

Foundation For Community Dance Information Sheet:



Moving from Benefits to employment
April 2007

This information sheet is intended to provide disabled dance artists with some useful contacts to go to for more detailed advice on seeking employment or becoming freelance, and the possible effect of this on the receipt of benefits.

Information is provided for guidance only and is correct at the time of going to print. We strongly urge you to take specialist advice if you are thinking about seeking employment or becoming freelance.

Starting in employment

It is a good idea to talk to people about this – such as a Job Centre adviser if you have one at the jobcentre and/or friends and family. The bigger the network of support you have, the easier it may be to make changes to help you stay in work. Lots of people will have a strong interest in you staying in work and may be able to suggest equipment, extra support, training or adjustments that can help you over potential difficulties. It may help to know that if things don't work out, as they won't for some people and through no fault of their own, there may be the option of moving back very easily onto benefit. (See the information on the 52-week linking rule).

What about working for myself?

There are many reasons why you might consider going freelance and working for yourself as many community dance practitioners do, enabling you to manage your own time and lead your own creative projects. This can be quite daunting but membership of organisations such as the Foundation for Community Dance can help in providing you with some practical information and support and in connecting you to a network of other freelance dance artists.

Is there any support to help me?

When considering work, it's important to identify what support you currently have and how you can use this to help you in seeking employment and becoming employed or self-employed. You may already have support from family and friends, social services, medical services, supported housing and so on. It is important to link up your support networks and keep them informed of your plans. Your current networks may be able to support you with your work, including day-to-day practical support, filling in job or funding application forms, going to see employment support agencies, dance organisations or disability arts organisations. There is a lot of free support available to anyone considering working for themselves and it is sensible to get as much help as possible before starting up. Some useful contacts are listed at the end of this Information Sheet. You can also get support

from the New Deal scheme while you are trying to start your own business. The Access to Work scheme (see below) can help with equipment and support.

Jobcentre Plus - Disability Employment Advisers

If you need additional employment support because of a disability, whether working for yourself or someone else, your local Jobcentre Plus office can advise in a number of ways. It can provide information about vacancies, employment schemes and benefits.

There are Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) based in job centres who can provide specialist advice and support designed to meet your individual needs. Your DEA can discuss your current employment situation and can work with you to plan the best way into work. If you're concerned about losing the job you're already in because of your disability, the DEA can provide advice to you and your employer and explore practical ways to help you keep your job. If you are interested in going freelance and becoming self-employed then your DEA can advise of your best route into self-employment. Together, you will draw up an action plan to help you move into employment or keep your existing job.

Jobcentre Plus work schemes and programmes

Access to Work

Access to Work (AtW) is a tailored scheme designed to help you and your employer at work or support you in becoming self-employed. Access to Work advisers provide advice and practical support to disabled people and their employers to help overcome problems at work. AtW advisers can provide money to help you with travel expenses to interviews, support at interviews and support in your job. They can carry out assessments of work areas and make suggestions for essential or useful changes, help with payment for support workers, equipment, and adaptations to equipment and premises. Applications for Access to Work support are usually made by the employee but generally in coordination with the employer.

Job Introduction Scheme (JIS)

It's not always easy to be sure if a particular job or work environment will suit you because of your disability. If you are keen to do a job, but have some practical concerns about your disability that make you hesitant about accepting it then the Job Introduction Scheme can help. It pays the employer an allowance to train you to do the job and offer support. It can ease the way for the first few weeks of your employment - typically for the first six weeks. During this time your employer will pay you the usual rate for the job. The job can be full or part time, but must be expected to last for at least six months and JIS must be applied for before you start your job.

Work Preparation

This is an individually tailored programme, lasting up to thirteen weeks. It helps people to gain the skills and experience needed to enter the workplace after a long period of absence. Work preparation helps with identifying the most suitable work for you, providing experience in a work environment, learning new skills and updating old ones. The programme is run together with voluntary, private and public sector organisations.

WORKSTEP

This is a programme that helps disabled people to get and keep employment, aiming to provide support to people facing complex barriers at work. The scheme is run by Jobcentre Plus along with organisations from the voluntary, private and public sectors. Whilst on the scheme the person receives individual support in finding and keeping suitable, paid employment. The WORKSTEP supplier will support both the individual and the employer to get the most out of the opportunities that the job provides. WORKSTEP can also be used if a person is 'at risk' of losing their job. In this case the provider will work with both employer and employee to identify any changes to the workplace, training or other support necessary to keep the job going. Support to employers as part of the schemes does not replace the responsibilities required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

For further information: For details of any of the above schemes contact the Disability Employment Adviser at your nearest Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus. To find your nearest Jobcentre go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

New Deal for Disabled People

This scheme is designed to support you in moving from disability and health related benefits into paid employment. It can also provide support towards self-employment. It is entirely voluntary so you can decide whether or not to participate. It works through a network of Job Brokers. Job Brokers can give you: advice about how to get a job; help with matching your skills and abilities to what employers need; and support on starting work or becoming self-employed. Different Job Brokers can offer different services, so it's worth getting the details of as many as you can in your area and then registering with the one that best suits your needs. Your Job Broker will also understand the barriers that might make it difficult for you to work, such as mobility issues or lack of confidence, and they will try to help you with these.

For further information: go to www.direct.gov.uk or call the helpline Tel: 0800 137 177. To find the Job Brokers in your area visit www.jobbrokersearch.gov.uk, or you can visit your nearest Jobcentre, Jobcentre Plus. To find your nearest Jobcentre go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

Working while claiming benefits – 'Permitted Work'

You cannot usually work while you are getting Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, National Insurance Credits or Income Support because of illness or disability. However, you may be able to do some types of work - within limits. This is called Permitted Work. The Permitted Work rules were introduced to allow a person to work less than sixteen hours a week for a specified period of time without affecting their benefits or their eligibility for incapacity benefit. You may find it useful to try out work to see if it is suitable and perhaps gain new skills, whilst staying on incapacity type benefits.

Permitted Work is a benefit arrangement - employers do not offer 'permitted work'. You do not need approval from your doctor or have to have a medical test just because you are doing permitted work. However, if a medical test is due as part of your ongoing benefits-related review, it will go ahead as planned.

This can be a useful introduction to work but remember that it is time-limited and that the maximum amount you can earn may affect non-incapacity type benefits, such as Housing Benefit. However, many people find it a risk free way to try out work, including self-employment. You should check with your local Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus office before you start.

Supported Permitted Work

Supported permitted work is work done with the ongoing support or supervision from a professional caseworker (employed or engaged by a public body or voluntary organization). This could be work done in the community or in a sheltered workshop. It also includes work done under medical supervision as part of a hospital treatment programme.

Effect on benefits - if you get Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and you do Permitted Work, any earnings will be taken into account when assessing these benefits. You can work and earn up to the Permitted Work limit - which varies depending on the type of permitted work you do - and this will have no effect on you receiving Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance.

Income Tax - if you start Permitted Work, you may be liable to pay tax on your extra income. You should notify the HM Revenue & Customs as soon as you start work.

For further information: Contact the Disability Employment Adviser at your local Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus office. To find your nearest Jobcentre go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

The Incapacity Benefit linking rule

Linking rules mean that you may be able to reclaim a previous rate of benefit if you stopped receiving Incapacity Benefit when you started work or a training programme but you fell ill again, or your disability meant that you could not carry on working. So if you are on incapacity related benefits, it is possible to go back onto these benefits without reapplying if you can't stay in your new job or self-employment because of your health or disability. You may need your doctor to confirm these reasons.

There are three different linking rules: 8-week linking (for people who have been on Incapacity Benefit for **less** than 28 weeks), and 52-week and 2-year linking (for people who have been on Incapacity Benefit for **more** than 28 weeks). To qualify for the 52-week and 2-year linking rules you must meet different requirements that your Disability Employment Adviser can tell you about.

In order to claim this protection, when you **cease** claiming benefit you must write to the benefits agency stating that you want to be covered by the relevant linking rule (you should automatically be eligible but this should make sure). You should receive a letter stating that you have this protection and you should keep this letter in case you need it later. People starting work naturally hope that they will not need this protection. If you take this simple precaution, you may feel more confident about trying out work, as it gives you up to a year to see if things settle down and whether work makes you better off – in financial terms and in terms of your own well-being. In some cases, similar protection exists for mortgage repayments.

If you benefit from one of the Incapacity Benefit linking rules you can try work secure in the knowledge that if it does not last, you will be able to return to claiming during this period of time without having to re-qualify for your benefits.

For further information: Contact a Disability Employment Adviser, Benefit Adviser or New Deal Adviser at your local Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus office. To find your nearest Jobcentre go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

Working Tax Credit

If you are aged sixteen or over and are disabled then you may be able to receive Working Tax Credit. It is for people who are employed or self-employed (either on their own or in a partnership), who: usually work sixteen hours or more a week, are paid for that work, and expect to work for at least four weeks.

For further information: www.direct.gov.uk

Some useful contacts & resources:

Advice Agencies:

Ask Mencap

Ask Mencap is Mencap's information service on learning disability issues, organisations and services. They have produced a number of factsheets including one on Work and Employment. This is available on their website.

Tel: 0808 808 1111
Textphone: 0808 808 8181
Email: help@mencap.org.uk
Website: www.askmencap.info

Business Link

A business support, advice and information service managed by the Department of Trade and Industry. They have offices around the country. Search online for your local office.

Tel: 0845 600 9006
Text: 0845 606 2666
Website: www.businesslink.gov.uk

Directgov

Directgov is the website of the UK government which contains information about all public services.

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

The DRC is an independent body that works with disabled people, employers and service providers to find practical solutions for everyone. Many disabled people still don't know that they are entitled to rights and assistance in their daily lives and employers and service providers often aren't sure how to help. The DRC has been set up to advise. You will find further information about moving between work and benefits in the Employment section of their website.

Address: DRC Helpline
FREEPOST MID02164,
Stratford upon Avon
CV37 9BR

Tel: 08457 622 633
Textphone: 08457 622 644
Fax: 08457 778 878
Website: www.drc.gov.uk

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

HMRC is the new department responsible for the business of the former Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise. They can answer queries relating to tax and tax credits and forms can be downloaded from their website.

Tel: 0845 6055999
Minicom: 0845 366 7805
Email: helpdesk@ir-efile.gov.uk
Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus

To find your local Jobcentre Plus office visit their website.

Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

The National Federation of Enterprise Agencies (NFEA)

The NFEA is the membership body for Local Enterprise Agencies, and other like-minded organisations, in England. It forms a network of independent, not for profit local agencies committed to responding to the needs of small and growing businesses by providing a comprehensive range of services. In particular they target pre-start, start-up and micro businesses, helping develop their ability to start and sustain themselves, and to encourage growth and stability. To find out about the wide range of business support services available in your region, contact your local NFEA Member. You can locate them via the website.

Address: 12 Stephenson Court
Fraser Road
Priory Business Park
Bedford
MK44 3WH
Tel: 01234 831623
Email: enquiries@nfea.com
Website: www.nfea.com

The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust supports young disadvantaged people (18-30) to start their own businesses.

Address: 18 Park Square East
London
NW1 4LH
Tel: 0800 842 842 to be put through to local office
Tel: 020 7543 1234
Fax: 020 7543 1200
Textphone: 0207 543 1374
Website: www.princes-trust.org.uk

Disability Organisations:

Blind Business Association Charitable Trust (BBACT)

BBACT is a not-for-profit organisation which provides support for people who are blind or partially sighted and in self-employment.

Address: 29 Quantock Rise
Shepshed
Leicestershire
LE12 9JR
Tel: 0845 045 0696
Email: info@bbact.org.uk
Website: www.bbact.org.uk

Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunities is a national charity helping people with disabilities find and retain work. They also provide a wide range of support and advice to employers on disability and employment issues.

Address: Crystal Gate
3rd Floor, 28-30 Worship St
London
EC2A 2AH
Tel: 020 7448 5420
Fax: 020 7374 4913
Minicom: 020 7374 6684
Email: info@eopps.org
Website: www.opportunities.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)

The RNID has a fact-sheet written specifically for deaf people who want to set up their own businesses.

Address: 19-23 Featherstone Street
London
EC1Y 8SL
Tel: 0808 808 0123 (freephone)
Text: 0808 808 9000 (freephone)
Fax: 020 7296 8199
Email: informationline@rnid.org.uk
Website: www.rnid.org.uk

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

The RNIB offers Employment Officers, Job Placement Officers, Technology Officers and Post-Compulsory Education Officers throughout the UK who can discuss employment and career options. The employment section of their website provides information for blind and partially sighted job seekers and the services and support available. You can also download a fact-sheet entitled 'Career support and job seeking resources – employment fact-sheet'. This helps you to locate the RNIB Regional Education and Employment Centres who can offer further advice.

Address: 105 Judd Street
London
WC1H 9NE
Tel: 0845 766 9999
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Website: www.rnib.org.uk/employment

Arts-related Organisations and information:

CreativePeople

CreativePeople is a web-based national network providing information, advice and guidance on professional development to support all those who work in arts and craft industries in making the most of their careers.

Email: info@creativepeople.org.uk

Website: www.creativepeople.org.uk

Dada-South

Dada-South is the disability arts development agency for the South East region. They have produced a fact-sheet entitled 7 Steps to Business Start-Up. This can be downloaded from their website.

Address: PO Box 136

Cranbrook

Kent

TN17 9AD

Tel/Fax: 01580 714642

Email: info@dada-south.org.uk

Website: www.dada-south.org.uk/bookfactsheets.php

Deaf and Creative

This web site is aimed at young d/Deaf people at various stages of their education who are interested in a career in the arts and creative industries. It provides information on going to university, getting a job, starting a business, doing further qualifications, getting funding and job vacancies.

Website: www.deafandcreative.ac.uk

Foundation for Community Dance

The Foundation for Community Dance is the UK development agency and umbrella organisation for community dance. Its vision is for a world where dance matters to everyone, and mission to make participation in dance vital to society, people's lives and their communities.

Tel: 0116 253 3453

Fax: 0116 261 6801

Email: info@communitydance.org.uk

Website: www.communitydance.org.uk

Mouse on the Move

Alan Martin is a disabled dance practitioner who has made the move from being on benefits to becoming self-employed. He has started his own business under the trading name of 'Mouse on the Move'. You can read his personal accounts of his experiences on his website.

Website: www.mouseonthemove.co.uk

POTENTIAL

This Information Sheet has been produced as part of Potential, a strategic programme of the Foundation for Community Dance which focuses on dance and disabled people. The main aim of Potential is to improve the access to and quality of opportunity for disabled people who wish to engage with dance either as a recreational activity or as a professional opportunity.

The programme includes monthly Potential Email Updates that contain information about events and opportunities relating to dance and disabled people. This is a free, international service and is a useful mechanism to ensure you stay up-to-date and connected with what is happening in this area of work. To subscribe to receive the monthly Updates send an email to potential@communitydance.org.uk with "subscribe" in the subject heading.

The Foundation for Community Dance have produced other Information Sheets relating to dance and disabled people. These include; Dance and Disability Contacts and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). These are available to download from the website: www.communitydance.org.uk.

The website also includes information about current professional development opportunities and job vacancies. Members of the Foundation for Community Dance also receive weekly jobs e-newsletters which list UK dance vacancies. Information about membership can also be found on the website.

The Foundation for Community Dance is the UK development agency and umbrella organisation for community dance.

Our **Vision** is for a world where dance matters to everyone, our **Mission** to make participation in dance vital to society, people's lives and their communities.

We believe that dance can transform the lives of individuals, groups and communities and that everyone has the right to experience dance regardless of where they live, their age, gender, race, disability, economic circumstance or culture. It creates opportunities for people to develop positive relationships with their communities; provides art-form skills; is inclusive; promotes ownership and belonging; contributes positively to fitness and well-being, community development and regeneration, inclusion, education and learning.

The Foundation supports a membership of 1,600 individuals and organisations - a hub of professionals and supporters - representing 4,400 dance artists and teachers, dance-makers, companies, organisations, agencies and venues; universities and training establishments; funding bodies, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations. The Foundation is a regularly funded organisation of Arts Council England, and has received project funding from the Big Lottery Fund, EQUAL/European Social Fund, Millennium Commission and arts lottery funding.

Our activities are outcome-focussed and aim to achieve:

- **Access, participation and progression in dance for all** by encouraging new opportunities for participation; facilitating dialogue; promoting participatory dance and its benefits; building networks of likeminded people and organisations.
- **Recognition of the importance and role of dance in people's lives** through lobbying and campaigns; profiling health benefits; supporting engagement with diverse people and communities; presenting positive diverse images, evidence and stories to reveal the impacts of dance.
- **Greater understanding between diverse communities through participation in dance** by raising awareness of barriers/signposting strategies to overcome exclusion; targeting disabled people and BME groups as participants and leaders; leading debate about inclusive practices.
- **Quality assurance for dance practitioners and their employers, participants and their communities** through a Framework of skills, practices and codes of conduct; membership packages to help practitioners/organisations to better serve communities; a map of routes for progression; geographic and focus-based networks.
- **A dance profession, and audiences for dance, supported by services and information resources about participation in dance** through a web site and publishing; technical services; information, advice and guidance to professionals; signposts and resources about participating.

For further information about our work, or to find out more about becoming a member, visit www.communitydance.org.uk or call +44 (0)116 253 3453

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A Partner in
CreativePeople