilities within the context of health and legal issues, and are working with a range of agencies across England to develop additional courses/interventions or to identify existing courses of quality that we will promote nationally. It is our ambition to have a national framework of courses and other professional development opportunities such as coaching and mentoring in support of the sector available by 2006.

3: EFFECT OF PUBLIC POLICY AND INVESTMENT: HOW HAVE PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND POLICY INITIATIVES INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANCE AS AN ART FORM IN THE UK?

- **It is clear that issues of public policy have led recent investment – the introduction of the National Lottery with a concern for ‘good causes’ and the commitment to social inclusion have been key in wider distribution of investment:** there are indications that key Trusts and Foundations, together with the Lottery (not just the Arts Lottery) have distributed funds to include a wider range of dance activity and increased access to dance activities for a wider range of participants and audiences. Community dance practitioners have taken advantage of new funding streams from across Lottery distributors and Government initiatives from a range of departments (Education and Skills, Health, Home Office) to attract additional funds to community dance.
- **The continued debate around policy-led funding initiatives detracting from the rights/needs of artists simply to create art, thus diverting them from their primary purpose, is interesting and will continue:** the Foundation for Community Dance’s position remains that this is not an either/or argument. We need, in dance, the widest possible range of funding options to support artists, access, participation and audiences. Initiatives such as Creative Partnerships, Decibel and responses to the Disability Discrimination Act mean that there has been a genuine attempt to widen the distribution of public funding.

4: HOW EFFECTIVE IS ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND AT DEVELOPING POLICIES, DEPLOYING INVESTMENT AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY INITIATIVES?

- Arts Council England is only at the end of its first year of operation as a unified organisation and we regard the transformation into one organisation as a major achievement, as is the establishment of Grants for the Arts as the main route for the financial support of arts activity from the Council.
- However, we would argue on the basis of anecdotal evidence from our membership and colleagues across the arts that there is still not an equality of interpretation of overall policy and the criteria for Grants for the Arts across the organisation. It would appear to us that there is a challenge in terms of managing expectation to ensure a greater equality of provision across England. There is currently a perceived lack of transparency about the process of how decisions are made rather than the criteria against which applications for funding are assessed.

5: IS PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN DANCE AT A SUFFICIENT LEVEL?

- **The short answer to this is no. Whilst the larger organisations and companies are in a somewhat better position to sustain themselves and the range of activities they undertake, smaller scale and freelance practitioners find this more difficult. And of course, requests for funding support way outstrip available funds.**

- Whilst the community dance sector has become successful at identifying and drawing down funding from a range of sources this often involves small organisations chasing funds rather than concentrating on the work itself – taking them away from their prime purpose as a dance resource.
- We would support a wider range of funding sources that allowed for greater financial investment and greater commitment by the funding stakeholders the sector is working with rather than have one funding source that - even with increased investment - would still not have sufficient funds to address the positive contributions made by community dance.
- The Arts Council is not the only mechanism through which arts funding is, and can be, distributed. Local Authorities are a key element of the funding mix and responsible for considerable collective arts spending across the country. It is unrealistic and unreasonable to expect the Arts Council to be able to meet all the funding requests made of it, though its role as a broker with other funding sources is something we think could be further exploited for the benefit of all.

6: CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- **To increase, sustain and diversify investment in community dance, based on clearly articulated priorities and processes:** to increase access, participation, continuity, progression, and equality of opportunity across the country.
- **To develop a vigorous economy within the community dance sector:** to promote better employment opportunities, ensure skills retention within the sector, and increased remuneration for people working in the sector commensurate with skills and experience.
- **To develop a national framework for continuing professional development:** that is valued for its quality by practitioners, employers and funding partners.
- **To work more effectively with partners in the sports and health sectors:** to ensure that the health benefits of community dance are better understood, more widely valued and supported, and to build on existing dialogue to promote the common and distinctive benefits of each.
- **To continue to place diversity and equality of opportunity at the heart of community dance practice:** removing barriers to participation, promoting dance from the widest cultural communities, challenging historical convention and articulating diverse opportunities for progression in community dance for both participant and practitioner.
- **To further develop the national infrastructure for community dance:** to ensure more equitable provision geographically, capacity for delivery, mobility and adaptability – both in terms of physical spaces/places and skilled practitioners.
- **To continue to raise the profile and understanding of community dance:** and articulate its value locally, regionally, nationally and internationally with policy makers, the general public and the media.