



Inclusion of Disabled Participants

Guidelines for Organisers of Youth Dance Platforms

These guidelines were produced by [GDance](#), a production and training company with a specialism in inclusive practice.

They are a result of GDance's evaluation of Access and Inclusion at [U.Dance 2015](#) and its associated regional platforms and are intended to help event organisers plan for how they will make their youth dance platform more accessible and inclusive.

Some points are specific to U.Dance national and regional platforms, whilst most are applicable to any youth dance event.

The sections highlighted in green indicate U.Dance minimum expectations with regards to inclusion and access. Organisations have a legal duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' as outlined in the [Equality Act 2010](#) and a responsibility to assess whether they are able to follow the U.Dance minimum expectations, or to follow the guidelines more extensively. Examples of how the Equality Act works in practice found to the Citizens Advice [website](#).

NB. These guidelines will be reviewed annually; we anticipate they will evolve and welcome your feedback. Contact u.dance@yde.org.uk or call 020 7940 9800.

Structure of the Platform:

For those organising a competitive platform with a selection process:

- Be as flexible as possible with groups including disabled dancers regarding how much of the day / platform they engage with, arrival / departure time, etc.
- NB. If some groups arrive later, ensure there is a staff member / well-briefed volunteer to welcome and brief them
- Allow longer for groups with disabled dancers to do technical run-throughs
- Consider whether early starts are really necessary for all groups (especially after a travel day / performance evening)
- Build in relaxation / recovery and /or informal networking opportunities so groups can mingle more and manage energy levels

- Consider incorporation of fringe performance / activities into your platform opening out opportunities for groups not yet in a position to perform on the main stage
- Consider fundraising to enable commissioning of an experienced integrated dance choreographer to work on an associated performance project bringing together disabled and non-disabled dancers / school or college groups (or this could be incorporated into larger funding bids)

For all platforms:

- Consider including a film screening strand to your platform as this could enable either:
 - screening of high quality work led by and/or featuring professional disabled artists (thereby supporting visibility of high calibre disabled dancers) and/or
 - an alternative way for youth groups including disabled dancers (who may face barriers to performing live) to engage with / be seen at your platform
- Support integration between groups (thereby between disabled and non-disabled dancers):
 - Consider simple ways of facilitating coming together of groups, e.g. a simple 'high-five' motivational meeting before / after performances, or using a welcome event/speech to give groups an opportunity to share something / get to know each other
 - Consider programming facilitated debates as part of your platform engaging disabled and non-disabled young people in discussion together
 - Explore whether activities / run-throughs could be scheduled so that there are specific times when some groups can inter-mingle informally (rather than waiting in separate spaces)
- Where possible, avoid scheduling 2 activities requiring sustained energy levels (e.g. a workshop and performance) one immediately after the other

Promoting the Opportunity to Apply:

Reach:

- Join / use networks, consortia and / or online resources to identify and promote to local disability focused dance organisations / practitioners. These include:
 - The National Inclusive Dance Network / National Alliance (www.nidn.org)
 - Unlimited Impact (<http://www.unlimitedimpact.org.uk/>)
 - The Diverse Futures website (<http://diversefutures.org.uk/>)
 - The North East Inclusive Dance Network (<http://www.tinarts.co.uk/take-part/special-projects/ne-inclusive-dance>)
 - The London consortia (Magpie, Candoco, Trinity Laban, Greenwich Dance Agency)
- Categorise your database so that you can easily compile a mailing list to target groups in your area which include disabled youth dancers, including:
 - Independent youth dance companies which include disabled dancers
 - Inclusion-focused dance companies / agencies with associated youth companies
 - Schools and colleges that have disabled students
 - Freelance practitioners specialist in inclusion of disabled young people
- Build your database to include key intermediaries who can help promote the opportunity to apply and/or who may consider submitting an application, including:
 - Nearby dance agencies / companies known for a focus on working with disabled artists / young people
 - Special Educational Needs (SEN) advisory teachers
 - Local authority commissioners with a disability remit
 - SEN Coordinators and/or key (performing arts or activity coordinator) staff in schools and colleges with disabled students

- Local activity centres and/or charities / social enterprises that commission or deliver short breaks and/or arts activities for disabled children and young people

NB. Your database could be developed affordably using interns, volunteers or junior staff

- Consider other means of group being brought to your attention and/or your platform being brought to their attention, e.g.:
 - Fundraise to appoint one or more 'inclusion ambassadors' to identify and encourage more groups including disabled dancers to apply
 - Consider a system of nomination to run alongside (self) application

Guidelines & Promotional Material:

- If your event is part a selection platform for U.Dance national festivals, ensure you use the national festival Guidance Notes which refer to how the access needs will be met
- Ensure your guidelines are clear, use simple language and are offered / provided in alternative formats
- Explicitly state in the guidelines that you particularly welcome applications from groups including disabled dancers
- Ensure guidelines regarding the age of youth dancers state that disabled youth dancers can be up to the age of 25
- Use imagery including disabled youth dancers and/or that make it clear your platform embraces diversity
- Access information: provide as much detail as possible (on paperwork and/or online) regarding what is in place so that group leaders can make their own decisions regarding whether your platform is accessible for their group (avoid using the term 'fully accessible' as this could raise unrealistic expectations).
- Think broadly when providing access information, e.g. this information should not just address physical access at the venue but also, for example, whether there will be assistants to support integration into workshops (if applicable)

- If there are different stages which applicants can select (e.g. county, regional and/or national, as for U.Dance), ensure this is clear in the guidelines
- Issue your guidelines well in advance of the platform
- Use words in the promotional material that emphasise the potential impact of taking part (as opposed to the competition element if there is one), e.g. 'inspiring' and 'celebration'
- Highlight benefits which disabled youth dancers have reported were 'selling points' to them: it networks you into the 'community of dance': provides great opportunities to network, meet other dancers and to see their performances (if promoting the national U.Dance platform, it's also a chance to stay away from home with your peers!)

For Platforms with a Selection Process:

For regional U.Dance partners:

- Use and engage with the annual training / discussion sessions regarding criteria
- Appoint an inclusion specialist to your panel / decision-making team

For other platform organisers:

- Ensure your criteria do not result in potential exclusion of disabled dancers (e.g. due to an emphasis on technique) and are transparent in terms of how you reach your selection decisions (e.g. be clear as to whether groups are also selected on other grounds, such as achieving a balanced programme)
- Ensure your panel / decision-maker(s) are clear and consistent regarding whether the context in which the performance is created and/or how the choreography evolves is being taken into consideration (e.g. a group with learning disabled dancers may use more improvisation within a structured choreographic framework)

Access Considerations:

General: Assessing and Meeting Access Requirements:

- Always speak to leaders of groups including disabled dancers about their particular access requirements as early as possible
- Use the access questionnaire developed for U.Dance 2015; either send it out to group leaders and/or use it as a guide for your discussion around access. Available on request.
- Build an access allowance into your budget / funding bid(s) to support groups with support and/or transport needs and ensure details about the availability of access budgets is in pre-application information

- Where possible, invite leaders of inclusive groups into venues prior to the platform to assess likely access issues for their particular youth company

Physical (venue) & Other Basic Access Considerations:

- Always do a recce (don't rely on the venue's own assessment of its accessibility)
- Provide clear information prior to application stage about access information at venues / spaces being used
- Consider all potential requirements (also of audience members in advance), working into budgets for example fees for BSL interpreters, hearing loops, audio description, subtitling of films
- When assessing venues, be mindful of:
 - journeys between venues / spaces as well as within the venues themselves; providing information to participating groups about potential car / taxi transport needed and preferably provision for that transportation need
 - checking where ramps are needed and that there are no 'lips' at the top of ramps
 - backstage access
 - lighting: where additional lighting may be needed (e.g. backstage) for those with partial sight / tendency to trip
 - usual risk assessment considerations: trip hazards, etc
 - door and corridor widths and room sizes, especially where electric wheelchair users will be waiting or travelling
 - accessible toilet availability: do more need to be hired?
 - areas for quiet zones / time out
 - changing spaces (e.g. are these suitable if there are male and female members in a group)

- Ask a wheelchair user and/or others who use mobility aids to accompany staff when undertaking recesses of venues

Signage and documentation:

- Put up clear, pictorial and accessible signage
- Supply documentation for youth dancers in easy-read format (this does not need to be in 2 different formats as all dancers will be able to understand the easy-read version)

Appointment and briefing of artists, staff and volunteers:

- Ensure workshop artists already have experience and understanding of working inclusively or ensure they are trained / coached in advance
- Provide information regarding the workshop leader's background to group leaders / applicants in the access information. Then, they can make informed decisions about how much support they / their other dancers may need to provide or not
- Ensure all staff/assistants (volunteers, assistants, artists, panel members, stage crew) are briefed regarding the access requirements of each group and given basic disability awareness briefing / training. It is NOT enough to just say 'there will be some disabled participants'. E.g. the stage manager needs to understand how difficult it may be for some wheelchair or mobility aid users to reverse and obviously need to know if use of strobe lighting, for example, may trigger a seizure
- Wherever possible and appropriate, appoint one or more disabled artists or volunteers as speakers, workshop leaders and/or guides/helpers

Considerations for Platforms Including Talks / Debates:

- Provide information about alternative (to university / conservatoire) training routes which could reference case studies of high profile disabled artists
- Ensure dancers and group leaders know in advance that information relevant to them will be covered (as many are sceptical about these events from past experience)
- Provide careers information in other formats / online so that those who were unable to attend the full day of activities still benefit

- Make them as short and concise as possible and don't schedule 2 talking based activities alongside each other
- Break youth dancers up into small groups for discussion
- Ensure visibility of a disabled dancer on any panels, or in filmed footage for example

Considerations for Platforms Including Workshops / Masterclasses:

- Provide workshop leaders with information regarding the access requirements of dancers, far enough in advance to inform their planning of the session(s)
- Consider how you will allow time for adaptation / different learning speeds in the session
- Ensure the pace is not too fast / frenetic.
- Ensure the content is clear and simple, for example; not too much talking, switching music off when the artist is speaking, using appropriate language, avoiding styles with complex footwork and offering adaptation suggestions
- Be clear with group leaders in advance regarding whether they can / are needed to play a support worker role in workshops

- Where possible, split the participants into smaller groups (e.g. c.15-20, rather than 30-40 dancers). Consider (to address the fact some dancers want faster paced workshops) running 2 concurrently with one more technical and one allowing for more adaptation and creative exploration
- Where possible, ensure opportunity for non-disabled dancers to work with their disabled peers
- Ideally, ensure the workshop leader is provided with / provides an assistant with understanding of adaptation and inclusive practice

Evaluation:

- Do / provide evaluation tools in alternative formats; talk in advance to inclusive group leaders regarding what will work for their group

- Put up a graffiti board and/or use alternative (e.g. social media / email for non-verbal communicators) means of gathering information from participants during and/or after the event

Supporting Sector / Organisational Development (in inclusive practice):

- Consider whether you could align other programme funds and/or fundraise to offer choreographic training, mentoring and/or sharing for leaders and emerging / existing choreographers with interest or experience in integrated practice
- Contract a local inclusion specialist organisation / professional to provide mentoring / a sounding board (and potentially evaluation services)
- Ask your Director / Chief Executive for whole organisation (including staff and regular volunteers, including Board members) disability awareness training

