

## **Making a Move**

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

### **Information for dance organisations**

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.

## 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:

- Communicate clear messages about the community dance profession: its core values, standards and commitment to quality
- Achieve professional affirmation for those working in the sector
- Offer quality assurance and accountability to the outside world
- Provide clear and consistent information on professional standards in community dance, establishing a common baseline for employment, appraisal and professional support
- Offer information, advice and guidance for individuals and organisations to support professional development planning
- Establish engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) as an entitlement and an expectation of professional practice in community and participatory dance
- Facilitate a more efficient and effective network of CPD provision based on market need

*'A clearly articulated framework which guides an organisation through a carefully researched pathway would certainly help us in our role of supporting new professional dancers, those at the mid-career stage, those wishing to move across from performing or choreographing to education and community work and those looking at roles in administration and management. Such a framework would also complement the work we do in supporting dancers and companies to market and promote their work to new audiences and promoters'*

Christina Christou, Head of Education and Community Department, Akademi

## **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.

Over the last thirty years, community dance has gained recognition as a distinctive area of practice supported by a substantial and skilled work force of dance artists, organisations, networks and a UK development agency/membership organisation: The Foundation for Community Dance.

Its profile and impact within dance and community arts, and its contribution to cultural, political, educational and social agendas has seen an increase in the diversity of settings, providers, employers, participants and models of delivery associated with community dance. Concurrently, the implications of government and sector policies on training and skills development and issues of quality assurance and legal compliance – health and safety, insurance, child protection - have become of greater concern for employers, providers and support organisations within the dance sector and beyond, and to community dance professionals themselves.

The profession has reached a crucial stage in its development, where to achieve professional recognition in 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 a strategic approach to progression and professional development. 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. The Framework is not a 'career ladder' or a training course, but more of a climbing frame: supporting individuals and organisations to get to where they would like to be.

The Framework has been initiated by the needs of professionals working in community and participatory dance and they are its primary audience, alongside their employers and the people who participate in the dance activities they provide. But wider engagement with The Framework is key to its success, and it is designed to meet the needs of a wide range of existing and potential stakeholders, affording numerous points of access and engagement.

For organisations working mostly in community dance it will inform employment procedures, quality assurance and delivery of strategic aims for dance development at local/regional level. For non-sector organisations, its immediate value will be a greater understanding of community dance and what it can offer, and signposting towards networks and potential partnerships.

The Framework will sit alongside existing models for training, accreditation and professional development. It will operate within existing infrastructures for dance, community arts and other professional sectors, creating more opportunities for collaboration across the dance profession and a greater collective voice within workforce development and employment. 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 place where it is able to define and clarify its beliefs, professionalism and good practice. It will facilitate increased confidence in sector professionals and providers, offer clear positioning, and strengthen the case for engagement and investment in community and participatory dance.

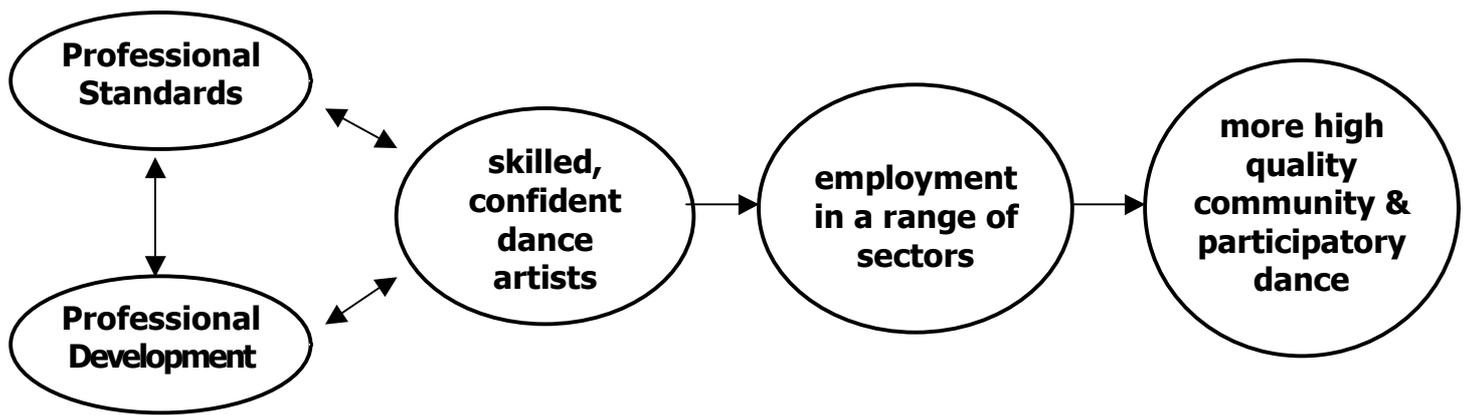
For dance companies, agencies, strategic organisations and employers of dance artists; initial training providers and those who offer CPD opportunities, the Professional Framework will:

### **Help you to help yourself and others by**

- Encouraging excellence – and innovation - in community and participatory dance: supporting practice that is self-aware and critically reflective
- Communicating standards for community and participatory dance practice that are agreed and understood throughout the sector
- Establishing baseline criteria for training, recruitment and selection, informing conditions/contracts of employment, appraisal and pay-scales
- Enabling training and CPD providers to offer tailored support and guidance for trainees, employees and artists that makes best use of national, regional and local resources
- Providing assistance in brokering relationships with employers across a diversity of contexts: helping them to find the quality provision they seek from dance artists

### **Assist the dance sector as a whole by**

- Providing a common language for advocacy to support profiling, marketing and positioning for dance artists and their work
- Facilitating more consistent dialogue and understanding between individual artists and organisations, strategic dance agencies and cross-sector networks



## 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 artists 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](http://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.

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