



Media Release: 7 July 2025

Disabled dance artists complete artist development programme with Dance Leaders Group

- **As part of Dance Leaders Group's Keep Moving project, two disabled dance artists have completed their Artist Development residencies.**
- **Aiming to open and inspire disabled leadership and employment in the regional sector, the artist development programme offered residencies with Motionhouse and Anjali Dance Company.**
- **A short documentary and evaluation report give an inside view of the two residencies, designed to inspire organisations to offer new, similar opportunities, take a look here: <https://fabric.dance/keep-moving-artist-development-programme/>**

The Keep Moving project, led by FABRIC, and the Dance Leaders Group, (an independent network of dance professionals and leaders across the Midlands), commissioned and co-designed two Artist Development residencies. The residencies were delivered in partnership with dance-circus company [Motionhouse](#) and [Anjali Dance Company](#), placing two disabled artists within a professional setting, aiming to open and inspire disabled leadership and employment across the region.

With the conclusion of the residencies the partners are delighted to announce the publication of a fascinating documentary giving an inside view of the two residences alongside an Evaluation Report, which together are designed to encourage organisations to offer new, similar opportunities.

Becky Bailey, FABRIC Director of Engagement said: “the residencies were a test of possibility – a real-world experiment in what inclusive, equitable artist development could look like when done well. Instead of adapting a mainstream experience, the Artists Development residency model was co-created with embedded inclusivity – one grounded in trust, dialogue, and flexibility.”

The first residency offered Anjali company dancer Nick McKerrow the opportunity to work in close collaboration with renowned choreographer Gary Clarke, and artistic & access advisor Rachel Liggitt. Following Nick's Developing Your Creative Practice (DYCP) Award that explored his transition from performer to choreographer, this studio-based opportunity focused on the creation of Nick's first autobiographical solo work.

Alex Henwood, Director of Anjali Dance Company said: “At Anjali, we demonstrate creativity, excellence, and disability are not mutually exclusive. This programme has been a vital step in addressing sector-wide gaps, especially in mid-career support for learning-disabled artists. Nick’s progression exemplifies what’s possible with the right support and conditions. It’s highlighted collaborations between National Portfolio Organisations and disabled-led organisations like ours are key to building inclusive, intersectional spaces where all artists can thrive.”

The second residency supported disabled artist, Sander Verbeek to shadow Motionhouse’s Artistic Director Kevin Finnan and Associate Director Daniel Massarella throughout the creation of Hidden, the company’s latest touring production. Sander gained inside knowledge of how the different aspects of a touring production come together, following how Kevin works with a team of artistic collaborators across multiple forms, and how he shapes the production as it moves from rehearsal to premiere.

Louise Richards, Executive Director of Motionhouse said: “It was fantastic having Sander in the space with us. 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.”

FABRIC currently convenes the Dance Leaders Group, who collectively have a commitment to identify new funding opportunities to support this work. Together they have been inspired to continue to work with regional partners to develop and refine interventions and models of working and are committed to supporting progression routes into dance careers inside and outside of education and vocational routes.

Becky added: “The residencies showed once again that the potential is there. The talent is there. The hunger is there. Now, the sector needs to respond – with commitment, resources, and courage. DLG and FABRIC continue to be committed to advocating for artists progression routes and our door is always open for partners to be in dialogue with us about the possibilities of collaboration.”

Anjali Dance Company is exploring the development of a specific pastoral/care policy for creative processes, to proactively ensure holistic, psychologically safe artistic environments.

Motionhouse will use the project as a springboard to explore further initiatives for disabled artists and is integrating key learnings from the project into regular practice and future projects including during recruitment.

Sander is keeping connected to the artists and professionals they have met and is actively applying for other positions and funding.

Nick is seeking further funding to enable his new work to be ready for premiere. He was awarded a Liberty Festival Research & Development grant in early 2025, and has secured an Arts Council

project grant to sustain his practice and ensure his work can continue to develop, with the ambition to secure tour bookings.

Keep Moving is a Dance Leaders Group project led by FABRIC, delivered by regional 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. The programme included three interlinked strands of activity that address inclusive participation, platforming & showcasing, and artis development these were: Regular Dance Provision; a Performance Strand; and an Artist Development Programme.

Find out more about Keep Moving here: <https://fabric.dance/keep-moving-artist-development-programme/>

Watch a short documentary here: <https://youtu.be/3PAfkH1oul0>

Access an Evaluation Report on the Artist Development programme here: https://fabric.dance/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/SHARED-FABRIC-Artist-Development-Report-V3_12June_compressed_compressed-1.pdf

ENDS

For further information contact Helen Annetts, PR on behalf of the Keep Moving Project on 07779 026720 or email HelenLAnnetts@hotmail.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

About Anjali Dance Company

Anjali Dance Company is a pioneering organisation dedicated to celebrating the creativity and talents of learning-disabled people through dance and the arts.

Founded in 1995 by Nicole Thompson, Anjali's work spans touring professional productions, workshops, and community projects and consultancy, aimed at challenging perceptions, increasing cultural engagement, and furthering inclusion.

With a commitment to co-creation and lived experience, Anjali is transforming how the arts interact with disability, health, and social action.

Anjali's work is built on the Social Model of Disability, which focuses on societal barriers as the primary cause of disability. While this model promotes inclusivity, Anjali acknowledge its limitations in fully addressing the personal and medical challenges faced by some individuals with impairments.

About Motionhouse

Motionhouse is an internationally acclaimed dance-circus company that creates and tours world-class productions, combining athletic physicality, powerful narratives, and cutting-edge digital imagery. Breaking down barriers to access is a priority, and the exceptional range and volume of the company's touring takes the power of dance to people across the UK and internationally.

Promoting equality, diversity, and engagement with underrepresented communities in dance, circus, and outdoor arts has always been a key part of the company's approach, including for example in 2022, when dancers from Critical Mass were part of the integrated cast for *Wondrous Stories*, the opening show of the Birmingham 2022 Festival which launched the Commonwealth Games celebrations in the city. Artistic Director Kevin Finnan's work with disabled dancers led to

his role as Choreographer and Movement Director of the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Alongside Motionhouse's performance work, an extensive education, training and community programme delivers impactful and inclusive dance projects in schools and community settings across the UK.

The company is committed to promoting equality in all aspects of its work, and to creating a culture that respects, values and champions diversity, upholding equal opportunities and recognising and celebrating diversity. The people the company works with are at the heart of this commitment and Motionhouse celebrates the opportunities it has to work with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences.

About FABRIC

FABRIC is a strategic dance development organisation based in the Midlands with sites in Birmingham and Nottingham. FABRIC aims to inspire, increase and diversify engagement, co-create with the extraordinary people of the region, encourage creative leadership, develop talent, and celebrate the impact of dance and its place in public life.

The **Keep Moving programme** was born out of **Critical Mass** a high-profile dance and movement project conceived and commissioned by the Organising Committee of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, in collaboration with the **Dance Leaders Group (DLG)** and executively produced by FABRIC (previously known as DanceXchange). The project engaged 242 young people aged 16-30, with and without disabilities, to come together to perform as a united dance cast as part of the major event strategy for the event.

Keep Moving continues this successful project, embedding ongoing participation and workforce development in the West Midlands dance ecology, generating learning and insight about inclusion, access and disability for the region whilst engaging young people in high-quality culture and dance experiences.

Keep Moving is programmed & managed by FABRIC, delivered by regional 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.

About Dance Leaders Group

The Keep Moving programme is made possible through the ongoing commitment and collaboration of Dance Leaders Group (DLG), pushing boundaries and challenging perceptions through projects such as #DanceConnect 2020, Beyond Borders 2021 and Critical Mass 2022.

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.