High level summary of the project

1. The primary purpose of this study was to map and compare the various routes into education, training and employment in the performing arts for post-16 learners. In particular the study identifies the defining characteristics of various streams of education and training offered in LSC funded institutions offering qualifications at Levels 3/4/5/6 (NQF).

2. Within this general mapping project there is a particular focus on identifying the potential for rationalising the public funding of provision for exceptionally talented young performers in dance, musical theatre and, drama and stage management. This focus is needed in order to assess whether post 16 learners from a diverse range of backgrounds can access the advanced levels of training required for sustainable employment to be a possibility.

3. As this study was commissioned by the LSC, there is an emphasis on the role of the LSC Dance and Drama Awards (D&DA). These are offered to exceptionally talented performers and stage managers as a capped scholarship scheme and provide access to the highest quality post-16 vocational training. The core objective for the Awards has been to support the continued growth and development of the dance and drama sectors by: ensuring that the most talented students have access to high quality training which will prepare them for productive careers in the performing arts; and to contribute to future developments in the sector based on the effectiveness of the current scheme.

Key findings

4. The D&DA has already proved itself to be very successful in terms of ensuring that the quality of training offered by their providers is of the very highest standards and this has had a positive and systemic knock on effect on other leading schools. There are obvious limits to what the D&DA provision can achieve in terms of access however. It is leading the sector but its resources are limited.

5. The map of D&DA providers and courses supported by the Awards is the result of historical factors rather than being a planned programme of provision which addresses the future needs of the industry and the training sector. Since the inception of the scheme, there has been a migration of providers to HE and the creation of a new HEFCE Conservatoire, which has brought 1000+ FTE places into the maintained sector. There are fewer drama and stage management ballet providers involved in the scheme, the majority of courses in 2005-2006 are for Musical Theatre and Dance. There are only a few D&DA providers located outside of the London and South East area and there are few providers for contemporary dance, or other than European performance heritages.
6. In addition, the training market is more fragmented than it was in 2000. There are a number of different pathways into vocational training other than through the independent dance, drama and stage management providers. There is the new HEFCE provision for instance and the DfES Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) has become the major player in terms of supporting access to specialist vocational training in Dance.

7. There are a number of new national initiatives planned for improving the progression pathways into advanced training for the performing arts which will impact on the Awards, particularly at the pre-specialist vocational stage. These include Arts Mark and Arts Awards (DCMS), Creative Apprenticeships and the Creative and Media Diploma (Sector Skills Councils), the Tony Hall review of Dance provision for the DfES, the allocation of substantial new funding for the MDS and its various programmes, new direct grants to Ballet schools etc. The sector skill council – Creative and Cultural industries – has recently launched the National Skill Academy focussing on stage management training and access.

8. Although there is evidence that the scheme has increased the numbers of men training for musical theatre and dance and evidence that there has been an increase in the numbers of students from low income families, progress has been slower in increasing representation from Black and minority ethnic students and students with certain disabilities. However, it should be noted that D&DA providers have been at the forefront of widening participation to advanced levels of training and has a very good and accountable record when compared to the DfES funded MDS or the HEFCE funded Conservatoire for Dance and Drama for instance.

9. There is evidence which shows an essential need for intervention at the pre-specialist vocational stage in order to ensure that a more representative pool of exceptionally talented performers access the highest levels of training. In terms of dance early identification and access to specialist training is essential and the LSC has neither the reach nor the resources to provide for this. This may be the most significant obstacle to increasing participation in the D&DA and other leading schools.