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# Dance: achievements, challenges and opportunities

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Consultation paper appendix

The dance sector in England has grown exponentially over the past 40 years and is widely considered a world leader. Many of our artists and companies such as DV8 Physical Theatre, Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, Akram Khan Company and Hofesh Shechter Company are in demand internationally. The Royal Ballet is widely recognised as one of the most successful companies in the world. The pioneering work by integrated dance companies such as Candoco and StopGAP is respected globally and has challenged historic stereotypes about who should and could become a dancer. The sector is estimated to employ more than 40,000 people in the UK, most in portfolio careers, many of them employed in the voluntary and amateur sector.

The success of the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* and the street dance group Diversity on *Britain's Got Talent* illustrate how popular dance has become. The latest Taking Part survey shows dance participation has increased significantly – from 8.4 per cent in 2005/6 to 9.7 per cent in 2007/8. England is renowned for the quality and reach of its community dance, and dance makes an important contribution to education and learning among young people and adults. Dance undergraduate numbers have risen by 97 per cent over a five-year period and 11 per cent of Creative Adult Learning classes are dance-related. There has been a recent revival of interest in the benefits of dance to health and well-being and a new Government Dance Champions group has been established.

Our funding historically focused on the major ballet companies, but has diversified in line with the sector itself. In 1969/70 we funded seven dance organisations, compared with 70 today. These include producing and touring companies, a small number of specialist venues and festivals and dance development agencies – all of which act as beacons for both professional and community dance activity. Our role focuses on supporting talent, production and touring and encouraging audience development and participation. We also support national umbrella organisations to provide a range of services for the dance sector.

We have made significant capital investments, for example at the Laban Centre in Deptford, DanceXchange in Birmingham and Jerwood DanceHouse in Ipswich. This funding has enabled

the development of an important network of smaller-scale dance venues. Dance also takes place in theatre and combined arts venues, many of which are starting to increase their dance programming through initiatives such as the Dance Consortium.

Much of our investment is made in partnership with others. We work with local authorities, regional development agencies, trusts and foundations. We also work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, currently with a particular focus on developing a national strategy for dance and young people through the Dance Programme Board and through supporting Youth Dance England.

The recently published *Dance mapping* gives a clear picture of the challenges and opportunities for dance. It provides evidence of a growth in audiences for dance, albeit from a low base, and a better relationship between the work we fund to tour and the organisations that present this work. Lack of time and space for dance in some theatre venues is a challenge, but there are clear dance 'hot spots' across the country that can be built on. Market leaders such as Sadler's Wells (which has increased audiences for dance over the past four years by 56 per cent) are driving new ambitions, working with partners on a large scale and collaborating on co-productions and touring networks with smaller venues.

Choreographers today are more confident in claiming spaces beyond the theatre and playing to audiences beyond the mainstream. Helping artists to continue to deepen and diversify their choreographic practice is central to the future of dance. We need to support both specialist dance and multi-artform infrastructure, both buildings and producers, to develop more opportunities for work to be created and presented. At the same time, in partnership with others, we need to encourage training and workforce development that takes account of changing markets including participation, while continuing to nurture world-class performers and choreographers.

## Our ambitions for dance

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### Goal 1: Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated

We need to aspire to give choreographers and dancers the space and opportunity to create great work that will attract audiences and be the best in the world, supporting companies and individuals who are players on an international stage.

We want to increase opportunities for research and talent development, with enough time to work with dancers in appropriately equipped spaces.

To achieve more opportunities for artists to work across the country, we want to reinforce dance hot spots as catalysts for dance development in the regions. We want to ensure that buildings (dance houses and choreographic workspaces) are accessible to choreographers and companies, as well as to young people, students and wider communities. We want to strengthen the physical infrastructure for dance presentation across specialist and non-specialist spaces.

We want to encourage a sector which celebrates diversity through:

- widening debate around dance aesthetics
- learning from international practice

### Goal 2: The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled

We want to encourage better dialogue between the dance profession and the training sector in response to the education and training issues highlighted in the *Dance mapping* report.

We want to see stronger dance organisations by addressing the shortage of experienced leaders across the dance sector and the need for strategic collaboration and better knowledge and resource sharing among organisations.

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**Goal 3:**  
**More people value and enjoy the arts**

We want to collaborate to raise the profile of contemporary dance, encouraging diversity, new ambition and new audiences.

We want to continue to encourage ballet and large-scale companies to diversify and extend their artistic profile and reach.

We want to encourage a new wave of promoters, companies and projects to generate wider audiences by challenging them to increase links between the subsidised and commercial sectors. We want to find untapped opportunities to tour dance.

We want to explore the potential of digital opportunities while celebrating the wider influence of choreography in a range of creative industries (advertising, music videos, broadcasting, digital, theatre, opera and popular dance).

We want to encourage more grassroots participation. We want to explore ways of connecting current Arts Council and local authority investment to ensure as many people as possible benefit from the complex range of dance 'offers' now in place. We'd like to see improved signposting to these opportunities.

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**Goal 4:**  
**Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts**

We want to see an increase in dance skills and the quality of choreography made for and by young people. We want improved standards in dance teaching. We want to encourage young people both to dance and see dance.

We want to expand opportunities for young people to engage with dance outside school, particularly at secondary level. We want to help to nurture talent development through continuing to work with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to support schemes such as the Centres for Advanced Training (CATS) and the Dance and Drama Awards.

We will continue to partner in a national strategy for dance and young people in and out of school.

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**Goal 5:**  
**The arts sector is sustainable, resilient and innovative**

We want to see the development of the entrepreneurial skills of dance leaders to ensure that companies, artists and producers have a deeper sense of their markets and can position themselves more effectively. We will support dance leaders to better understand and drive the development of an economy to sustain dance creation and distribution, and to design and deliver strategic professional development to support life-long portfolio working.

We want the dance sector to take a more connected approach to advocacy. To support this, we want to explore how to achieve better intelligence gathering to build on the data we have recently collected in the *Dance mapping* report.

## What next?

### Proposed areas of focus, 2011–14

Areas of focus	Supporting
Identify and provide opportunities for the next generation of dance talent through sustained support in a wider range of contexts.	Goal 1
Build long-term strategic relationships between artists, companies, venues and producers to support artistic excellence and audience development.	Goals 1 and 3
Strengthen the national network of dance houses and choreographic workspaces.	Goals 1 and 5
Broker new relationships between dance professionals and the higher education sector to develop a more 'fit for purpose' workforce.	Goal 2
Build a more confident public for dance able to make informed choices and be more adventurous as participants and as audiences.	Goal 3
Increase opportunities for quality dance experiences for children and young people.	Goal 4
Support the dance sector in building sustainable future business models.	Goal 5
Encourage the dance sector to use London 2012 and the Cultural Olympiad as a springboard for innovation and future sustainability.	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
Support artists and organisations to understand and realise digital opportunities as they emerge.	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
Develop awareness of climate change and ensure positive dance action in response to a changing global environment.	Goal 5