

Paul Hamlyn  
Foundation

**Art  
Works** | Developing  
Practice in  
Participatory  
Settings

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# ArtWorks code of practice

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Kathryn Deane, Sound Sense  
for ArtWorks Navigator  
November 2014



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## Introduction

ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings is a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative which was established in 2011 and continues to the end of March 2015. It is a workforce development scheme that seeks to meet the needs of artists at different stages of their careers, building on good practice to enhance the existing development infrastructure.

ArtWorks Navigator (one of the five pathfinder projects funded by ArtWorks) has been investigating the usefulness of a number of artist quality indicators: National Occupational Standards (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2014); the developing ArtWorks CPD Credit System (Leatherdale, 2014); and a code of practice (this paper).

## 1 Codes of practice

Codes of practice, or conduct, are rules outlining responsibilities or behaviours of both individuals and organisations. One working definition is:

*'Principles, values, standards, or rules of behavior that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of an organization in a way that (a) contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders, and (b) respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations.'*

(International Federation of Accountants, 2007)

Codes of practice are widely used by professionals, especially in the regulated professions: solicitors, barristers, teachers, doctors, complementary medics, therapists, counsellors and advisers all have codes. These serve several functions:

- they set out how a professional practitioner should behave, in particular in safeguarding their clients: in that sense they are codes of ethics, too
- they are a quality indicator: a practitioner abiding by their code should be providing at least a baseline quality of service to their clients. In a regulated or quasi-regulated profession a code will have teeth: breaches of it are accompanied by sanctions, including disbarment from the professional association (which in a regulated profession means disbarment from permission to practice)
- they are often written by a profession on behalf of their members, ensuring that the commitments in the code are owned by the individual practitioners

Codes are often written as a set of *high-level statements* – each covering a broad topic – with a number of *subsidiary statements* under each one with more detail, unpacking what the high-level statement means in practice. For example, the code of practice for nurses and midwives (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2008) has just four high level statements, starting with 'Make the care of people your first concern, treating them as individuals and respecting their dignity', under which there are five subheadings (eg 'Collaborate with those in your care') each with three to five detailed subsidiary statements (eg 'You must listen to the people in your care and respond to their concerns and preferences').

There are very few codes of practice in participatory arts.

## 2 Towards a common code of practice for participatory arts

In 2011, ArtWorks Navigator mapped a range of codes of practice against each other (Deane, 2013) selecting five codes representative of counselling, music teaching, arts therapy, dance teaching and community arts together with three codes from Navigator partners:

- Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals Code of Practice
- Incorporated Society of Musicians code of practice for private music teachers
- Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK Code of Professional Practice
- Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Teachers of Dance 2008/2009
- Cartwheel Arts Code of Practice for Freelance Artists
- a-n Code of Practice for the Visual Arts
- People Dancing (formerly the Foundation for Community Dance) Code of Conduct
- Sound Sense Music education code of practice for practitioners

It found that all these codes, despite their wide variety, were easily and almost completely mappable against each other at the high-level statements level. This is not surprising. The essence of all of these practices is about a professional leader working with people in their care: the actual nature of that professional work is largely irrelevant to a code of practice which describes the professionalism of a professional working in an ethical way. The paper concluded that

*'The codes mapped therefore provide good evidence that a generic code could be created which keeps its statements broad enough to be generic while not so broad that they become anodyne.'*

(Deane, 2013)

ArtWorks Navigator therefore developed a generic code, testing it in a variety of settings including:

- through the members of Navigator, representing some 25,000 artists and employers involved in work in participatory settings
- presentations and breakout groups in conferences of ArtWorks Scotland, ArtWorks Cymru and ArtWorks North East
- workshops at ArtWorks pathfinder meetings

In addition, 'aligned' codes (see below) from a-n, People Dancing (formerly the Foundation for Community Dance) and Sound Sense have stood the test of time for up to 10 years. These have had significant uptake by practitioners: over 90% of People Dancing's membership of 4,000+ individuals have signed up to its aligned code, for example. Sound Sense developed its aligned code in conjunction with MusicLeader (a Youth Music initiative with 18,000 subscribers), and numerous other bodies and employers use or endorse the code.

Overall, this broad spread of people, organisations, art forms and time under which the code statements have been tested and piloted is firm evidence that the code is appropriate for, and accepted by, the sector.

### 3 The ArtWorks code of practice of artists working in participatory settings

The high-level statements of the ArtWorks code of practice deriving from all the testing and piloting are therefore:

**As an artist working in participatory settings, I commit to:**

- **being skilled in working with individuals and groups**
- **being well prepared and organised in my work**
- **having appropriate artform skills**
- **taking responsibility for my actions**
- **undertaking safe practice**
- **evaluating and reflecting on my work**
- **maintaining my professional competence**

Feedback from testing also made clear a series of *principles* the code would need to operate to, all of which have been addressed in the code's design:

- subsidiarity
- artist ownership
- employer sharing responsibility
- interpretiveness

ArtWorks recognises that it needs to respect existing initiatives and works with them, not as an additional burden to them. This principle of **subsidiarity** means here that organisations with existing codes of practice will continue to use them. ArtWorks will signpost these codes as 'aligned' to the ArtWorks code – providing a 'first stop shop' for codes that these organisations can benefit from.

Regulated professions need to place demands on practitioners, telling them what to do and how to behave, so their codes in turn read as demands placed on practitioners. This runs counter to participatory arts practice which places both artist and participant at its heart. The ArtWorks code reflects this principle of **artist ownership** in its first person language and clear commitment.

At the same time, there was much feedback about the role of the employer. On its own, the code could be seen as a one-way contract, with all the commitment on the part of the artist. In some other professions this is tackled by having equivalent codes for employers. But this presents a number of difficulties in participatory arts – not least the huge variety of settings and therefore employers that artists work with (dha, 2014). The difficulties of achieving a common code across all these different sectors would be great – and the value of anything so created dubious. More useful is the principle of **employer sharing responsibility**, which has been explored in terms of CPD:

*'If we are to generate change, it is important that we work together to influence the 'system' within which workforce development for artists practising in participatory settings operates. We need to consider and discuss together what the responsibility for action is in different parts of this system.'*

(Burns, 2014)

In the code, this 'responsibility for action' is clearly a two-way partnership in which employers need to share responsibility for artists' practice. Each of the high-level statements requires action from the employer as well as the practitioner. For example, an artist can only be *skilled in working with individuals and groups* when the employer ensures the artist has appropriate information on the participants and their aspirations; an artist can only be *well prepared and organised* when the employer has negotiated clear and complete information about the work, for example, around the objectives of a project.

This leads to the last principle underpinning the code – **interpretiveness**. The ArtWorks code operates at high-level statement level only. This allows for the statements to be interpreted in different ways and with different emphases depending on art form, setting or purpose across the spectrum of participatory arts. At the same time, these 'behaviour statements' have the capacity to be challenging. Whatever interpretation is placed on the statements, 'being skilled,' 'taking responsibility,' 'maintaining competence' and the rest are meaningful, professional activities.

## 4 The code in practice

In practice, the code has benefits for artists and employers, learners and trainers, and supporting organisations. For artists, it demonstrates their commitment to quality work; for employers it demonstrates their commitment to recognising high quality practice; for both, it forms the basis of a dialogue through which quality behaviour and practice can be negotiated, whether at generic level or at the level of an individual project.

Learners – whether in FE or HE or as part of their CPD – can use the code of practice in several ways:

- as a checklist of what they are learning – the code statements cover a lot of ground
- as a reflective study tool, to explore differing interpretations of the statements
- to aid employability: signing up to the code is evidence of an artist's involvement in professional networks

Similarly, lecturers, teachers and trainers can use the code of practice as a basis for course material and an assessment tool; perhaps as a way of crediting students using the code for reflective study; and to encourage professionalism and as evidence of students' professional status.

## 5 Conclusion

The ArtWorks code of practice is ready for further rollout. This is possible by a variety of routes:

- a participatory arts organisation with an existing codes of practice can discuss with ArtWorks Navigator ([info@communitydance.org.uk](mailto:info@communitydance.org.uk)) if their code can be 'aligned' with the ArtWorks code
- an organisation without an existing code can adopt the ArtWorks code

- an artist who is a member of either of the above groups can sign up to the code through that organisation
- other artists can – literally – sign up to the code by printing out the last page of this report

The following stage is to develop a web-based micro-site, which will provide:

- reasons for artists, employers and learners to engage with the ArtWorks code of practice
- links to organisations offering a code of practice to sign up to
- directories of who has signed up to the code
- guidance, FAQs, and discussion boards – explaining the code, debating its application

## References

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## Sign up to the ArtWorks code of practice

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- ONE** Are you a member of a professional association in participatory arts?  
Check if your organisation already offers a code
- TWO** If they don't, do encourage them to become part of the ArtWorks Code of practice  
family and contact [info@communitydance.org.uk](mailto:info@communitydance.org.uk)
- THREE** Not a member of any of the above? Print out and sign a paper copy of the code  
here – so employers will know you've literally signed up to the code

The ArtWorks Code of Practice helps to ensure artists provide high quality experiences when working in participatory settings. By adopting the code, artists demonstrate their commitment to quality work. By using the code as a benchmark, employers and hirers of such artists demonstrate their commitment to requiring high-quality practice of those who work for them.

Full details of the ArtWorks Code of Practice are at [www.artworksphf.org.uk](http://www.artworksphf.org.uk).

**As an artist working in participatory settings, I commit to:**

- **being skilled in working with individuals and groups**
- **being well prepared and organised in my work**
- **having appropriate artform skills**
- **taking responsibility for my actions**
- **undertaking safe practice**
- **evaluating and reflecting on my work**
- **maintaining my professional competence**

Signed:

Dated:

# Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Paul Hamlyn (1926–2001) was a publisher, businessman and philanthropist who was concerned about social injustice and disadvantage – particularly as it affected children and young people, and those ‘outsiders’ seeking to integrate into British society. In 1987 he set up the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for general charitable purposes, and on his death he bequeathed the majority of his estate to the Foundation, making it one of the UK’s largest independent grant-making organisations.

The mission of the Foundation is to maximise opportunities for individuals to realise their potential and to experience and enjoy a better quality of life.

[www.phf.org.uk](http://www.phf.org.uk)  
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## ArtWorks

ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings is a PHF Special Initiative working to improve participatory practice in the arts. It focuses on workforce development, seeking to improve training and development infrastructure for artists at different stages of their careers. The initiative began in 2010/11 and continues to the end of 2014/15.

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