

Welsh community dance organisation, Rubicon Dance, regards National Occupational Standards as “an invaluable resource” for its trainees “to measure their progress at a nationally recognised level”.



Background

Launched in 1976 as Cardiff Community Dance project, Rubicon Dance was one of the first of its kind in the UK. It provides consistent dance programmes, workshops and activities for people of all ages and abilities in a wide range of community settings such as schools, hospices, residential and care homes and hospitals. Rubicon Dance employs 20 members of staff, plus approximately 12 freelance dance leaders who work across Cardiff, Newport and the Vale of Glamorgan in Wales. Successes include receiving the Creative and Cultural Skills Theatre Skills National Award in 2017 and 2018.

Using Dance Leadership National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Rubicon Dance has embedded National Occupational Standards (NOS) within its successful Dance Leadership Training and Mentoring Programme, its internal human resources processes, and its continuous professional development (CPD) activities. Since its launch in 1994, 25 individuals have gone through the training and mentoring programme. Based on the Dance Leadership NOS suite, the programme was developed to address a shortage of skilled dance leaders with the necessary skills to work with and inspire community groups.

Participants of all ages are encouraged to undertake the programme, with former trainees ranging from 23 to 55+, and from a wide range of backgrounds; some with extensive dance training experience, and others with no formal dance training and some who have transferred from non dance careers into the community dance sector. The programme is tailored to individual needs and involves intensive work shadowing and structured mentoring linked to a personal CPD plan. Trainees work alongside experienced and highly skilled community dance leaders and understanding is gained by combining practical experience and observation with supported reflective learning. Trainees are required to provide evidence aligned to the NOS. After completing the programme many trainees move on to work as freelance dance leaders, but continue to receive ongoing mentoring and support offered through a structured CPD plan.

The programme was developed and is led by Tracey Brown, Mentoring, Training and Development Leader. Tracey was a former Rubicon Dance student herself and, after completing her dance training, enjoyed a successful career as a dance development leader prior to joining Rubicon Dance as an employee twenty two years ago. She believes that their “freelancers have got where

they are because of NOS, plus ongoing tailor made and thorough mentoring support. The NOS are well regarded and have credibility in the dance sector”.

As well as using NOS to underpin its training and mentoring programme, Rubicon Dance also uses NOS as the basis of its internal human resource processes, for example, recruitment, performance management and staff CPD.

Louise Lloyd

Former Rubicon community dance trainee, Louise Lloyd, is now a successful freelance dance leader running 23 weekly community-based dance sessions in the Cardiff/Newport area to over 300 people ranging from 3 years of age to 80+. After completing a degree and masters in dance performance and choreography, Louise found that she lacked leadership practice skills necessary to move her career forward. Louise was taken on by Rubicon Dance as a trainee on the training and mentoring programme. Her placement was funded following a successful application by Rubicon Dance for Welsh Government Jobs Growth Wales funding.



Louise believes that the on-the-job training offered via her traineeship *“was the best way for me to get the skills needed to be a community dance leader and witness those skills in action”*. *“Working to the NOS gave me the assurance in the quality of the work I was delivering. It sets a high level of what is expected from a session that the participants deserve”*.

The Future

Rubicon Dance plans to continue to deliver its successful Dance Leadership Training and Mentoring Programme, which Tracey says *“is in demand and highly regarded within the sector”*. It also has plans to further develop its mentoring model and roll it out more widely across Wales and into England.

Source: Tracey Brown (Mentoring, Training and Development Leader) and Kathryn Williams (Director) Rubicon Dance. February 2018