

Making a Move

A strategy for the development of a professional framework for community dance

Information for dance artists

In the spring of 2005 the Foundation for Community Dance embarked upon a journey with community dance artists and organisations, one that began with the questions 'how do you describe what you do, how do you do it and what would help you do it better?'

The responses were fascinating, and presented an enormous challenge.

This marked the start of 18 months' extensive consultation, with community dance artists, organisations and employers, to research the potential for a framework to address the current and future professional development needs of people and organisations who work in community and participatory dance.

Making a Move is the result of this consultation and sets out the Foundation for Community Dance's vision and strategy for developing a Professional Framework that will enhance the professional lives of those who practice, deliver, provide and support dance in community settings.

We believe it will enable dance artists and companies, arts and non-arts employers and support organisations at local, regional and national level to undertake their work more effectively, with greater quality, satisfaction and recognition, and with greater benefit to the communities they work for and with.

This leaflet provides an overview of the strategy: it explains what the Professional Framework is, why it is needed, how it will work, what it will offer, and how we will make it happen.

'With the Framework for support, I feel that artists and practitioners can focus on developing their individuality, finding their pathway and thus extending their value rather than 'fighting their corner'

Anna Daly, Community Dance Artist, Ludus Dance

What is it?

The strategy: Making a Move will lead to the creation of a Professional Framework for Community Dance. We see this Framework as an integration of information, guidance, resources, systems, individuals, organisations and networks that together form a coherent, comprehensive and flexible model of support that will:

- Enable the community dance profession to communicate its core values, standards and commitment to quality
- Give those working in the sector professional affirmation, status and recognition
- Offer quality assurance and accountability to the outside world
- Establish engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) as an entitlement and an expectation of professional practice in community and participatory dance
- Support a diverse, inclusive and accessible professional development culture
- Offer information, resources and guidance to enable individuals to navigate their chosen route into and through the profession

Why is it needed?

The community and participatory dance profession is diverse and vibrant. It is a success story, with an unrivalled range of dance forms and styles, contexts within which it takes place and communities that it touches. It has a skilled and committed workforce that benefits from numerous routes into the profession, with different backgrounds, training and experiences. But it has no immediately recognisable or shared mechanism for defining quality, standards or competence and few means of describing progression and professional status.

Increasingly, the Foundation for Community Dance has received anecdotal feedback from its Members about the ongoing challenge of encapsulating their skills, expertise, training and professionalism in a way that is meaningful and recognisable to peers, employers and the outside world. This 'grass roots' feedback is mirrored by a growing awareness - shared by other sectors with whom we interact across dance, arts, learning and so on - of the implications of government and sector policy on training and skills development.

Add to this mix an increasingly broad range of employers of dance artists and providers of community and participatory dance activities, each with their own set of requirements and expectations, the impact of legal issues – insurance, health and safety, child protection – and a complex picture is revealed.

It is clear that to achieve professional recognition within this bigger picture requires a more robust stance: a capacity to identify and implement common, agreed principles and practice around standards, conduct, competence, legalities, quality assurance and progression. Making a Move places this process in the hands of the profession itself, and will protect its core values and nurture the distinctive features of the practice, supporting ownership and proactive control of future direction. The Foundation for Community Dance will lead and champion this.

How will it work?

The Professional Framework is built around the central idea that quality community dance experiences are best delivered by highly skilled and professionally developed dance artists. The Framework supports this by communicating clear messages around quality whilst setting in place practical measures to enable professionals to progress their practice through engagement in CPD.

It does this through two strands:

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Communicates what we do, why we do it and how we do it: setting benchmarks for quality and supporting the adoption of shared standards. It includes:

A Statement of Values

The principle features of community dance and the values underpinning the practice

A Code of Professional Conduct

Benchmarks for safe, responsible and ethical working practices in community dance

Professional Competencies

The knowledge, skills and attitudes that underpin high quality community dance practice, including additional competencies for practice in specialised contexts

Support

Artists' guidelines, briefings, information and advice; a professional membership scheme; employers' guidelines

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provides support to enable individuals and organisations to progress towards increased quality and satisfaction in their own work. It includes:

The CPD Map

An interactive web-based map of CPD opportunities for community dance professionals across the UK

CPD Descriptors

To assist potential users to determine whether a particular CPD opportunity matches what they are looking for

Information, Advice and Guidance

Support for self-appraisal, CPD planning, career progression etc.

Support

CPD providers' forum; evaluation and feedback systems for CPD; CPD kite-marking scheme

The Framework is 'open', non-linear and flexible so that ways into it, routes through it and engagement with it can be different for everyone. There may be some individuals who use The Framework as their 'roadmap' throughout their professional life, and others for whom occasional usage of particular aspects is sufficient to support their professional development needs and affirm their practice.

The Framework is not a 'career ladder' or a training course, but more of a climbing frame: individuals can enter at any point, see where they are and take any number of routes through, around and onwards towards where they would like to be. In this way, it accommodates existing and aspiring professionals, recognises individual professional ambition and career paths, celebrates the diversity of practice, practitioners and providers within community and participatory dance and embraces the broad spectrum of existing and potential employers.

Where there are particular or pre-existing requirements within specialist areas of practice, The Framework will sit alongside them. Where there are existing models and opportunities for training, accreditation and professional development The Framework will work with them. Our intention is to build on what already exists and maximise resources; not to re-invent the wheel.

Where will it take us?

Making a Move will lead the community dance profession to a confident place where it is able to define and clarify its beliefs, professionalism and good practice, for itself and for the benefit of others. Far from limiting and policing practice, it will protect it, nurture it and sustain it, enabling:

A clear and confident professional voice:

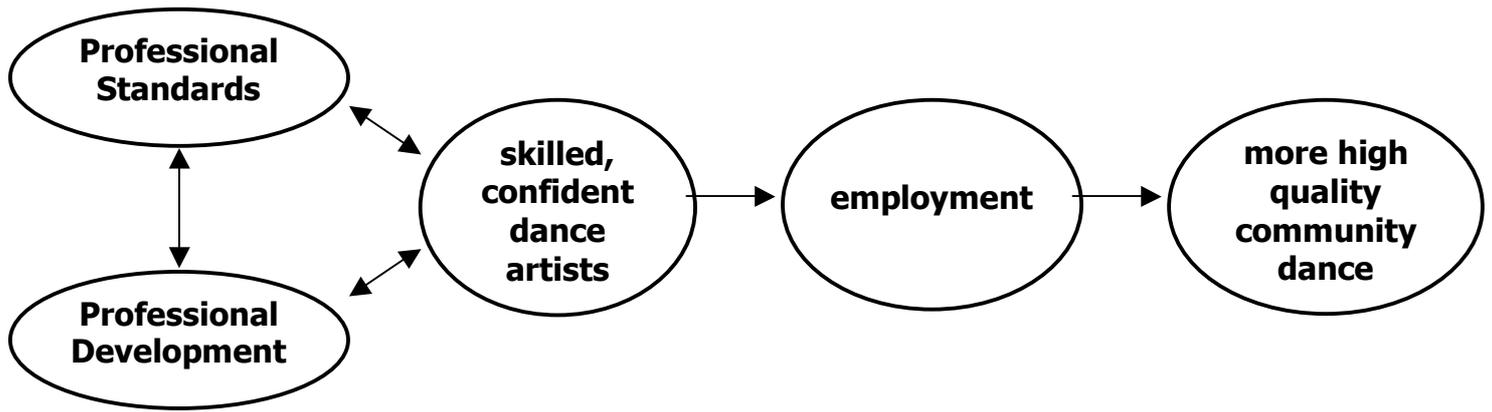
- A professional identity - this is who we are, what we stand for, and what we can do
- A common language, shared understanding and ownership of quality and standards
- Accurate representation and recognition in the wider world

Better quality of engagement:

- Valuing practice that is self-aware and critically reflective: aspiring to excellence - and innovation - in community dance practice
- Providing accountability and gaining trust and confidence
- Quality benchmarks that are agreed and understood across dance and other sectors – enabling a match of expectations between practitioners, participants and employers

Increased options and informed choices:

- Advocacy, profile and clear positioning for dance artists and their work
- More informed engagement with a diverse range of employers
- Clearer signposts to support personal and professional development



Making it happen

Making a Move will be implemented between 2006 and 2008 with a staged development plan of baseline research, commissioning, piloting and launch. This process will be led by the Foundation for Community Dance and will harness professional knowledge and expertise from across the dance and arts sectors.

We will work with individual practitioners and community dance organisations, strategic regional and national dance organisations, employers, CPD providers and non-dance sector organisations, funders and policy makers. Partnerships and collaboration will be central to success.

'We will work with the Foundation to create a suite of professional standards on which to base community dance practice. This is not a constricting process – it creates a sound foundation on which dance practice can be built rather than a cage in which practitioners are required to operate. By defining our own standards we give a clear message to employers in the education, health, community and justice sectors, where many of our practitioners find their primary employment, on what we do and how well we do it.'

Tom Bewick, Chief Executive, Creative & Cultural Skills
Animated Autumn 2006

The process is already underway, and we are working closely with Arts Council England - who have awarded us development funding - and Creative & Cultural Skills, the sector skills council for advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, music, performing, literary and visual arts.

However there is a long way to go. Some things are 'known' rather than written down or shared, some things are out there but hidden or isolated, some things don't yet exist and others need to be revisited and looked at afresh. It is the work of the Making a Move strategy to discover, reveal and pull all these elements together and it is through this process that a dynamic Professional Framework for Community Dance will come into being.

This is an exciting and important journey, and we hope you will join us on the way.

A full version of Making a Move is available to download from the Foundation for Community Dance's website, together with more information about the initiative and an opportunity for you to pledge your support.

Visit www.communitydance.org.uk for more details

Foundation for Community Dance is the UK development agency and umbrella organisation for community dance. Our vision is for a world where dance matters to everyone; our job is to embed participation in dance into society, people's lives and their communities.

LCB Depot
31 Rutland Street
Leicester LE1 1RE
Tel: 0116 253 3453
Fax: 0116 261 6801
Email: info@communitydance.org.uk

Registered charity no. 328392

