

Applause Youth Dance Festival

Your U.Dance Regional platform for the Midlands

Application Guidance

A guide for dance groups and individuals based in the Midlands wishing to apply to perform at Applause Youth Dance Festival, the U.Dance 2026 Midlands regional platform with the opportunity to be considered for the U.Dance National Festival.

1. What is U.Dance?

U.Dance is a national framework that develops dance performance opportunities for children and young people across England, led by One Dance UK (ODUK).

2. How will U.Dance in the Midlands happen in 2026?

Fabric leads on Applause Youth Dance Festival, which will also host the Midlands regional platform for U.Dance.

Alongside our workshops and performances, we will launch a dedicated marketplace offering young people the chance to network, discover career pathways in dance and the arts, and explore inspiring opportunities for both personal and professional growth.

We hope that the festival will be able to support up to 25 groups, with places divided equally across the East and West Midlands on the Saturday and Sunday programmes respectively.

3. What can I apply for?

Groups can apply for:

- Applause Youth Dance Festival only

or

- Applause Youth Dance Festival AND U.Dance 2025 National Festival*.

*Groups selected to attend the U.Dance National Festival will be responsible for funding their own travel, food and accommodation, so please consider this when applying.

4. Applause Youth Dance Festival – Good Practice Guide

A Good Practice guide has been created to support all group leaders working with young people towards this U.Dance Regional platform in the Midlands.

Please [read this document](#) and refer to it throughout the creation of your choreography.

5. Selection Process

Following the deadline of 1pm Wednesday 28 January 2026 a selection panel of dance professionals will shortlist groups to perform at Applause Youth Dance Festival 2026.

- a) Groups selected to perform at Applause Youth Dance Festival 2026 will be notified in the week commencing Monday 2 February 2026.
- b) The selected pieces will be professionally filmed on stage. A panel of regional dance professionals will select four groups in total to be considered by the national panel (two from the East Midlands and two from the West Midlands that opted to be considered for the National Festival).
- c) Following this selection process, the national panel will consider the four shortlisted groups. The national panel will select one group from the East Midlands and one group from the West Midlands and offer them a place at the U.Dance 2026 National Festival. The two successful group will be notified in April 2026.

6. Who Can Apply?

Any youth dance company, school dance group, community dance group or individual that meets the criteria mentioned in point 7.

We welcome applications from groups and soloists working in different dance styles and different settings including schools, youth centres, community groups and youth dance companies. We'd like to strongly encourage groups that include disabled dancers with physical or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) to apply.

These opportunities are open to any and all dance forms.

7. Criteria

The selection panels will be looking for dance groups that:

- a) Demonstrate excellence in performance
- b) Present excellent and engaging choreography
- c) Show dancers taking clear ownership of the choreography, which is appropriate for their age and experience
- d) Demonstrate respect and consideration to all (demonstrated through both the group's conduct at the regional event and the appropriateness of performance content).

A note on choreography: Excellent work selected for the U.Dance National Festival in previous years has been created by group leaders, teachers, young people, professional choreographers and any number of collaborations. There is no preferred 'type' of choreographer and the creator(s) of the piece will have no bearing on the selection process.

The selection panel for the U.Dance National Festival will select dance pieces from all regional platforms which combine to make a National Festival that will:

- a) Reflect the diversity of dance styles practiced by young people across the UK
- b) Create an interesting and varied performance
- c) Showcase excellent and authentic work from both schools and youth dance settings.

8. Group Eligibility

- **Group Size: no more than 30 dancers**

(Please consider that groups of 16 dancers or more will need three licensed chaperones instead of two to perform at the live events).

- **Age range: Dancers must be aged 11 to 19 on Monday 6 July 2026. Dancers living with a disability must be up to a maximum age of 25 years on Monday 6 July 2026.**

- **Length of piece: Minimum of 2 minutes and maximum 7 minutes**

Leaders must organise the administration (consent forms, performance licencing requirements, parent liaison and technical information), chaperoning at the live events and transport needs for their group.

9. How To Apply

- **Complete and submit an online application form:**

<https://bit.ly/aydf-2026-application>

Submit a film of your completed piece as part of your application.

In the event of live performances being cancelled, your film will be used to make selections for the National Festival if you opt in to be considered. This footage should be filmed to the best of your ability, the full-length piece that your group intends to perform, in costume if possible.

Please note:

- a) Applications will be acknowledged via an automatic email.
- b) Film footage should be provided within the application form using a password protected Vimeo link. Alternative methods can be discussed with Fabric where Vimeo is not possible, but Vimeo is the preferred method.
- c) Fabric takes no responsibility for unreceived applications or film footage that is faulty or not of a quality to view by the selection panel by the deadline given.
- d) In the event of any of the live events being cancelled (for reasons beyond our control) the event will not be rescheduled or take place digitally, but your film will be used to make selections for the U.Dance National event 2026.

10. Guidance for Filming Your Dance

- Make sure that your dance is well lit and clearly visible, don't film in the dark.
- Clear the space (no bags or chairs around the edges, don't distract the panel with clutter.)
- Make sure the whole group is present for filming.
- Use a sound system or loudspeaker so that music can be heard, don't use a phone to play music while filming or have people chatting in the background.
- Film the work from the front, not the back or side.
- If filming on a phone - position the phone in landscape
- Check that film footage plays the correct way up (you might need to change the orientation of the film).
- Check your Vimeo link works before submitting.
- Send any passwords needed to view the links.
- Check that we have received your footage if you do not receive a confirmation email. Don't feel like you are pestering us, we would rather make sure all applications come through successfully.

Call us if you have any questions, don't let submitting the film be stressful.

11. Costs

There is no fee to apply for Applause Youth Dance Festival. However, groups will need to be prepared to cover the cost of:

- Transport to and from the performance venues (bursaries will be available to cover some costs for West Midlands based groups travelling into the East Midlands)
- Food and refreshments (young people to bring packed lunches)
- Cost for leaders to be present at the event/s.
- Costs for chaperone licences if required.

The groups successfully selected to attend the National Festival will need to raise their own funds to cover:

- Transport costs to and from the venue
- Food and refreshments throughout the event
- Accommodation costs for the group and their Chaperones for 1 or 2 nights.
- Costs for leaders and chaperones
- Chaperone licenses/training if required.

12. Access Funds

a). Applause Youth Dance Festival support

A small access fund is available to support groups attending Applause Youth Dance Festival, available through Fabric, which will be prioritised to support those traveling the furthest or need further access support for their performers.

b). National U.Dance Festival 2026 support

A small access fund is available to support the group attending the National Festival, available through One Dance UK.

[Click/tap here to be taken to the online application form.](#)

For any queries or questions about the information above or applying for Applause Youth Dance Festival, please get in touch with Chelsea (Fabric Producer).

Email: chelsea@fabric.dance

Phone: 0115 924 2016 (Monday to Friday 10am till 5pm).