



National
Dance
Teachers
Association

National Dance Teachers Association

Strategic Plan

2007 - 2010

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Introduction

- 1 The National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA) is the only national subject association whose sole remit is dance in education. It is a registered charity and limited company by guarantee run on a voluntary basis by an executive committee elected by the membership. Membership stands at 1000 plus and includes individual members: primary and secondary teachers, lecturers in further and higher education, advisers, inspectors, dance artists and community dance practitioners and organisational members: schools, colleges, dance companies, LEA education centres, national and other dance agencies. Most members are located in England, but some are from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, some from Europe and some from overseas.
- 2 Since its inception in 1988, the NDTA has actively lobbied for the place of dance in the curriculum and has played an important role nationally in helping to shape policy related to the quality, nature, range and scope of dance within the formal education sector. It has been successful in raising the profile of the subject at a national level and in contributing to development and dissemination of good practice.
- 3 The NDTA is regularly called upon to attend meetings with government agencies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Arts Council England (ACE). It has strong links with other dance, physical education and arts organisations including the Association for Physical Education (afPE), the Foundation for Community Dance (FCD), ACE and Youth Dance England (YDE) and has been involved in a range of influential partnership projects the most recent of which include working with the Dance Network with Youth Sports Trust and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, Youth Dance England, the Yorkshire based Dance in Partnership Trust and the Association for Physical Education.
- 4 NDTA supports the teaching of dance wherever it is located within the curriculum and actively maintains links with physical education and arts organisations in order to promote high quality learning and teaching in dance. However we argue that it is the study of dance as an art form that offers the greatest potential for the development of a pupils' creative, imaginative, emotional and intellectual capacities, enabling them to find their own voice as creator, performer and critic and through which their artistic, aesthetic, cultural, physical, personal and social development is facilitated.

NDTA Mission and Strategic Objectives

- 5 The NDTA seeks:

To ensure that all children and young people in the United Kingdom have equal access to a high quality dance education.

- 6 The NDTA's works to achieve its mission through:

- advocacy for a high quality dance curriculum
- lobbying for dance to be valued as a subject in its own right
- promoting best practice in learning, teaching and assessment in dance

- working with government departments, outside agencies and others to advise on policy development and supporting the place of dance in local, regional and national strategies and initiatives
- supporting and developing partnerships
- providing and facilitating high quality continuing professional development opportunities for those teaching dance in schools
- providing teachers with, and helping them to access, high quality learning resources
- working to ensure the availability of an appropriately trained workforce teaching dance within the formal education sector
- maximising children and young peoples' experience of working with professional dance artists and their experience of professional dance performance
- strengthening the NDTA's position as the lead subject association for dance in schools.

Context for Development of the Strategic Plan

- 7 NDTA was first established as an association run similarly to many voluntary clubs and societies, without paid employees or an office base. The Association became a registered charity in 1994 but still functioned as a voluntary organisation funded primarily by membership fees and supported by occasional grants. In 2000, the employee was contracted for just three hours a week. Since then, there has been a gradual but small expansion in the availability of paid support primarily through fixed term or project-funded posts. In September 2004, the administrative base moved from the home of the Vice Chair to an office in Lichfield, Staffordshire. Whilst membership fees provide the main source of core funding, the association has benefited from a number of partnership projects, which have provided additional funding for specific initiatives.
- 8 The first Business Plan for NDTA was developed in 2002 and subsequently through annual review has provided a foundation for the association to develop a more strategic approach to identifying priorities and setting targets. This period has been one of rapid change, not only in terms of the dance education agenda but also in the range and nature of partnerships developed, the move to the new office, the increase in the number of paid employees and through incorporation as a limited company in 2005, which began trading in May 2006.
- 9 This is the first Strategic Plan produced by NDTA. It takes account of the association's changing responsibilities and is more encompassing of its full range of work than the current Business Plan. It provides a flexible framework for planning and development, for setting budgets and for annual monitoring and review.

Structure of the Plan

- 10 The plan identifies four key activity strands each supported by a strategic objective and main themes around which the action plan is organised. These strands, objectives and themes are presented in diagrammatic form on the next page. This is followed by commentary on the main strands with an action plan for 2007/08 included as Annex A.

Main Strands and Key Objectives

- 11 The four main strands each with a key objective provide the framework for which priorities for the next three years are identified and organised:

Dance Education: To sustain and extend work focused towards supporting the development of high quality learning and teaching in dance

Governance, Management and Strategic Leadership: To consolidate and develop measures to ensure safe governance, efficient management and long term stability of the association

Communications: To improve internal and external communications

Systems: To ensure that operational systems and procedures are efficient, appropriate and effective.

Monitoring and review

- 12 Progress against targets will be reviewed at the end of the first financial year and used to inform the development of the action plan for the second year with the process repeated at the end of the second year. The main achievements and areas highlighted for development will be reported to members through the Annual Report presented each year for discussion at the AGM.

Risk within the Strategic Plan

- 13 Preparation of the strategic plan has included consideration of some of the key risks facing the NDTA and emphasises the need to embed risk management into NDTA procedures. This is considered further in commentary on the main strands of the plan.

Main Strands and Key Objectives

Main Strands & Key Objectives	Themes
<p>Strand 1 Dance Education</p> <p>To sustain and extend work focused towards supporting the development of high quality learning and teaching in dance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Contributing to national debate and policy development</i> <i>Sustaining current partnerships and developing new partnerships where appropriate</i> <i>Improving the availability of appropriately trained teachers teaching dance in schools</i> <i>Providing high quality continuing professional development opportunities</i> <i>Providing high quality resources and up-to-date information for those teaching in schools</i>
<p>Strand 2 Governance, Management and Strategic Leadership</p> <p>To consolidate and develop measures to ensure safe governance, efficient management and long term stability of the association</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Policy and strategic development</i> <i>Improving and maintaining the efficiency and effectiveness of management structures, committees and working groups</i> <i>Strengthening the NDTA regional infrastructure</i> <i>Consolidating and improving staffing</i> <i>Monitoring physical resources</i> <i>Meeting legal requirements and embedding best practice regarding governance and employer responsibilities</i> <i>Implementing and sustaining business planning based on the Strategic Plan</i> <i>Income generation</i> <i>Strengthening risk management</i>
<p>Strand 3 Communications</p> <p>To improve internal and external communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Improving and maintaining effective internal communications</i> <i>Strengthening external communications and perceptions of NDTA</i> <i>Improving publicity materials</i> <i>Increasing membership</i>
<p>Strand 4 Systems</p> <p>To ensure that operational systems and procedures are efficient, appropriate and effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Refining and documenting administrative and financial procedures</i>

Commentary on the Strands

STRAND 1: DANCE EDUCATION

National Debate and Policy Development

- 14 The NDTA has been consistently proactive in contributing to national debate and policy development relevant to dance in the curriculum. The most recent activities have focused on the QCA futures debate, the KS3 review, the reduction in teacher training numbers, the proposed introduction of the professional standards framework for teachers, the development of GCSE subject criteria for dance and the DfES subject association initiative, some of which are ongoing. It is a key priority of the plan that the NDTA continues to make a full and effective contribution at a national level although, there is a need to address how this can most successfully be achieved.

Partnerships

- 15 The association has worked in partnership with various bodies, agencies and groups for time-limited projects and with others in partnerships that have been sustained over a longer period. Significant current partnerships include working with:
- i) Youth Dance England in the delivery of Dance Links - Making Links, a two year initiative funded by the DCMS through the PESSCL strategy, which aims to increase high quality links between schools and out of school dance providers
 - ii) the Youth Sports Trust and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, to promote best practice in learning and teaching through the Dance Network initiative
 - iii) the Association for Physical Education to publish *A Practical Guide to Teaching Dance* (January 2007) with a linked national CPD programme.
 - iv) the Association is committed to maintaining these partnerships and to developing new partnerships to improve children and young peoples' access to a high quality dance education but needs to take account of its capacity to manage such partnerships effectively.

Appropriately trained teachers

- 16 During 2003 and 2004, the NDTA carried out a Jobs Survey to collect data regarding the perceived shortage of suitably qualified dance teachers. Following the announcement by the TDA to systematically cut PGCE places available for dance over the next three years, the project has been re-instated in order to substantiate further, the evidence available regarding the ongoing shortage.
- 17 The NDTA policy paper Maximising Opportunities (2004) highlights the shortage of suitably qualified dance teachers and identifies the need to work in a number of different ways to increase the number of dance teachers available to work in schools and recognition is made of the contribution made by dance artists. However, it is also recognised that specialist training is necessary and to this end, the association has recently planned and delivered two projects focused on developing the skills of dance artists to work in schools – the Yorkshire based Dance Artists in Education Training project (for Dance in Partnership) and Making Links (for Youth Dance England). However, a much greater ambition is to develop a nationally recognised accreditation

framework for dance artists and other dance practitioners working in schools and it is a priority of the plan to lead and/or where appropriate to work in partnership with other organisations to take this forward.

Continuing Professional Development

- 18 NDTA has a proven track-record of providing high quality professional development opportunities for teachers and other adults, primarily dance artists, teaching dance in schools. The practice of providing themed training days focusing on specific elements of the dance curriculum will continue. In addition to providing its own programme of activities, NDTA contributes on a regular basis to conferences and continuing professional development opportunities offered by other organisations and will continue to do so where possible.
- 19 Since its inception, the NDTA has organised an annual conference, mostly one-day events but including two weekend conferences. It has been NDTA policy that every two years the venue should be located in London and in each alternate year, in another part of the country. Whilst every attempt has been made to use different venues throughout the regions, account has to be taken of where through experience it is known that members are willing to travel. Since 2000, there has been a deliberate attempt to use high quality dance venues, which has been well received by members.
- 20 Although provision of high quality CPD opportunities is a priority of the plan, the capacity to deliver extensive or extended training opportunities is limited without additional paid support. Strategies for financing extra support need to be considered as an integral part of the planning process.

Resource Materials

- 21 During the last few years, the Association has provided three main resources for members: Dance Matters, the website and a dance resource list for teachers. However, whilst each is a high quality resource there are on-going difficulties in consistently meeting publication dates for Dance Matters, in maintaining updates in the information provided on the website and the provision of new resources. The difficulties arise largely from overload in the demands placed on the committee and in managing services that are contracted out. Addressing these difficulties is a priority of the plan.

STRAND 2: GOVERNANCE, MANGEMENT AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Strategic Leadership

- 22 In the absence of a paid director or other employees, the Strategic Leadership Group (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary plus one other committee member) effectively acts as a senior management team with overall responsibility for strategic leadership, governance, management and in keeping the work of NDTA focused towards achieving its vision.

Policy and Strategic Development

- 23 The NDTA Policy Document *Maximising Opportunity* (2004) articulated views of the NDTA membership and sought to inform policy makers of current issues and concerns regarding dance education in the UK. However, since then developments regarding for example, the QCA futures debate, the KS3 review, proposed changes to the 14-19 curriculum, workforce reform, the reduction in teacher training numbers and the proposed introduction of the professional standards framework for teachers make it necessary for NDTA policy to take account of new developments and change.
- 24 The recent DfES subject association initiative indicates that the NDTA may need to make some changes in order to align policy with any unilateral agreement arising from proposals regarding a single council, primary membership packages and collaborative CPD activities. NDTA is part of the Subject Association Working Group (SAWG) and thus well placed to contribute to new developments and to take account of these to inform policy and action.
- 25 There are a number of organisations and agencies' supporting the teaching of dance in schools but the NDTA is the only national body whose sole remit is dance in education. However, because dance sits between physical education and the arts, the association is sometimes disadvantaged and omitted from government policy discussions. There is a need to be continually proactive in asserting the NDTA's position as the lead organisation for dance education whilst exploring the benefits to be gained in strengthening links with other organisations.

The Executive Committee

- 26 The NDTA's governance and management arrangements are unusual in that the Executive Committee is effectively the Board but with responsibility for establishing policy as well as the day to day and ongoing management of the association's business and its employees. Membership of the committee is by election, terms of office last for three years but without restrictions on the number of terms that can be served and all those elected serve in a voluntary capacity.
- 27 The current situation places considerable responsibility on the executive committee and particularly the long-serving members, some who have held office for over fifteen years. It is a priority of the plan therefore, that exit and handover strategies for key officers are established as part of an overall risk management strategy.
- 28 Although the increasing work of the association, particularly with regard to national initiatives and partnerships, is crucial, it has been additional to the work of running a membership organisation. In managing the workload, the Committee has been stretched, far more than is effective or desirable. This has been exacerbated by several changes of staff, relocation of the office base and increased governance and employer responsibilities. Committee sub groups established at the time of developing the first business plan, were no longer felt to be effective. Consequently, some have been dismantled and a more flexible approach implemented to deal with the on-going dance education agenda. The effectiveness of the current arrangements needs to be monitored and considered in relation to additional staffing in the NDTA office.

Regional Representatives

- 29 The NDTA regional structure consists of twenty-seven regions in England, two in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Europe and Outside Europe. The current structure was developed from feedback provided by the first representatives according what appeared to be geographically practical at the time. It is clear that most would appreciate a network of local representatives, stronger links with the Executive Committee and a clearer remit about their role. Additionally, the increasing number of people coming forward when vacancies become available together with the questions asked has indicated the need for a review of current arrangements. This has been supported by the responses from current regional representatives to a survey seeking their opinion regarding role, responsibilities, selection and terms of office. Changes arising from the survey will be implemented during early period of the plan. Further strengthening of the regional infrastructure is seen to be a priority.

Staffing

- 30 During the beginning of the 2006/07 financial year, a part-time General Manager was appointed on a fixed term contract, with a remit to consider how the administrative base of the association might be strengthened and the work of the committee supported. Effective management of NDTA business and the specific responsibilities of the Executive Committee need to be reviewed alongside any decisions made regarding staffing and the NDTA office.
- 31 There is an on-going concern regarding the lack of funding available for a part-time director and an increasing realisation that it is difficult for the association to sustain or implement some areas of work without paid support by people with dance expertise. With this in mind, self-financing strategies will be explored to support and extend its dance education work.

Physical Resources

- 32 The association rents a small office in the Lichfield Business Village at the Staffordshire University, Lichfield campus. Computers and office furniture are provided as part of the contract and the University invoices for photocopying, telephone calls and other consumables. There is also a meeting room, which can be booked as part of the services provided without additional cost. The office is just adequate in size for two members of staff but cannot accommodate a third person. Storage space is inadequate and currently most archive materials are held elsewhere. Larger offices are available but the increase rental costs are above budget unless savings are made elsewhere. For the last two years, executive committee meetings have been held at the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD) in Euston at a relatively low price for a central London venue. The association has no physical resources of its own. Contingency plans need to be in place should use of the current office space no longer be an option thus having implications for budgeting and risk management.

Governance /Employer policies

- 33 Steady progress has been made since 2005 in developing policies and procedures needed to ensure that the NDTA meets legal requirements and expectations of best practice with regard to governance, as an employer, as a company limited by guarantee and as a registered charity. The plan proposes further policy development appropriate to the size and structure of the organisation to ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities in each of these areas. The most urgent of these relate to equal opportunities, the new age legislation and health and safety.
- 34 The NDTA's first staff development policy approved in 2005 included a staff appraisal system, which was successfully piloted as part of the process of developing the policy. With several changes in office staff during 2005/06, the appraisal system has yet to be embedded as a regular procedure and this needs to be addressed.

Business Planning

- 35 The first business plan developed in 2002 provided a framework through which the main functions identified in the plan were used to organise the work of the Executive committee. Since then the plan has remained essentially the same in structure with new sections added which were an attempt to address new governance and employer responsibilities. The format is now seen to be cumbersome and some elements will be subsumed within policies and procedures prioritised for development. Development of this Strategic Plan is an attempt to provide a flexible framework for maintaining the work of the association in a constantly changing external environment without the stability of secure and substantial core income or funding.
- 36 Essentially business planning is focused around one year action plans developed around the themes related to the main strands and strategic objectives of the Strategic Plan. Towards the end of each financial year, the current action plan will be reviewed and a plan developed for the following year according to the progress made, on-going or new priorities and the projected income available for the new financial year.

Income Generation

- 37 Long-term strategic development of the NDTA is severely hampered by the lack of core income to fund the post of director (either part or full time) and another part or full time dance specialist post. It is a priority that during the period of the strategic plan, the committee explores how income might be generated so that the work of the association can be sustained. In the short term, it is proposed that strategies are implemented to generate enough income to pay for specific areas of work to be taken forward.
- 38 Over the last few years, there have been an increasing number of requests for NDTA to work with other organisations or individuals to support CPD initiatives. These have included consultancy work in relation to Teachers TV, CPD provision for individuals / individual schools and specialist projects such as dance training for football coaches in order to help them understand the primary school curriculum. Unfortunately, the NDTA has been unable to position itself to take up such opportunities as a basis for generating income. The strategic plan proposes that issues are addressed and practicalities to be considered regarding quality, capacity and policy with regard to NDTA consultancy, recommendation and passing work on to other individuals/providers and in so doing, to explore how the NDTA might improve its income from such work.

Risk Management

- 39 The Executive Committee has always been mindful of risks affecting the sustainability of its work or its image but the last business plan was the first time that there had been an attempt to articulate these formally and to identify the likelihood and severity of specific risks. This now needs developing into a risk register that takes account of a wider range of the NDTA's work and management responsibilities and through which the Executive Committee has oversight of the most significant risks facing the association.

STRAND 3: COMMUNICATIONS

Internal Communications

- 40 Internal communications are seen to be those between the office, named officers, the Strategic Leadership Group, members of the executive committee, regional representatives and members. These are managed on a day-to-day basis through email and phone calls with strategic business conducted through SLG meetings, executive committee meetings, working groups and the annual regional representatives meeting. Strategic communications to members are usually directed through Dance Matters, which can be problematic in that it is only published three times a year.
- 41 As a channel of communication meetings and working groups are effective overall as are direct emails and phone calls. However, distance and demands on the time of a voluntary committee and voluntary regional representatives causes some difficulties regarding specific responsibilities, following actions through, meeting deadlines and sometimes in responding to members.
- 42 With an increase in business and an increase in paid administrative support, the development of improved and efficient channels of communication between the office and the executive committee is a priority. Consideration will also be given to improving communication between the committee, regional representatives and members.

External Communications

- 43 It is a priority of the plan that the NDTA improves its external communications including perceptions of its position as the subject association for dance. Further consideration needs to be given to the way in which the association is presented externally to individuals, organisations and agencies particularly those who are in the position to influence dance in schools. The plan proposes that the association is more proactive in maintaining both its image and its profile.

Marketing and Publicity

- 44 It is some time since existing publicity materials have been reviewed although some early work has taken place through a working group assigned with the task of reviewing and updating the membership application form. This work needs to be taken forward and extended to take account of all publicity materials to strengthen what is communicated about the NDTA. Increasing membership remains a priority not least because it provides the main source of income.

STRAND 4: SYSTEMS**Administration and Finance**

- 45 Most administrative procedures are well established and overall, very effective particularly those related to membership administration, course and conference administration, advertising, circulation of Dance Matters, receipting cheques and invoicing. Although, some progress has been made in documenting office administrative procedures, there is little in place regarding financial procedures. It is a key priority to develop up to date working documents for both office administration and financial procedures.
- 46 It has been felt for some time that both financial and administrative systems could be streamlined and sometimes more time economical. From the beginning of the 2007/08 financial year, a machine package for accounting will be used. This will, of course, involve a change in existing financial reporting and processes. New processes will be developed over the year and the current Financial and Administrative Procedures document will be revised to reflect this.