

FABRIC

Artist Development Programme

2025

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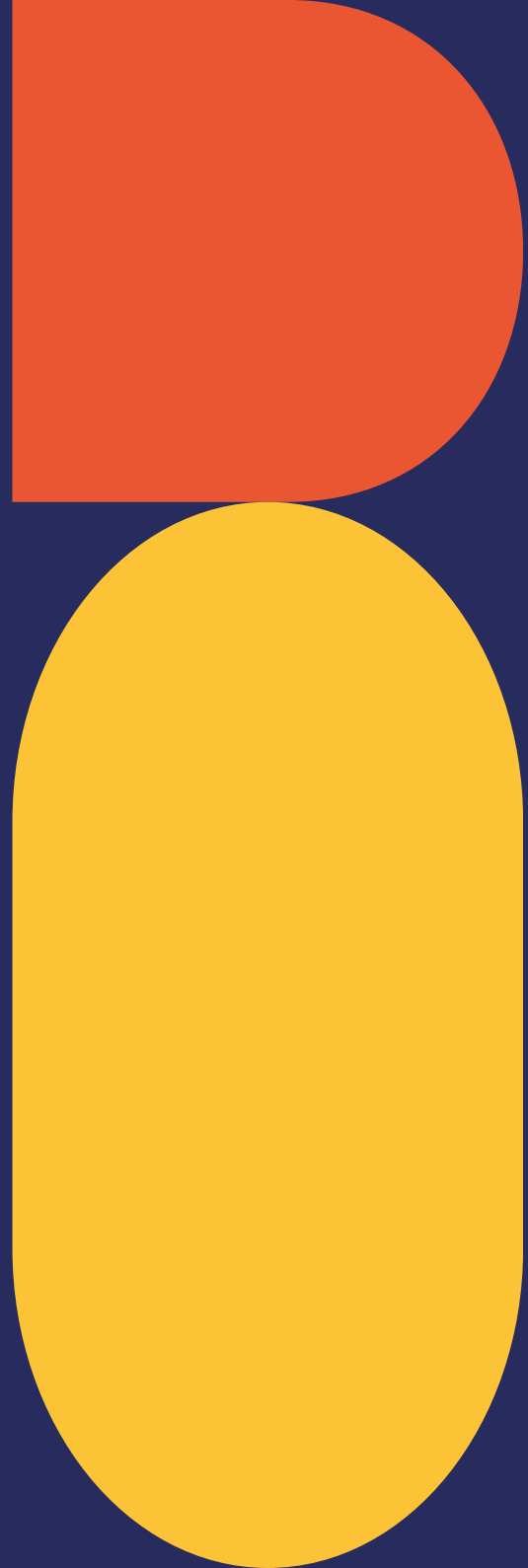


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1. Summary



The programme

In partnership with Motionhouse and Anjali Dance Company, FABRIC co-designed two artist development residencies. Each placed a disabled artist within a professional company setting, with the following features:

- Tailored recruitment that prioritised accessibility and understanding individual needs.
- Creative residencies with opportunities to shadow, co-create, and explore choreography.
- Mentoring and peer support, enabling reflection, learning and confidence-building.
- Wraparound support, covering logistics, wellbeing, and professional development.

FABRIC co-produced an inclusive opportunity grounded in trust, dialogue, and flexibility. It stemmed from a desire to test different models of working that could support more disabled creatives to gain professional development and eventually long-term employment.

“It is great opportunity for learning to happen for us all about opening up opportunities. Ultimately coming together and learning. All parties can learn a lot from each other. As organisations, ensuring our opportunities are accessible should continue to be prioritised.” FABRIC

What changed

Artists:



Confidence and Identity: Artists left the programme with a clearer sense of their own artistic voice and value.



Skills Development: From choreography to production, artists built the tools to lead their own work.



Advocacy: Experiences fuelled a desire to share learning with others and advocate for better access in dance education and beyond.



A clear demand: High application numbers revealed a real appetite for development opportunities from disabled artists across the country.

For the Organisations



Organisational growth: Both Motionhouse and Anjali reported a deeper, practical understanding of inclusion.



Culture shift: Teams reflected on how access can become part of organisational culture, changing how they recruit, rehearse, and collaborate.



Mutual benefit: Staff and artists alike described the experience as a two-way exchange of learning and creativity.



A proven model: The project demonstrated the positive impact of inclusion being baked in from the beginning.



Momentum for change: The project generated interest from other producers and highlighted the need for systemic reform.

Learning & recommendations

What we learnt:

- **The setup is as important as the studio time.** Investing in relationship-building, access planning, and expectation-setting is key.
- **Access is not a one-size-fits-all.** It needs to be dynamic, relational, and co-owned.
- **Artists thrive when given ownership.** Empowering disabled artists as creative leaders is both transformational and necessary.
- **Inclusion can't be left to chance.** It requires time, intention, and sustained investment - not just goodwill.



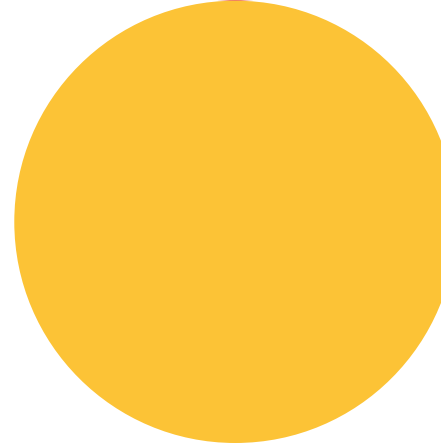
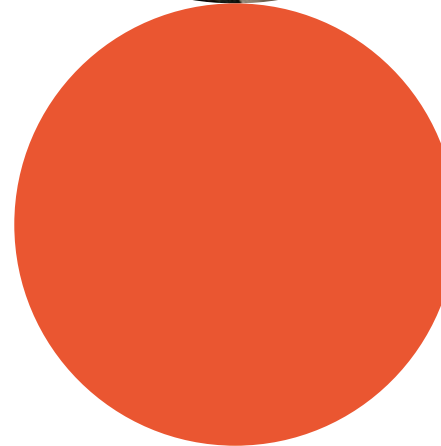
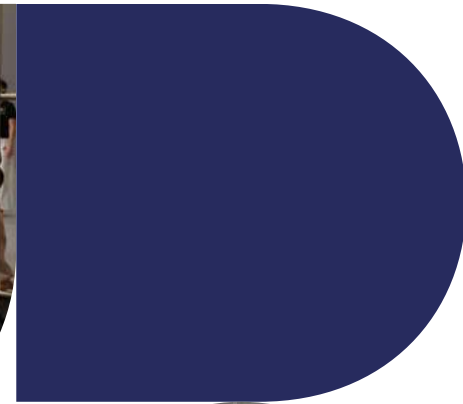
Recommendations summary:

- **Continuing to test new models of working** to evidence how they can work for any organisation.
- **Rolling out the model nationally**, via regional hosts and multi-year investment.
- **Connecting with younger disabled artists** to build pathways from education into professional practice.
- **Embedding this approach in policy and funding**, holding organisations to account for genuine inclusive practice.
- **Sharing the story widely** - on stage, online, and in print - to shift perceptions and inspire others.

Conclusion

The FABRIC Artist Development Programme wasn't just about two residencies. It was a test of possibility - a real-world experiment in what inclusive, equitable artist development could look like when done well. It showed that the potential is there. The talent is there. The hunger is there. Now, the sector needs to respond - with commitment, resources, and courage.

"It's incredible how honesty supported this creation. To see this small spark of creativity, coming from collaborators, critique, and dancers, suddenly ignite the creation and just develop the foundations of almost the entire show. I feel able to dream big, start small, forge honest relationships and create better environments for dancers." Sander Verbeek, placement artist with Motionhouse



Story of Change

In a partnership founded on **trust**, **collaboration** and **honest conversation**, centred on **disabled artists in leadership** and **decision making**, with an **approach** of **flexibility** and **inclusivity**, the programme intends to **challenge** and **create sector change** through **lived experience**.

The Programme

Paid placement for disabled dancers and artists

Wraparound support for employer and artist

Disability expert advice and guidance

Real world insights through live projects

Sharing good practice

Continuing the Critical Mass Legacy

Mentorship and peer support

Development of professional practice, approaches and artistic identity

More confidence and self advocacy

Career development and progression & achieving potential

Transferable knowledge, skills to support further practice development and inform future decisions

Disabled artist

More **accessible Company** with increased **knowledge** and, **inclusive policies, processes and places**, establishing more **opportunities** and **pathways**

Artistic **Directors** **development** of own **practice, approach** and **disability** understanding

Company

More disabled artists joining and **progressing** in sector

Artists and companies are **disability advocates** and **influencers** in their wider network & sector

Creating **sense of belonging** and **visibility** in the dance sector

Agency for change

Shift of sector **perspectives, approach and practices** with **more opportunities** and **programmes** available

Sector

Long-term aim

A more **accessible** and **inclusive sector** where **artists of all bodies and minds** are **valued** and have **equitable access** to **employment** and **progression pathways**

2. Context and background



Purpose of the programme

This programme of work is the current phase of a broader development and commitment to disability and inclusion in dance. Dance Leaders Group (DLG) have been working across the Midlands, to push boundaries and challenge perceptions through projects such as #DanceConnect 2020, Beyond Borders 2021 and Critical Mass 2022. As part of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022, Critical Mass was a catalyst for the Midlands to make systemic changes in how genuine inclusion can be achieved in mega cultural events. It has changed how we engage, support and commission disabled artists and performers.

This report looks at this project through the lens of an organisational evaluation perspective. It includes insights from the artists, creative teams, and senior management colleagues.



Thanks to the above projects, participatory dance opportunities and knowledge of inclusive practice in the Midlands region is strong. However, The Arts Council England diversity reports highlight that disability representation in dance employment is low compared to other creative arts, and significantly behind the general UK population of 24%.

The main aims of the artist development programme were to:

- **Address the challenges faced by disabled creatives when accessing career progression in dance.**
- **Provide a safe learning environment for the disabled artist as well as the company/artists they were working with.**

Additional information is available in the [resources section](#)

Who was involved

Motionhouse

Motionhouse is an internationally acclaimed dance-circus company known for combining athletic physicality, powerful storytelling, and cutting-edge digital imagery. Committed to breaking down barriers to access, the company tours widely across the UK, bringing dance to diverse audiences. Promoting equality and inclusion is central to its work, as seen in projects like Wondrous Stories with Critical Mass during the Birmingham 2022 Festival. Artistic Director Kevin Finnan's work with disabled dancers led to his role as Choreographer and Movement Director for the London 2012 Paralympic Games. The company also runs a nationwide programme of inclusive education and community dance projects.

Sander Verbeek (he/they) is a Dutch disabled artist. Since 2016 Sander developed as a dancer through Holland Dance Festival projects and Stopgap's Sg2 apprenticeship. Graduating with the creation of Boombox, a digital choreographic blend of music and narration, supported by a choice of transcripts. Showcasing a unique insight into a disabled experience. Collaborations with Europe Beyond Access, Maylis Arrabit, Peter Leung and having been the disabled emerging artist at Motionhouse. It has cemented their desire to develop their own work as a choreographer.



Who was involved



Anjali Dance Company is a pioneering charity dedicated to celebrating the creative potential of people with learning disabilities. They develop individuals as creative artists, supporting them to demonstrate their talents, develop professional skills, and transform the landscape of the arts industry to be more inclusive and accessible. Through collaborations with world-class choreographers, Anjali creates and performs original, high-quality dance works, while also offering education, outreach, and professional development opportunities to foster a more inclusive arts ecosystem.

Nick McKerrow is a professional dancer with Anjali Dance Company and an international drag act, Nikita Gold, with DragSyndrome. He exemplifies that disability is no barrier to creativity, and became the first learning-disabled artist featured in *The Stage* and has since appeared in *British Vogue*. Nick began his transition into choreographic practice in 2024, after he was awarded an Arts Council Developing Your Creative Practice Award (DYCP).



What happened: Motionhouse's offer

- Shadow Artistic Director Kevin Finnan and Associate Director Daniel Massarella during the creation of the company's touring production, Hidden, which premiered in February 2025.
- Work with the creative team throughout the creation process to gain understanding of how the different aspects of a touring production come together.
- Work with a team of artistic collaborators across multiple forms (choreography, set, projections, music, lighting and costumes) to understand how a complex production is developed.
- Understand how a production moves from rehearsal to premiere before Hidden embarked on its extensive national and international tour.

During the recruitment process, Motionhouse made an additional commitment to a second placement student, Emma Cleaver, who was in her third year at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance. They recognised the challenges within dance conservatoires and higher education environments for neurodivergent or disabled dancers, or those living with a long-term health condition. Emma was able to access opportunities with Motionhouse alongside Sander, receiving pastoral support to understand how to advocate better for her access needs in educational settings.

Emma's placement was not the main case study for this project, but her experiences and the peer support relationship with Sander are referenced throughout, where relevant.

What happened: Anjali's offer



- Working in collaboration with choreographer Gary Clarke and artistic support Rachel Liggitt
- Studio-based project exploring all aspects of creating a professional work with Nick holding responsibility for decision making
- Production of an autobiographical solo work with the aspiration to tour in late 2025.
- Multi-location residencies in Leeds, Derby, Nottingham and London to connect with other regional dance organisations
- Production time in a black box theatre space to test lighting, set and props, and choreography in a performance setting

The team

Motionhouse

Artistic Director:
Kevin Finnan

Executive Director:
Louise Richards

Associate Director:
Daniel Massarella

Motionhouse dancers

Access Support:
Rachel Liggitt

Anjali Dance Company

Director: Alex Henwood

Choreographic Mentor:
Gary Clarke

Access Support &
Rehearsal Assistant:
Rachel Liggitt

FABRIC

Engagement Producer:
Sophie Humphries

Director of Engagement:
Becky Bailey

CEO & Artistic Director:
Paul Russ

3. What worked well



What worked well

This section highlights key themes from the feedback, focusing on partnerships, recruitment, the artistic process, internal relationships, and confidence building. It provides insights into what worked well and why.

“It is bigger than choreography, it is about people knowing you and connecting with you. It is huge.” Anjali Dance Company



Partnership and delivery

Trust and collaboration: The strong partnerships between Anjali, Motionhouse, and FABRIC, along with the support of the funder, United by 2022, were vital to the programme's success. These long-standing relationships created a foundation for open, honest communication, enabling all parties to address challenges collaboratively.

The trust established early on allowed for constructive discussions on what worked well and what could be improved for future iterations. This dynamic partnership model enabled the programme to evolve in real time, offering the flexibility needed to meet the diverse needs of the disabled artists. There is also benefit to a shared knowledge and expertise across organisations that strengthens the experience for all.

Sustainability and long-term impact: The programme's sustainability was reinforced by the ongoing relationships formed during the collaboration. Motionhouse is committed to integrating its learning from the project into its long-term practices and Anjali Dance Company remains dedicated to continuing its mission to influence the sector and drive change. This is reflected in their continued efforts to support disabled artists and create opportunities beyond the programme.



Recruitment

Access and Inclusion: The recruitment process for Motionhouse prioritised addressing access needs upfront, ensuring the participation of disabled artists in a meaningful way. The team used the recruitment process to create an open dialogue about access requirements, which allowed for effective planning and tailored support. For example, the dedicated time to discuss individual needs ensured that all artists could engage fully with the programme.

“There was a huge shift in learning for us... having an opportunity to work alongside Sander and Emma has broadened our understanding. We’ve learned how much we need to consider the small, practical details to ensure success for everyone.”

Motionhouse

Mentorship and Peer Support: Successful recruitment also meant ensuring the right mentorship structures were in place from the start. Peer mentoring, particularly between the Motionhouse artists themselves, proved to be a vital part of the learning experience. Emma and Sander thrived from the peer-to-peer support, helping them refine their skills and gain confidence in their artistic practice. This collaborative model allowed for growth through shared experiences.

Working with familiar and trusted people created a safe space for Nick, where he felt valued and understood, allowing him to explore his artistic leadership.

“It has been instrumental having Emma there, learning side by side and supporting each other.” Sander

Artistic process

Artistic and Personal Development: The programme facilitated significant growth in both artistic and personal areas for the artists and organisations. For example, Motionhouse Artistic Director Kevin, said he adjusted his practice to narrate his internal process in order to enhance Sander's learning experience. This was, in turn, a learning process for Kevin, adapting his thinking and decision-making processes. This open approach allowed the artists to understand the complexities of creating work and gave them the confidence to make informed artistic choices.

Anjali's strong focus on pastoral care also allowed artists to engage with autobiographical work in a safe environment, supporting their personal growth alongside their creative development.

It showed that the potential is there. The talent is there. The hunger is there. Now, the sector needs to respond - with commitment, resources, and courage.

"The best bits: working with Gary Clarke and working with props. They were amazing...I am so proud of myself." Nick

"I wanted to get tools to put in my toolbox for my choreographic practice. I often get to see the end result...it was interesting to get behind the scenes and see how it all starts...Kevin would take a moment, he would be very honest and clear of why he made choices." Sander

Artistic process

Real-World Insights and Practical Learning: The opportunity to shadow experienced professionals provided invaluable insights into the realities of the creative process. Artists were able to observe how complex elements such as choreography, music, and visuals are integrated into performance work. These experiences enhanced their understanding of the intricacies of professional dance and helped them prepare for future challenges.

“Watching one of the shows from backstage while on comms...I got to hear the technical hiccups and see what the crew did. That was a highlight. How they support and how they achieve to put the show on the stage.”

Sander

Mentorship and creative collaboration: Anjali’s mentorship-driven approach focused on providing Nick with a safe space to explore new ideas. Their commitment to creative collaboration allowed him to step outside of his comfort zone, developing new artistic skills and experimenting with different creative processes.

For both Anjali and Motionhouse, the flexibility of the programme allowed the artists to grow both in their technical abilities and their artistic vision.

“We allowed each day to unfold, there was no expectation of what needed to happen...each day we came in, we had a check-in and we said ‘right, what are we going to do today?’. And we began really slowly. We never clock watched, we never gave any pressure to the room.”

Anjali Dance Company

Delivery team relationships

Internal relationships and peer support: A key success was the creation of a supportive, inclusive environment, where artists felt safe to experiment and collaborate. Both Sander and Nick benefited from the positive internal relationships within their teams, which helped them feel confident in trying new things and refining their artistic processes. This environment fostered trust and mutual respect, allowing the artists to push their boundaries while feeling fully supported.

“I loved every second!...I loved working with Rachel, Gary and FABRIC in this process to get my life out there...I just love it, it’s like a holiday, that feeling you get.”

Nick

“There was something about the synergy of these people in that space with Nick where I felt...the collective skills were really valued, seen, appreciated, pulled on, thanked and respected. It was an incredibly satisfying artistic experience...and that was tangible because we could all feel it.”

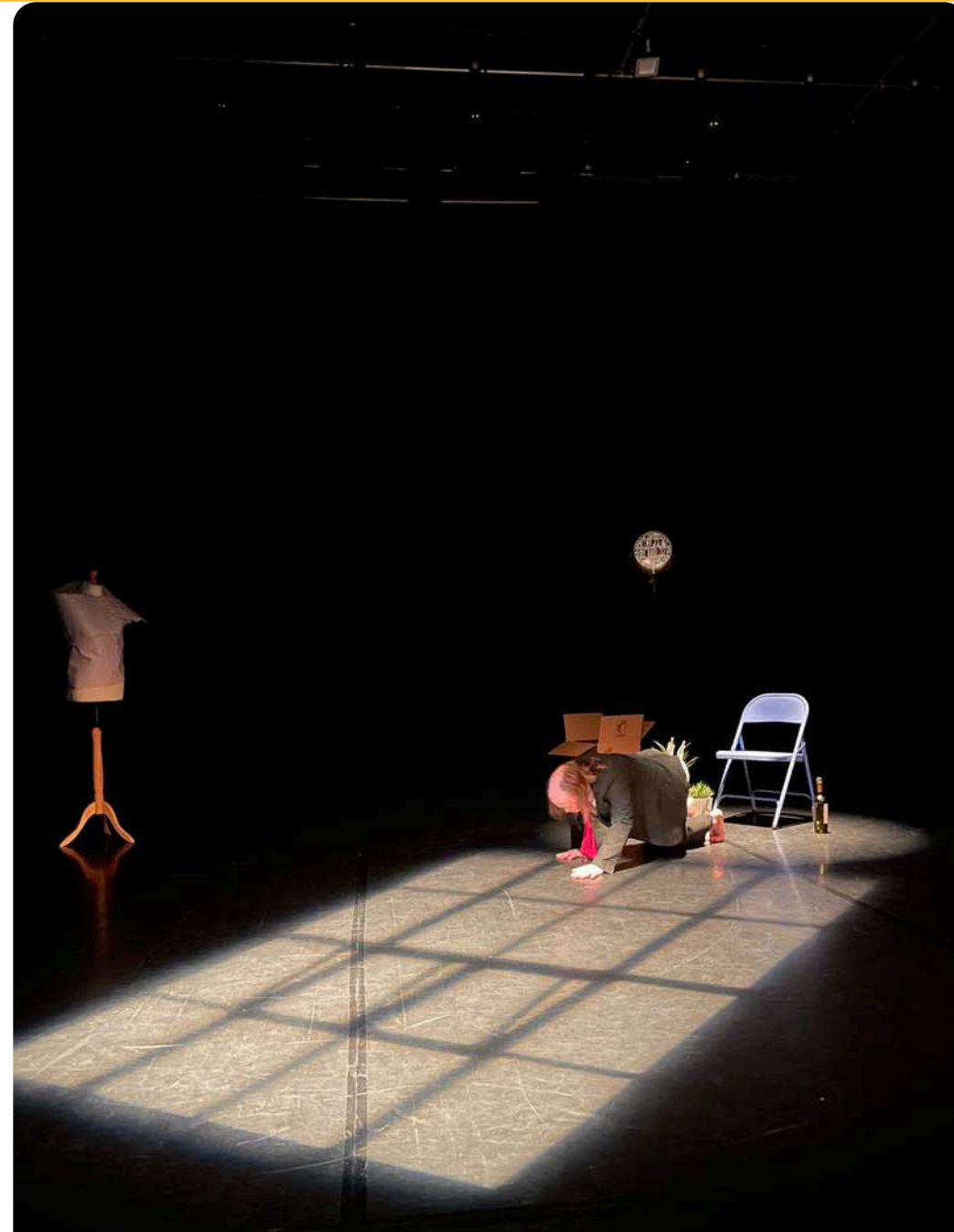
Anjali Dance Company

Delivery team relationships

Teamwork and Inclusion: The programme's welcoming nature was instrumental in making the artists feel like part of the team. The inclusive atmosphere helped foster strong working relationships and the collaborative model encouraged shared learning and led to a more cohesive and productive environment for everyone involved.

"We came up with ideas, all three of us made suggestions. I'm a huge fan of Dr Who and we fitted that in."

Nick



Confidence building

Confidence Building: One of the most notable successes of the programme was its ability to significantly increase artists' confidence. By working alongside professional dancers and choreographers, Sander developed a clearer understanding of their artistic identity and capabilities, and grew more confident in their artistic choices and leadership.

Working with Gary, Nick was empowered to lead and make decisions throughout the creative process, strengthening his transition from dancer to choreographer.

“The order that Kevin did his things, it made me think ‘I could do it differently’, it gave me a way to start my own work...I know, moving forward, I want to work with different bodies and disabilities.” Sander

“I wanted to learn my process, my choreography, my ideas... bring them into the studio and theatre. It is interesting taking work from ideas. I enjoyed exploring my whole life and living on my own. I developed my work to become a professional choreographer.”

Nick

Confidence building

Support and personal growth: Confidence building was also supported by strong pastoral care, which helped artists navigate emotionally challenging moments. This holistic support allowed them to balance personal growth with professional development, ensuring that they could make meaningful progress both artistically and personally. As a result, the programme empowered artists to advocate for themselves and develop the resilience needed for future opportunities.

“It was fantastic having Sander in the space with us. I've really enjoyed watching him - I feel like I've seen him growing as an artist and growing in confidence, and that's a wonderful thing to see...

...Inviting in Sander has challenged us to think differently about how we engage on every level, the way we talk about the work, the vocabulary that we use, the pacing of the day, the opportunities for breaks, for conversation. It's about understanding in a practical way, rather than just a theoretical one, the need for different artists to engage with the day in a different way.

We've always been very committed to sector development, and we do a huge amount of it, in addition to our integrated practice across our programme. I hope that this project will help demonstrate that there is a real gap in support for disabled artists. We are committed to making our work as accessible as we possibly can in the broadest sense. We're always looking for new projects, for the next opportunity. So, it's just there on a fundamental level for us to look for more opportunities like this.” Motionhouse

4. Considerations for action



Considerations for action

This section outlines the key challenges and considerations for action, focusing on areas such as timing, resource allocation, access barriers, and personal development. It provides insights into the challenges and ways to improve future programmes.



Timeline and planning

The tight timescales and the need to balance artistic creation with logistical demands sometimes made it difficult to fully immerse the artists. Creation processes are often fixed due to touring timelines that cannot be changed, and funders often have timelines with fixed deadlines.

When working with disabled artists, additional time is needed in all planning & preparation processes - more than you would typically be required for a non-disabled artist. Being realistic with what is possible in the timeline is vital.

Adopting a flexible approach that is responsive to individual needs will support any timeline restrictions. Motionhouse had a 12-week creation period, working 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, but worked collaboratively with Sander to devise a schedule with shortened hours in the day, and days of the week that supported their access needs.



Resourcing & pastoral support

Being a small independent team, Anjali Dance Company found it challenging at times to balance resourcing, especially with studio time and other out-of-studio tasks like planning, prop buying, and logistical preparation. For Anjali, it was important to manage expectations of what could be realistically achieved with available resources. For the future, sufficient resources (time and financial) are allocated in order to maintain the focus on inclusion and support over the long term.

Balancing personal growth and professional development was challenging at times, especially when navigating autobiographical work and maintaining professional boundaries. Motionhouse noted the benefit of having the insight of navigating complex personal growth journeys alongside professional development. Anjali, in particular, faced the challenge of providing pastoral support during emotionally intensive periods. To better support artists, it is essential to establish a clearer separation between personal and professional growth, alongside providing dedicated pastoral care during particularly intensive stages of the process.

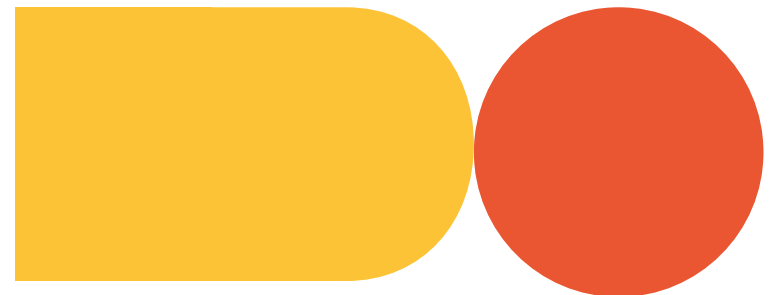


Accessibility

Practical access barriers, such as travel systems and venue accessibility, presented significant challenges for disabled artists. It can take a considerable amount of planning and energy simply to arrive on site. Any unexpected disruption to a journey can exacerbate these challenges.

The high physical demands of the dance sector, coupled with the expectations placed on artists to perform at their best once on site, further compound the difficulties. The impact of fatigue, the necessity for regular breaks, and the management of energy levels add significant emotional and physical costs, which are often not accounted for in standard sector practices.

Both the practical access barriers and the physical demands have far-reaching implications, including an increased risk of dropout. To truly support disabled artists, it is essential to consider and implement adjustments on an individual basis that address both aspects of accessibility. This is crucial to ensuring disabled artists not only remain included but are given the full support they need to thrive in their work and personal well-being. This is particularly relevant for independent artists or non NPO companies.



Considerations for successful experiences



Induction and introduction. It is important to integrate artists into the company by providing a clear introduction, ensuring everyone understands who is present, their roles, and the duration of their involvement. Creating an inviting and inclusive space from the start of the program and at key points (such as during shadowing activities) is essential for fostering collaboration



Managing pressure points. As deadlines approach, the pressures of premiering new work naturally increases the stress levels. These moments, while part of the creative process, can limit the time available for artists to immerse themselves fully. It's essential to try and find a balance between meeting deadlines and ensuring that artists feel valued, included, and have sufficient time to contribute meaningfully



Exploring opportunities to maximise artist participation. Exploring additional opportunities for disabled artists to contribute creatively, such as by allowing them to create small dance pieces alongside their observational roles would enhance their experience. These opportunities would need to be balanced alongside the daily operational pressures



Clear communication. Effective communication is key, particularly when artists are not in the space. Communicating important information such as scheduling, expectations and timings will enable them to plan their required travel and other logistical challenges, which is particularly important in the context of the additional energy and consideration required to do this

Considerations for successful experiences



Acknowledging the importance of small details.

Small actions can have a significant impact on disabled artists. It's important to validate their concerns about access and support needs, working together to mitigate and address any issues to enhance their experience. Being aware of how seemingly minor details can affect the artist's participation will help minimise obstacles and create a more inclusive environment.



Involvement in Research & Development (R&D).

Including disabled artists in the R&D process would provide valuable insights, enhancing their learning experience and enabling them to contribute to the creative development in a more meaningful way.



Regular check ins. Providing regular opportunities for two-way conversations with the Company leads throughout the process will help create an open, supportive dialogue. This will offer a shared space and responsibility for raising any access needs or concerns.



Planning for support and accessibility.

Establishing a clear plan at the start for participating organisations to supporting disabled artists, ensures that necessary accessibility measures are in place. This proactive approach ensures that the artists' needs are addressed before challenges arise. Be ready to make more changes if required throughout the project.

5. What next?



Artists – what are they doing now?

The next steps for artists, organisations and the programme.

Sander is actively applying for other positions and funding. They are keeping connected to the artists and professionals they have met and are exploring the opportunity of using rehearsal space in the future.

Nick is seeking further funding to enable his new work to be ready for premiere. He was awarded a Liberty Festival R&D grant in early 2025, and is now looking for other funding opportunities to sustain his practice and ensure his work can continue to develop, with the ambition to secure tour bookings.



Participating organisations - what next?

Each participating organisation made three commitments in response to their learning:

Anjali Dance Company

- Explore the development of a specific pastoral/care policy for creative processes, to proactively ensure holistic, psychologically safe artistic environments
- Document Nick's full development trajectory, from initial DYCP award to the point of work distribution, as a roadmap for other mid-career artists interested in choreography.
- Maintain an environment which focuses on the art and Nick, rather than forced outcomes, to maximise artistic integrity

“What feels really important is that Nick and Anjali get the ability to continue and for the work to be made and to be shared. That’s where the power is; the part where we want to put time into. In a way then we all become much more familiar with what it is, we can see it shared with more people and it becomes something that isn’t theorised work, it’s good work and he is out there doing it.”

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Participating organisations - what next?

Motionhouse

- Use the project as a springboard to explore further initiatives for disabled artists
- Continue to seek partnerships to build on this experience and proactively look for fundraising opportunities
- Integrate key learnings from the project into regular practice and future projects including during recruitment

Dance Leaders Group

- FABRIC currently convenes the Dance Leaders Group, who collectively have a commitment to identify new funding opportunities to support this work.

FABRIC

- To continue to work with regional partners to develop and refine interventions and models of working e.g. Artist Development investment agreed with Shropshire Inclusive Dance (SiD) to upskill and mentor dance artist, Beth Gardiner
- A commitment to supporting progression routes into dance careers inside and outside of education and vocational routes e.g Keep Moving project and training provision like Future Shift
- To share the key learning from this project as part of a wider strategy that focuses on inequity in the dance workforce, launching a campaign that celebrates all the achievements since 2022's Critical Mass project.

Calls to action for the sector

Capacity for accessibility. Organisations often lack the capacity to invest time and resources into becoming more accessible unless projects are specifically funded. The sector needs to consider how larger organisations can take proactive steps toward true inclusivity without relying solely on external funding for accessibility initiatives

Expanding opportunities. Explore how to extend opportunities to others and broaden scope of practice. Capitalising on existing practice and opportunities, enabling more people to benefit from similar experience.

Challenging perceptions. Work to challenge the prevailing perceptions between mainstream arts and disability arts, aiming to bridge gaps and foster greater inclusion

Increasing opportunities. There is a clear demand for more opportunities, as evidenced by the high application rate (22 applicants, 12 interviewed). This highlights the significant gap in available opportunities and the strong desire for them

Building progression routes. It is crucial to create clear progression routes for disabled artists beyond company membership, offering continued growth and development opportunities

Addressing funding and programming barriers. Tackle barriers within funding structures and programming practices that limit access to opportunities for disabled artists, ensuring these barriers are addressed systemically

Collectively consider

Follow-up reflection. To build on the feedback, conduct a follow-up reflection to review the challenges and identify the next steps for implementing the learnings within each organisation

Collaborative conversations and visibility. Explore the possibility of bringing key partners together for a collaborative discussion to share the story, generate new ideas, and plan for the future. Given the visible nature of the art form, it's crucial to use social media and video to tell the story, backed by a clear communications plan/strategy

Sustaining momentum and securing long-term support. Focus on continuing the momentum created by the programme and securing long-term support. This includes ensuring that organisations can fulfil their commitments to inclusivity and creating equal opportunities.

Challenging sector barriers. Keep the discussions going on how to challenge sector barriers and promote true inclusion in dance, working toward systemic change.

Expanding reach. Roll out the programme to consider disabled dancers in a wider range of contexts and less obvious spaces, particularly targeting groups that are not already engaging with FABRIC.

Focusing on the younger generation. Develop a focus on younger artists, possibly connecting with initiatives like Keep Moving sessions. This would help create more inclusive progression and talent pathways, enabling diversity in body and mind to be represented as individuals advance into companies.

Collectively consider

Longer programme duration. Consider extending the programme's duration to 2-3 years to allow for deeper development and sustained growth

Capturing broader experiences. Ensure that the programme captures the broader experiences and insights happening throughout, embedding a reflective process from the start to gain deeper understanding and continual improvement.

Leveraging social media engagement. Capitalise on how young people engage with social media platforms to interact with dance. This could be a powerful way to connect with emerging artists and further the discussion around progression pathways

Sharing the impact beyond the West Midlands. Showcase the success of the programme beyond the West Midlands, building positive relationships and creating new opportunities. Share these efforts with other cities and countries to demonstrate the potential for success when proper planning and local partnerships are in place.

**“Until you show
what is possible on
stage, nothing will
change.”**

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6. What can you do?



What can you do?

To successfully replicate the programme in your own organisation, there are key foundations to consider. These critical success factors can guide the approach and structure needed for a positive and inclusive experience for all involved.



Critical success factors



Expectations and experience

Clearly define the experience you're offering and the expectations for both the organisation and the artists. It's crucial to be realistic about what you can provide within your organisation's capacity, while also ensuring that the opportunity is sufficiently challenging and enriching for the artists.



Support systems

Establish comprehensive support, including a dedicated inclusion champion and 1:1 mentoring. Make sure there are clear roles and responsibilities defined for all parties involved. This support should go beyond just artistic guidance, encompassing logistical and emotional support to ensure a positive experience for everyone.



Involvement of key partners

Consider who needs to be involved in the process - whether it's training providers, partners, or access support teams. The involvement of the right people ensures that the programme can be delivered successfully, with all necessary resources and expertise in place.



Access Considerations

Be mindful of both physical access (e.g., venue audits, transportation) and information accessibility (e.g. visual aids, clear communication). It's important that the whole experience is designed to be inclusive, allowing all participants to fully engage. This includes addressing access needs beyond the studio, such as travel and personal adjustments.

Critical success factors



Flexibility and Adaptability

A flexible, responsive approach is essential, allowing the creative process to evolve organically with the artist at the centre. Focus on their leadership development and decision-making abilities while maintaining a supportive and adaptable environment.



Time and Planning

The setup is just as important as delivery. Investing time in preparing the recruitment process, discussing access needs with candidates, and planning logistics will ensure a smoother experience. The time spent in preparation can have a significant impact on the success of the programme.



Creating a Positive Environment

Foster a stress-free and joyful environment where artists can thrive. Consider how the environment impacts their experience and ensure its welcoming and conducive to creativity.

If you would like to learn more about how FABRIC can support your company or organisation to deliver a similar opportunity, please get in touch with Director of Engagement, Becky Bailey at becky@fabric.dance.

7. Resources



Resources

[The Critical Mass Playbook](#)

[Common Ground Manual](#)

[Keep Moving Artist Development films](#)

[Barriers to employment report](#) (available mid-June)

[Unlimited](#)

[Making The Arts Accessible Podcast](#)

[Attitude is Everything's Accessible Volunteering Guide](#)



Thanks to...

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DANCE
LEADERS
GROUP

Motionhouse

Arjeli
dance company

The Artist Development programme has been part of Keep Moving. Keep Moving is programmed & managed by FABRIC, delivered by community partners, and funded by the United by 22 Legacy Charity as part of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Enhancement Fund from West Midlands Combined Authority.

Keep Moving is possible through the ongoing commitment of Dance Leaders Group and the legacy they started back in 2020. DLG is an open, independent network of dance professionals and leaders across the Midlands, with over 125+ members ranging from NPO's, freelancers, and project funded organisations. We connect, collaborate and commit to share practice across the Midlands region, striving for inclusion and equity in the workforce and our communities.'