

How do you get into community dance and what makes a good community dance leader?



dancefest
participation projects performance

Here's our advice:

- Believe in yourself and be adaptable. It's not a 9-5pm so in the early days you just have to keep going!
- Volunteer and make connections: Identify your closest community dance organisation and contact them. Tell them about yourself and your aspirations and volunteer at lots of different classes and well as those within any area of interest.
- Volunteering with office based employees also if you are interested in funding/marketing/administration/project management.
- Go to class! Get along to dance classes, take ideas from the teacher and find out what's available. DFA (Dancefest adults) is an opportunity for adult interested in and part of dance world to perform
- Be prepared to work a number of part time jobs alongside training - you won't go into full time employment as a community dance leader straight away. Secondary jobs include tax office, garden centre, bar work, admin.
- Most dance workers will do a period of shadowing, mentoring and team teaching for a minimum of 6 months in many different settings: community classes for children and young people, Chance to Dance classes for 55+, schools and special schools projects, care home sessions.
- Mentoring programme (from an experienced community dance leader), gaining practical experience through team teaching; leading community dance sessions with children and young people, adults and older adults. On completion of the initial observations, there will more opportunity to lead regular classes as a freelance artist, which also enables you to work in different settings, for different employers. (Pay scale is at a lower rate to start with and increases dependent on experience).
- Network your way through: Use the Internet to search for ways to promote yourself. As well as asking any dance organisations and contacts to help you, use social networking to promote yourself and search for potential employers.
- Join People Dancing (formerly Foundation for Community Dance), the professional organisation for anyone involved in creating opportunities for people to experience and participate in dance - listings of safeguarding courses, events, conferences and much more (Public liability through People Dancing). The People Dancing website would be really useful, it has various handbooks which the college might like to purchase at some point re community dance, dance and health etc. communitydance.org.uk/people dancing
- Budget and time management: It is rare that you will find a full time position within community dance initially, so be prepared to carry on with a number of different jobs and initially the dance side of work might be only a small part of your working week. Stick with



it, gain more experience and the balance will change, finally being able to quit those uninspiring jobs and focus on your creative future in dance!

What you need to become a community dance worker?

- Public liability insurance
- DBS (former CRB)
- Transport (as travelling across the 2 counties)
- Up to date first aid training
- Up to date safeguarding training

What makes a good community dance artist?

- Be adaptable: Adaptability is at the heart of community dance and the more experience you have in as many different areas as possible, the more likely you are to be successful in your search for work. Contact your local community dance organizations and go along to a wide range of classes with different age ranges, locations and abilities. Whilst most have areas of interest the most employable dance artists are good at working with all ages and abilities. Dancefest dance artists work in community settings, schools and with GP referrals.
- Look after yourself - mentally and physically. Attend class, keep fit and rest/take time out!
- Actively take part in CPD regularly - Dancefest, DanceXchange (Birmingham-based) and other local organisations lead CPD sessions you can be part of. These can be a great way to network too.
- Be prepared to travel! There's a lot of travel involved in your initial years as a community dance worker - from school to village hall and back again!
- Flexibility; in terms of when you work. When starting out you may be advised to accept any work offered, even if it's anti social hours, not great pay or means travelling for miles - just to gain as much experience and make as many contacts as possible.
- Experience and the ability to think on your feet; you don't always know what a group's going to be like and how much experience they've had. Often session plans can go out of the window and you need to be able to think on your feet!
- Hard working and passionate; getting involved in things outside of your paid work, e.g. taking part in classes, performances, going to the theatre, doing courses volunteering and helping out at events. In community dance you have to be willing to give up your time often unpaid to do CPD and be there for rehearsals and performances etc

dancefest.co.uk

info@dancefest.co.uk

01905 611199

Facebook: dancefestuk

Twitter: @dancefest

Instagram: dancefestuk

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