

Research Tender - Barriers to Progression & Employment in Dance for Disabled People

**Invitation for expressions of interest to undertake
this new research | Deadline: 3 June 2024**



Photographer: Philip Hatcher-Moore. Dancer: Krystal Lowe
11 Million Reasons to Dance: Cymru, commissioned by People Dancing



The Working Group

Candoco Dance Company, Corali, People Dancing, Stopgap Dance Company & TIN Arts are co-collaborators in a shared enquiry and Working Group to challenge ourselves and others to increase and sustain presence and representation by disabled people in the dance workforce and its leadership.

We mean business. The Working Group will act with focus and solidarity through long-standing shared histories and collaborations to:

- Strengthen & renew connections, practices and shared project activities.
- Amplify diverse voices and engage widely in dialogue.
- Catalyse change, influence and activism with new thinking, critical reflection, and tangible actions.

Working Group members are all National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) of Arts Council England.

For the purposes of this document when using the term ‘disabled people’ we mean this to include but not be limited to, people who define as D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, or who are chronically ill, have a learning disability or live with impairments or mental health conditions. We also understand that our terminology and language may not fully represent or be the preferred descriptive definition for all individuals who define as having a disability, condition or impairment.

When using or referring to the term ‘dance’ in the context of this document and the research more broadly, we mean this to include disabled people dancing, disabled artists, disabled producers, arts professionals and leaders working in dance, disabled people working within dance organisations, freelance disabled dancers, and disabled dance participants and volunteers, paid or unpaid.

Context

In 2019/20, the Diversity Data Report of Arts Council England revealed that disabled people made up just 5% of the workforce of core funded Dance organisations, the lowest percentage against all other artforms. The Department for Work and Pensions estimated that for 2020/21, 24% of the population identify as disabled/have a long-term health condition. In more recent Arts Council England released data for 2020/2021 - 2022/23:

- Only 9% of the workforce are disabled, with 8% being artists.
- Only 8.5% of National Lottery Project Grant applicants in dance are from disabled people, compared to 15.6% in theatre and 15.3% in visual arts (2022/23).

The Research Brief

The Working Group aims to change this through a new research programme, and by doing so increase disabled representation in dance. Disabled people will continue to have prominent roles as leaders, managers, and artists through our respective companies, but inclusive dance organisations like us cannot work alone to change this landscape. The evidence indicates that the work we have been doing individually and collectively over the last three decades has not been enough. We need more tangible action from other dance organisations to shift things further. It is our belief that our sector colleagues must implement a meaningful, long-term change programme in better collaboration with us and with each other.

To inform this change programme the Working Group wishes to appoint an independent disabled researcher/s (or co-led with a disabled or person/s with lived experience researcher/leader) or organisation or agency which has a disabled person within the team, to undertake a nationwide investigation that brings together individuals, groups and organisations in the sector to identify systemic barriers that prevent disabled people from entering, sustaining and progressing their careers in the dance sector.

This research is supported by Arts Council England and the overall aim is to gather and analyse current data and evidence so that we can identify and prioritise changes that the sector needs, and develop collaborative and impactful actions, leading to further research and/or projects that will monitor progress of sector change.

The research findings aim to establish priorities and actions to bring about change, and bring the sector together to engage in the co-design of an effective long-term action for change programme that enables all of us to work strategically and collaboratively to improve the representation of disabled people in dance. We recognise that systemic change will take several years, and that we must be pragmatic.



Photographer: Sean Goldthorpe. Dancer: Sian Green

11 Million Reasons to Dance - Inspired by Black Swan - commissioned by People Dancing

The research set out in this brief should:

- Represent diversity and intersectionality and lived experiences within disability
- Represent dancers, disabled artists and practitioners, and leaders at all career levels within the dance sector
- Be collated, represented and presented with full accessibility
- Identify barriers to progression, engagement and employment for disabled leaders and dancers with a multitude of working contexts that exist in dance and the arts, including within funded organisations
- Create a mapping of disabled dance artists and leaders across the UK
- Formulate and identify concise action points that based on the research findings will make positive changes in the long term.

Who will be involved and what they will be asked?

This document details some of the initial 'thinking' of the Working Group members, but it is expected that as part of the recruitment stage, and then appointment, the researcher/s will inform/design the detailed process and bring forward creative thinking, approaches and methodology for data collection within this brief.

1) Member organisations of the Working Group:

The Working Group will steer the research project alongside invited representatives including from the sector & funders who will form part of a steering group. As a part of the research, the member organisations of the Working Group will share information with the researcher(s) about:

- What work we have undertaken to date?
- Our perception of how our impact could be enhanced (including our shortcomings, as well as external hindrance we experience)
- The extent of our own knowledge of other non-regularly funded groups, independent practitioners, artists, and leaders
- The extent of our current roles as disability led and or focused organisations within the sector, and our potential future roles.

2) The Steering Group:

The Steering Group will be made up of some of the Working Group members, plus invited representatives from the sector & funders including people. The Steering Group will:

- Share useful information, articles, networks, databases and individuals to approach, or consult with to support with the delivery of the brief
- Help to ensure that the work represents the intersectionality and broad lived experiences within disability
- Support the researcher/s through the steering of the overall work through guidance, advice and support when needed.

2) Disabled independent professional dancers, leaders, teaching artists and community practitioners and groups:

It is fundamentally important that these individuals and groups are consulted with and represented accurately within the research. The final report cannot be validated without examining their perception and in depth lived experiences. We know there are many individuals and groups who are doing *good* work in the sector already, whose efforts have gone on under the radar of regularly funded dance organisations. As a result, we firmly believe there is a disconnect between what is happening on the ground and what is being picked up by the dance organisations.

Our proposition is that these dancers, practitioners and groups should be approached first to frame and inform the set of questions that we ask the dance organisations. These individuals and groups should be asked:

- Who are the disabled leaders and pioneers?
- Their own perception of barriers to entering/progressing in the sector and what current opportunities they know exist

- The understanding of 'others' access needs within the sector
- What they have undertaken to develop their or other skills/careers
- What opportunities are there for disabled dance artists, and where?
- Their experience of previous engagement with funded dance organisations.

Working group members all have extensive contacts, listings and access to disabled and non-disabled artists and dancers and can provide mailing lists and connections to other networks to support this level of consultancy needed.

3) Funded Dance Organisations and training providers:

The statistics as listed above evidence inadequate engagement from core funded organisations and the limited number of applicants to Project Grants. To improve on these statistics, we envisage that the research will primarily focus on engaging with funded dance organisations, who have a remit for:

- Artform development
- Education and training (Conservatoires, universities and grassroots training)
- Touring.
- Presentation and showcasing.
- Participation and community engagement.

The research will identify from dance organisations:

- Knowledge gaps
- Perception/prejudice about disabled dance practitioners, leaders, and managers
- Operational and logistical barriers
- Why has disabled representation not been a priority to date.

It is anticipated that all the respondents will be asked for their geographical location, so that the research can create a map of independent disabled practitioners, groups, dance organisations and inclusive dance organisations (including NPOs).

Desk-based research & a literature review:

- The research should also pool evidence and reports from existing publications and aligned research. Though not exhaustive, some examples of these publications are detailed below.
- The research is also expected to conduct deeper dives into the Arts Council's diversity data from previous years to establish a narrative for disability and dance in recent history and to set a clear baseline.

Timescale

The Working Group will disseminate the brief in May 2024 with a view to interviews and pitches taking place in early June 2024. The researcher/s should aim to start the work in July 2024, then presenting a draft report and initial findings to the Working Group in Jan 2025. The final report and call to action will be published in February 2025, followed by an evaluation and wrap up in March 2025. The Working Group will host a national event in 2025 in which findings will be presented and shared within the sector.

May 2024	Call out for researchers.
June 2024	Interviews and pitches.
July/Aug	Meetings with Working Group.
Oct 2024	Share findings and present to Working Group.
Nov 2024	Share findings presented at industry wide seminar.
Jan 2025	Draft report shared with Working Group.
Feb 2025	Final report and call to action presented & disseminated across sector.
March 2025	Evaluation and wrap up.
During 2025	Shared findings through joint symposium with NPO partners.

Conducting this research as above will enable those involved in the research to identify a set of assumptions and create a set of collective actions for a sector-wide solution. It is expected that the initial change programme will run for 2024-2026 with further work to be agreed for 2026/27 onwards (in keeping with NPO planning cycles). It is also hoped that the research and subsequent action plan can support positive and immediate change within dance organisations and the wider arts sector.

Whilst this timeline has been laid out for transparency, the Working Group supports any reasonable adjustments, access needs or flexibility (in agreement with Arts Council England) that may be required due to potential needs of either the participants or researchers involved.

Person specification for researchers

- An individual, or a team of researchers, or agency with at least one individual with lived experience of disability
- Relevant experience of leading similar research studies or have similar proven track record of work aligned with this brief, which can be evidenced and demonstrated
- A firm understanding of Theory of Change and the social model of disability, and other relevant models as appropriate
- Experience of collating and presenting data and evidence in such a way as to support a steering group to make informed decisions
- Experience of leading consultations, workshops and feel confident to facilitate discussions and or individual sessions with a diverse range of people with differing access and communication needs
- Experience of, or well-connected and networked to represent a diverse methodology to capture data and evidence from individuals with differing needs.
- Be outstanding in their approach to inclusion within their work, this includes thought in applying that to the collation, communication of, and presentation of the data with access considered
- Excellent written and communication skills
- Excellent project management skills
- Available for the dates and deadlines specified
- Relationship management experience and working within multi-partnership projects.
- Able to report to a working group and steering group.



Photographer: Sean Goldthorpe.

Dancers: Louise Dickson, Laura Dajao, Sian Green, Kimberley Harvey, Beth Gardiner.

11 Million Reasons to Dance - Inspired by Chicago - commissioned by People Dancing

Fee

The fee for this research is up to a maximum of £25,000 inclusive of expenses and VAT.

There is a separate budget available to support access costs for disabled researchers and contributors to the research.

Expression of Interest

Interested candidates are invited to make an expression of interest. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to pitch how they intend to fulfil the brief in person in Leicester in June and or online if more suitable or accessible for selected candidates.

People Dancing is managing the grant funding and contracts on behalf of the Working Group and will oversee administration and financial management.

Please complete our Expression of Interest form [here](#). You can also submit a video expression of interest no longer than seven (7) minutes stating how you think you/your team meet the brief. Send MP4 video applications to louise@communitydance.org.uk by the 3 June at 5pm.

If you face barriers in putting forward an expression of interest, or for an informal chat please email Louise Wildish – Head of Inclusion at People Dancing louise@communitydance.org.uk

A BSL version of this pack, an audio file, and an easier read version is available online at www.communitydance.org.uk



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

**People Dancing, LCB Depot, 31 Rutland Street, Leicester LE1 1RE
0116 253 345 | info@communitydance.org.uk
www.communitydance.org.uk | [@PeopleDancingUK](https://www.instagram.com/PeopleDancingUK)**

A selection of reference materials:

[Dance 4 / Fabric - Changing Perceptions](#)

2013 report into barriers to training for disabled people. Has a few more research papers to look at in the bibliography

[Impact of Stopgap Dance Company's inclusive dance syllabus](#)

<https://www.stopgapdance.com/learn-and-practice/dance-teachers-and-artists/inclusive-dance-and-iris-teacher-training/iris/>

[ISTD trial of 'adapting' syllabi](#)

ISTD piloted adapting their syllabus for disabled learners and the process was evaluated <https://www.istd.org/teach/inclusive-dance-practice/accessing-pathways-to-training/>

[11Million Reasons to Dance evaluation report](#)

Includes useful content and data from national inclusive dance project.

[Making a Shift](#)

Arts Council England report from 2017 into barriers into creative industries employment for disabled people.

[Research into inclusive dance training and education in UK, Greece, Sweden and Netherlands](#)

Commissioned by Onassis Cultural Centre.

[Time to Act by British Council](#)

Time to Act: How lack of knowledge in the cultural sector creates barriers for disabled artists and audiences

[Reflectors – experience of co-mentoring within dance and disability](#)

The personal stories of disabled and non-disabled dance practitioners working together in a shared learning experience.

[Invisible Difference research](#)

The InVisible Difference project seeks to extend current thinking that surrounds the making, status, ownership and value of work by contemporary dance choreographers. Coventry University.