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Mapping the training needs of d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists in Scotland

by Susan Hay



2025

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executive summary

In 2024 and 2025 Marc Brew Company (MBC) led a mapping and research exercise resulting in the publication of this report. This was driven by a desire to provide training opportunities for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent (DDN) artists in Scotland, like those Marc Brew had successfully implemented whilst working in America, whilst not replicating what already existed.

As such, the aim of the research was to map the training needs and aspirations of DDN artists in Scotland so that they could be better matched by training opportunities.

The research combined interviews, focus groups, individual and group conversations and Desk Research. It was considered essential that alongside this research a survey was undertaken to ascertain the current needs, wants and frustrations of artists working in Scotland.

Supported by Creative Scotland funding and a group of artists and organisations in Scotland committed to Inclusive Arts Practice and Performance (the DDN Training Network), the survey was co-created and distributed, targeted at those who self-identified as d/Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent and located in Scotland.

The survey was presented in multiple forms and shared across the partnership network with promotion made accessible through BSL and captioning.

105 responses were collected from the survey, two focus groups were held and six individual conversations undertaken to allow people time to feed back their views in a way that was comfortable for them. The key findings were:

- Affordable: Financial support such as bursaries and flexible payment options are crucial.
- Accessible: Training should be local, online, or hybrid, with flexible timings and support for travel and other access needs. This would meet concerns about intensity of learning, breaks and access needs being met.
- Inclusive: There is a need for more training specifically for DDN artists, with trainers who are themselves deaf/disabled.
- Supportive: Mentoring, networking support and help with getting work seen are highly valued, while getting help with making applications and understanding opportunities is critical. Whilst online and shorter training were attractive to overcome barriers such as travel and access costs, it was important for these to have some form of optional social or networking element, or the opportunity to be part of a community.
- Contextualised: Training should be relevant to the artists' work and provide opportunities for collaboration and skill development in areas such as audience development, marketing, and business skills. Targeted training that could continue to support artists throughout their careers would be beneficial and for training not to be siloed via artform or disability would be welcomed.

These findings were supported by the wider research which further identified:

- Successful projects were localised, with a wider geographic spread.
- A flexible, empathetic, person centric approach to training delivery and communication was key to delivering successful outcomes for participants. Existing projects identify how mentors and leaders with knowledge and lived experience of DDN are essential. Nurturing networks were also positive in continuing to support artists.
- Cross sector collaborative working led to successful advocacy, amplified through working together. Jointly groups can change and challenge perceptions and working practices.

The DDN Training Network are using these findings to inform their training and professional development offer now and into the future. They will also be used as evidence to advocate across the wider arts sector to encourage a broader range of opportunities for DDN artists. Examples include: Lung Ha Theatre's Access and Creative Principles Toolkit shared across the performing arts sector; MBC offering bursaries to DDN artists attending open workshops; MBC delivering D.A.R.E 4-day residency for DDN artists in Autumn 2026; Imaginate working in partnership with Birds of Paradise offering disabled professionals hands-on experience working either with the production Boys Don't Dance by Marc Brew or on the Edinburgh International Children's Festival 2026.

With thanks to all the organisations involved in supporting this research: Birds of Paradise (BoP); Creative Scotland; Cutting Edge Theatre; Dance Base; Drake Music Scotland; Indepen-dance; Lung Ha Theatre Company; Marc Brew Company; National Theatre of Scotland; Paragon Music; Solar Bear; Sonic Bothy; Triple C; Waterbaby Arts; Visually Impaired Scotland (VICS) and Y Dance.

The members of the DDN training network include: Birds of Paradise (BoP); Cutting Edge Theatre; Dance Base; Drake Music Scotland; Indepen-dance; Lung Ha Theatre Company; Marc Brew Company; National Theatre of Scotland; Paragon Music; Solar Bear; Sonic Bothy; Triple C Waterbaby and YDance.

Together, the network is committed to creating more opportunities for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists across Scotland.

introduction & background

Whilst leading Axis Dance Company in the USA, Marc Brew, Artistic Director of Marc Brew Company, created successful training workshops and intensives for Axis. This included a Choreolab that funded artists to have time and space with dancers with his mentorship, followed by a small sum to continue to develop the work afterwards.

On returning to Scotland from the USA Marc was keen to create similar training opportunities for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent (DDN) artists in Scotland.

In order to create something that had value for the Scottish community, Marc Brew Company's Creative Producer, Susan Hay, pulled together key organisations working in the field to jointly consider how they could work collaboratively to maximise the impact of any training for the sector.

It was identified that the mapping of current provision would be key to responding to the sector's needs. In Autumn of 2024 Marc Brew Company was awarded Creative Scotland funding to conduct a mapping and research project into the training needs of DDN artists in Scotland. A survey was drafted by a group of artists and organisations in Scotland committed to Inclusive Arts Practice and Performance. The organisations include: Birds of Paradise (BoP), Creative Scotland, Dance Base, Drake Music Scotland, Indepen-dance, Marc Brew Company, Paragon Music, Solar Bear, National Theatre of Scotland and Y Dance.

The aim of the survey was to map the training needs and aspirations of DDN artists in Scotland so that they could be better matched by training opportunities. The survey and supporting advert were BSL translated to make the process fully inclusive.

During the research period, MBC also engaged with Cutting Edge Theatre, Lung Ha Theatre Company, Sonic Bothy, Triple C, Visually Impaired Scotland (VICS) and Waterbaby Arts, who focus on supporting DDN artists and are now part of the wider peer support network, created through this project. We are aware that many other main stream organisations also deliver workshops for non-professionals and that pathways into the profession for DDN young people are of interest to many.



Image Credit: Luis Ponciano

methodology

The research combined interviews, focus groups, desk-research and a survey. The survey was targeted at those who self-identify as d/Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent and are located in Scotland. Participants were recruited through a social media campaign led by Marc Brew Company on Instagram and Facebook and shared through Creative Scotland and research partner's websites and direct mailing lists.

Within the initial survey that was collated using Survey Monkey, respondents were asked if they would like to participate further in 121 sessions or focus groups. The survey had 105 responses with over 20% wishing to participate further. Apart from a technical glitch that excluded some areas of Scotland in the geographical question, the response to the survey was positive. The survey responses were shared with those who expressed an interest in seeing them.

A limitation to this methodology is that it hasn't been possible to identify how many people work in the arts at this time, and the overall proportion of those that self-identify as d/Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent. As such it is unclear how the total number of survey responses, whilst seeming considerable, compares to the overall numbers of DDN people working in the arts.

Feedback from the survey -
"Really interesting results, thanks for sharing."
"it's good to have that feedback after completing such an in-depth survey."
"I really enjoyed this survey, well made 💟👁"


Image Credit: Marcin Lewandowski

survey recommendations

Key recommendations taken from the survey are that training for DDN artists needs to be:

- **Affordable:** Financial support such as bursaries and flexible payment options are crucial.
- **Accessible**: Training should be local, online, or hybrid, with flexible timings and support for travel and other access needs.
- **Inclusive**: There is a need for more training specifically for DDN artists, with trainers who are themselves deaf/disabled.
- **Supportive**: Mentoring, networking support and help with getting work seen are highly valued, while getting help with making applications and understanding opportunities is critical.
- **Contextualised**: Training should be relevant to the artists' work and provide opportunities for collaboration and skill development in areas such as audience development, marketing, and business skills.

Sub-notes:
In order for the DDN artists to feel comfortable going into a space, the following would support them:

- Receiving an access pack before the event.
- Confirmation that it was a fully accessible space (lift, lighting, sound levels and break out space).

- BSL interpretation and audio description were less requested. (provided as standard)
- Full day workshops need to have travel / access support and full breaks available. Also, consideration needs to be taken for light disabled people ie no LED lights in the space.

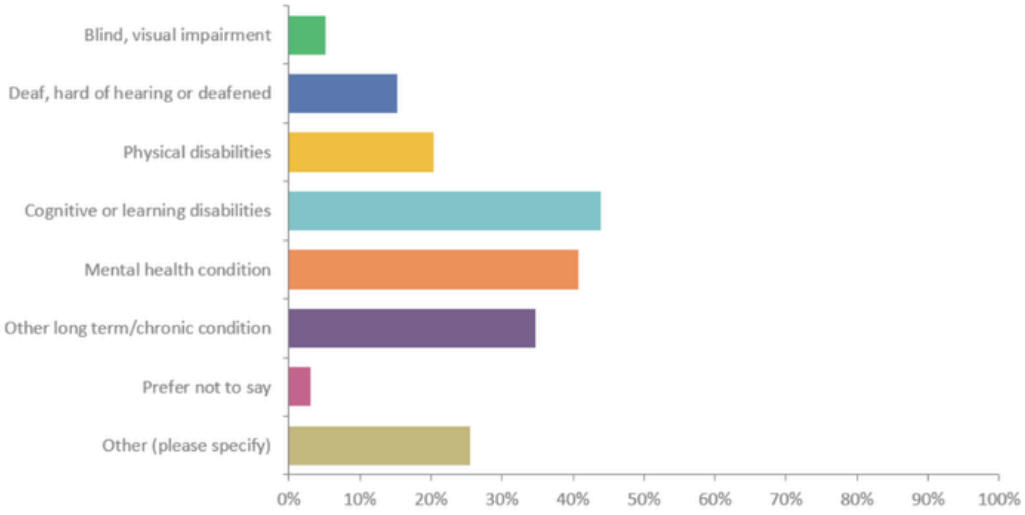
- Lung Ha Theatre Company has released, since this research has taken place, an Access and Creative Principles Toolkit. This toolkit supports the work presented in this report, providing individuals and organisations with guidance on working with learning-disabled adults.



Image Credit: Marcin Lewandowski

detailed survey responses

A deaf/disabled person is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as someone with a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' Do you consider yourself to be deaf and/or disabled under the Equality Act 2010? If so, please tick all that apply.

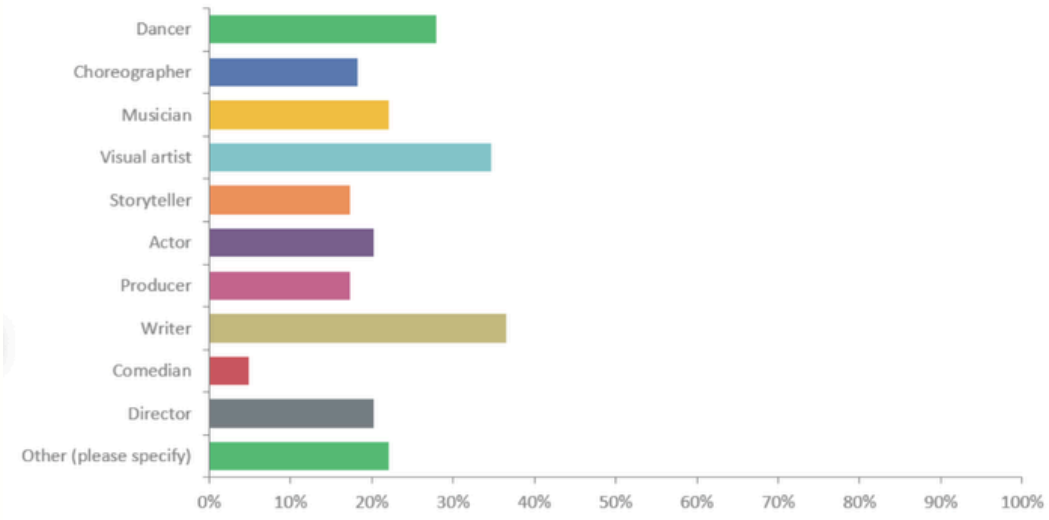


Responses:

Blind, visual impairment – 5%
Deaf, hard of hearing or deafened – 15%
Physical disabilities – 20%
Cognitive or learning disabilities – 44%
Mental health condition – 41%
Other long term/chronic condition – 35%
Prefer not to say – 3%
Other – 25% this mostly neurodivergence but also other conditions:
included Autism, ADHD, OCD, dyspraxia, ASD, a pre symptomatic carrier for Hungary Disease, WEAVER SYNDROME, PTSD, MDP syndrome, Action Myoclonus Renal Failure, Vascular damage affecting memory, dyslexia, pcos which makes me tired and affects my mental health but haven't been diagnosed with anxiety.

Note: Some people had multiple conditions

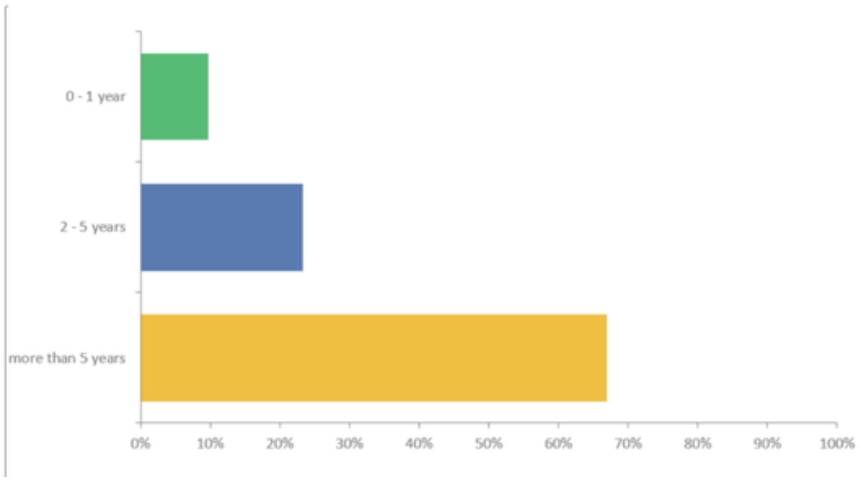
How do you describe yourself? Please tick all that apply.



37% of respondents are writers; 35% visual artists; 28% dancers; 22% Musicians; 22% Other. 20% are actors; 18% choreographers, 17% storytellers or producers and 5% comedians.
Other includes: dance teacher, educating artist, playwright & dramaturg, property master, physical theatre performer, artisan, designer, filmmaker, illustrator, activist and researcher, performer, signed song artist, Teacher, Footwear designer/customiser, graffiti artist, photographer, poet and facilitator, using music therapeutically in a range of community settings, development manager, Production Manager and drama and theatre workshop leader.

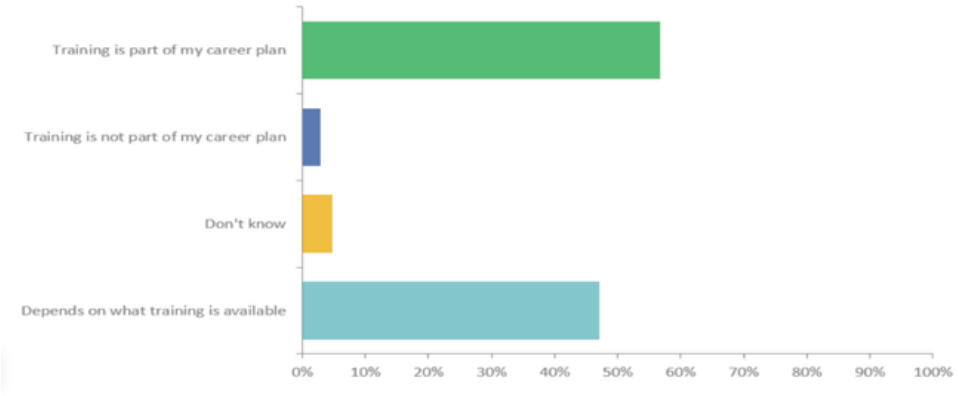
Note: some people had multiple skills.

How long have you been working in the arts?



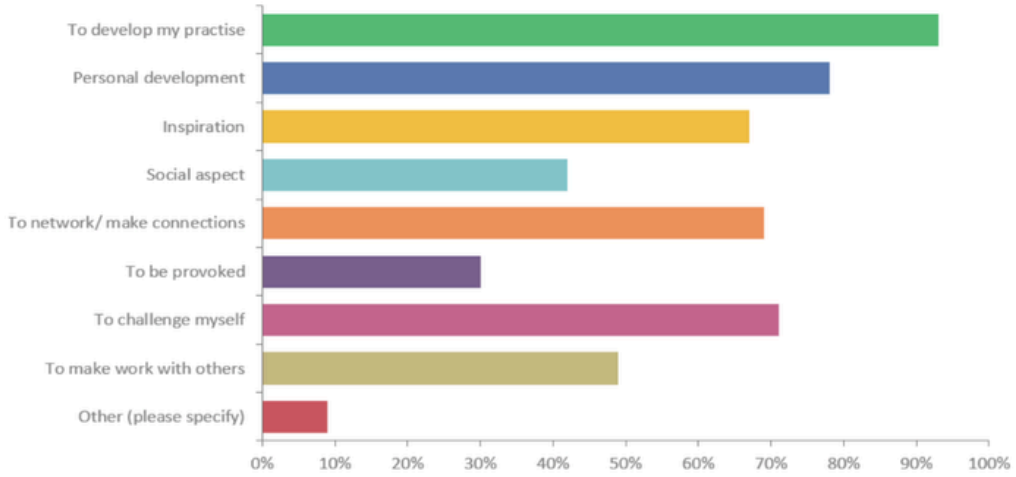
The majority of respondents (67%) have been working in the arts for more than five years. 23% have worked for 2-5 years and 10% for under a year.

Do you see training a part of your career plan?



The majority of respondents 57% saw training as a part of their career plan, but it highly depends on what training is available and if it is accessible to them. (NB: some respondents ticked multiple boxes which has skewed the percentages)

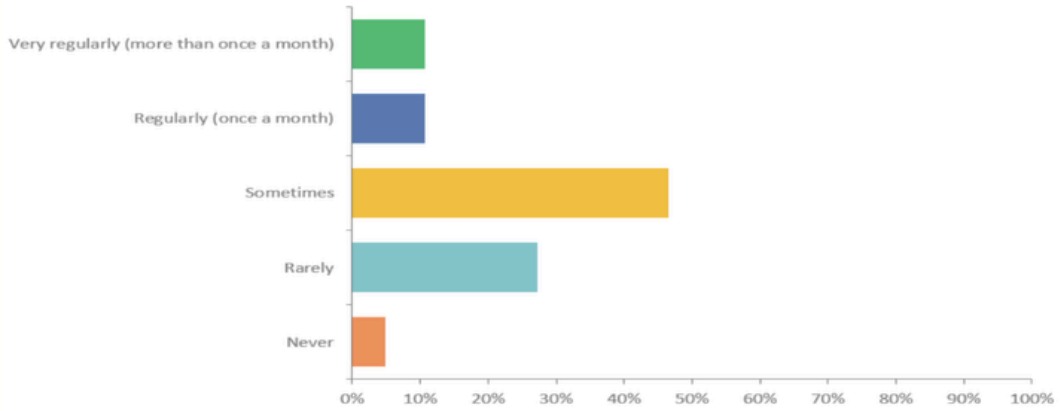
Why do you take part in training?



The top response for reasons to take part in training was to develop my practise – 93%. Personal development – 78%; To challenge myself – 71%; for Inspiration – 67%.
Connecting with others was also important - To network/ make connections – 69%; To make work with others – 49%; Social aspect – 42%.

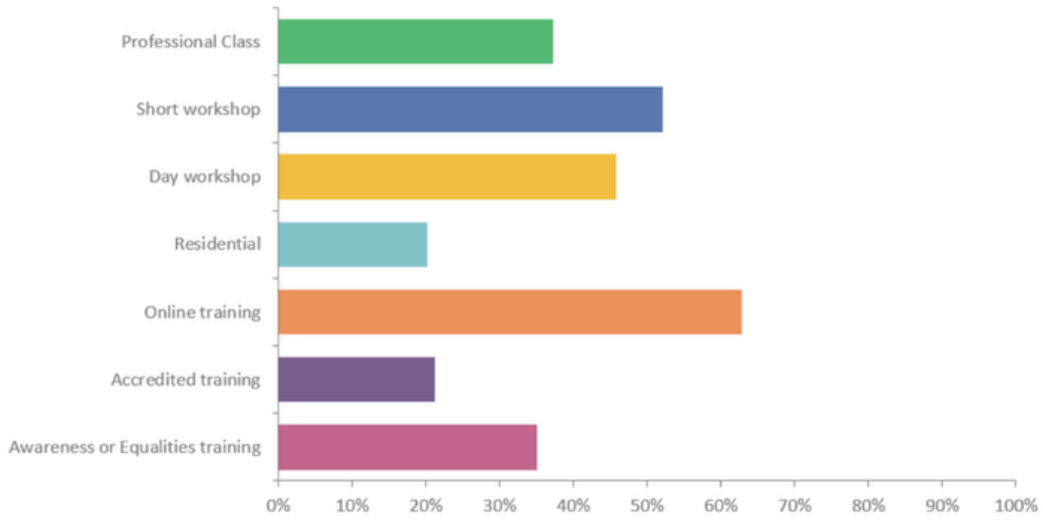
Other responses were: to diversify and become more sustainable; technical skills for independent artists; learn new skills and approaches; I enjoy learning; to improve career prospects; Access to training/seminars around the world; to find ways to reinvent my work in order to find more opportunities and sustain myself financially.

How regularly do you access training opportunities?



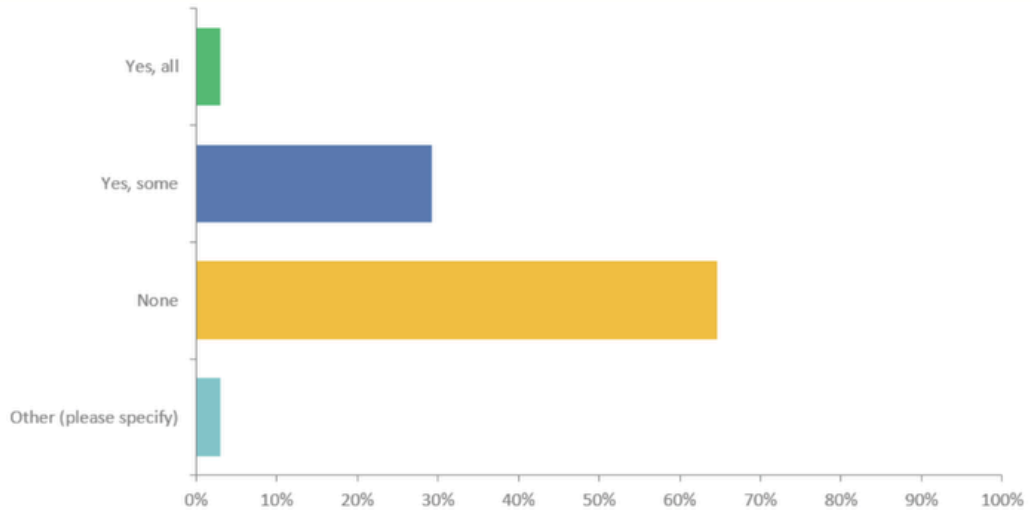
Respondents only sometimes attended training (46.6%), with many rarely (27.1%) or never (4.9%) attending training. Those who regularly (10.7%) or very regularly (10.7%) were in the minority.

Which of these training opportunities have you taken part in, in the last 18 months? Please tick all that apply.



Some respondents had attended multiple training sessions with online training the most attended (63% of respondents). Short workshops (52%), Day workshop (46%), Professional Class (37%), Awareness or Equalities training (35%), Residential (20%), Accredited training (21%)

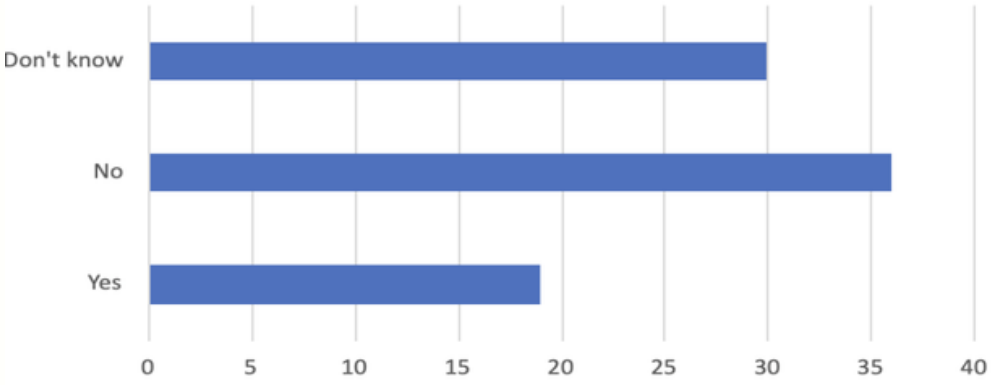
Were any of these training opportunities specifically for deaf and/or disabled people?



The majority (65%) of training opportunities were not specifically for deaf and/or disabled artists, with only 3% being targeted for these groups. 29% stated that some training was targeted for DDN artists.

Comments from participants: I was previously a carer, and so was my mum and we hope to cultivate a basic sign language intro class. Apart from that it can unfortunately be lacking out there; Some were training opportunities for me to learn more about the specific needs of different disabled groups eg People living with Parkinson's (PLWP).

Were any your trainers deaf and/or disabled?



22% of respondents were confident that their trainers were deaf/disabled. 35% were unsure. 43% were non-disabled tutors.

Which of the following training / development opportunities would you be interested in (please tick all that apply)



The top three answers were Mentoring (68% of respondents) Full day or short workshops (67% of respondents). For longer facilitated residencies, the preference was for it to be led by experienced disabled artists disabled artists (61% of respondents).

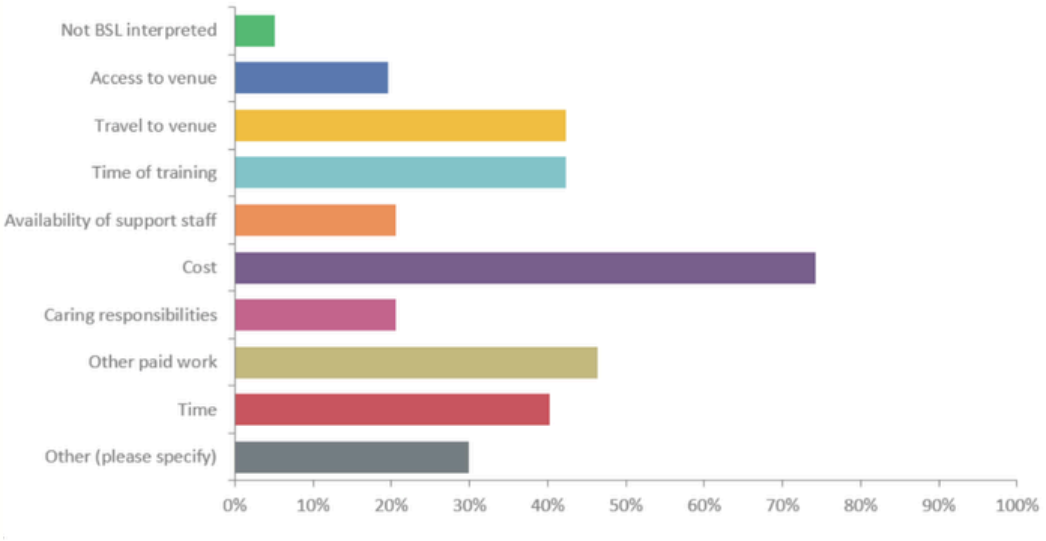
63% of respondents wanted help with getting their work seen. 55% would like to attend professional classes, with 54% seeking networking support. International exchanges were also popular with 52% interested in such opportunities. 40% would be interested in a self-led residency and 38% were interested in Inclusive teacher training.

One caveat was that full day workshops need to have travel / access support and full breaks available. Also, consideration needs to be taken for light disabled people ie no LED lights in the space.

One comment was that there needs to be more drama schools that are specifically for adults for additional needs and disabled people, that help them get grades in a way that works for them.
Other training listed includes: Weekly or fortnightly lessons; 1to1; Awareness or Equalities training; Opportunities for POC; Encouraging professionalism; Help with promotion; funding opportunities; How to survive when the entire world (and funding system) is against you training; Image description tips! How to expand but also articulate the words for those visually impaired; Funding; Hard; More training about how best to mentor neurodiverse artists as I am; Taking work abroad and networking; Bespoke training.

Personal experience: There's a lot of 'old school' directors still about. A month and a half ago at a professional gig where I was acting, there was a slap in the script and the director genuinely said 'you don't mind a little tap do you?'. I refused but I'm fairly certain it was received negatively and has impacted my reputation and there was no one to report it to.

If you have attended training, what barriers did you face to access existing training?



There are multiple barriers for those trying to access training with the main one being cost (74% of respondents). Having other employment, time – both own time and timing of the training and travel to the venue were the next popular responses (46%, 40%, 42% respectively). Travel to (42%) and access (20%) to the venue were also issues. Many (21%) had caring responsibilities, or were unable to access support staff (21%) with 20% finding that the venue was inaccessible for them. 5% cited a lack of BSL interpretation as being a barrier.

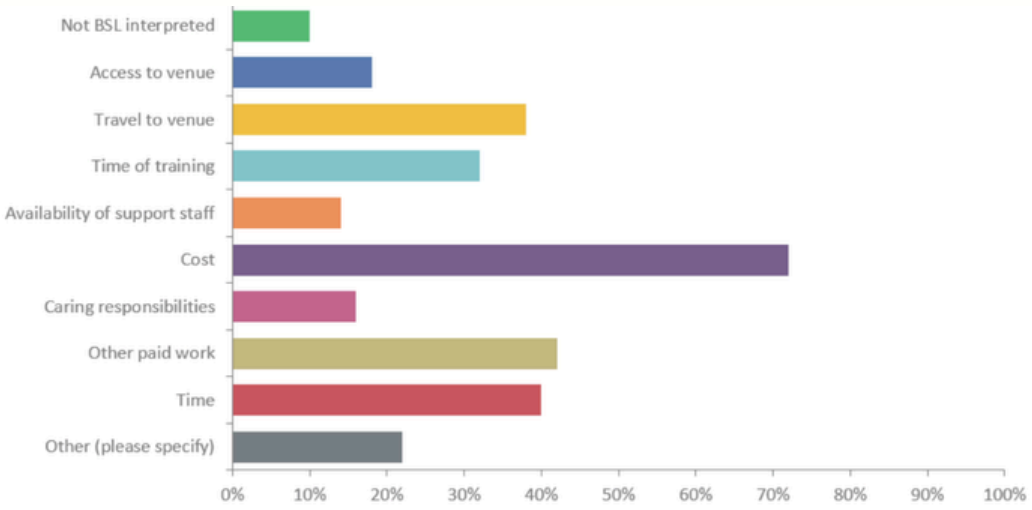
Respondents were asked for open comments around barriers. These include:

- teachers who don't have an understanding of working with disabled people (4 respondents);
- communicating and politics around social codes;
- Access to or while being in the building (3 respondents) No lift in building (& training was on second floor); lighting and sound, lack of quiet space.
- Networking is one of the biggest benefits of training and for people with social disorders like anxiety or autism it can be incredibly hard to deal with communication in person and online; networking not being accessible;
- I need regular breaks and rest recovery time. This is not always clear in programming;
- Hours too intensive - I can't manage full time hours; not enough breaks etc
- sometimes I feel shy going to new things;
- Counting and calculating;
- capacity;
- Physical ability;
- Capacity is fluctuating, so if at low points in health not much can get done or attendance and abortion of important information can be lost to overlapping ailments (IE migraines from bad lighting, dry throat, uncomfortable temperatures from an overuse of heating etc);
- Lack of captioning for HoH/deaf participants; They don't listen when I say it's easiest if seating is in a circle so I can lip read. They don't use microphones; Deaf - sometimes need to lip read and moving around on the ground when dancing is difficult;
- burnout;
- schedule conflicts;
- Anxiety around expectations;

- Materials not being shared ahead of session. Sometimes receiving slides or written material in advance is not always easy to get;
- Environment: loud noises and bright screens,
- difficulties with language and lack of diversity;

Personal experience: When studying, the head of the department was quite frankly ableist and reluctantly put in access requests, or ignored them, and then spoke down to me for it. Other lecturers were appalled but there was nothing I could do because he kept lying and misrepresenting what happened to higher ups

If you haven't accessed training, what are the perceived barriers?

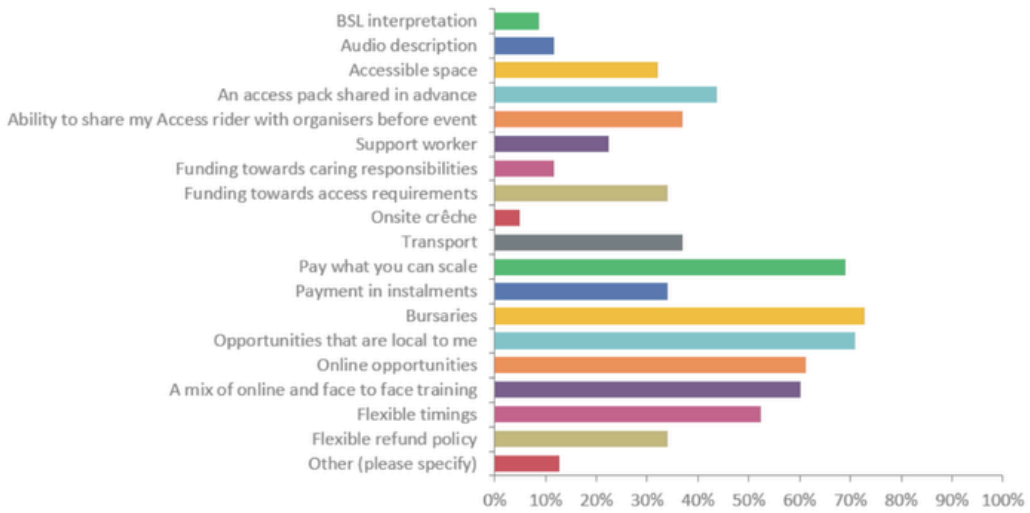


Similar to the previous question, the perceived barriers are largely cost (72%), other paid work (42%) and time (40%).
Not BSL interpreted – 10%
Access to venue – 18%
Travel to venue – 38%
Time of training – 32%
Availability of support staff - 14%
Caring responsibilities – 16%
Other perceived barriers were:

- Teachers not understanding disabilities
- social anxiety, situational mutism, that the event will be too overwhelming;
- physical ability;
- hard when on benefits;
- dance spaces are often ableist;
- capacity;

Personal experience: Understanding needs unique to person; I would have chosen to go elsewhere to finish my degree but housing was an issue - I couldn't move from my social housing. There's no system in place for this to be a consideration at all anywhere

Would any of these help make training opportunities more accessible to you? Please tick all that apply.



The most popular responses for making training more accessible were Bursaries (73%); Pay what you can scale (69%); Opportunities that are local to me (71%); Online opportunities (61%) and a mix of online and face to face training (60%). Flexibility in timings of training (52%), refunds policies (34%), were cited as helpful.

In order for the DDN artists to feel comfortable going into a space, the following would support them:

- receiving an access pack before the event
- Confirmation that it was a fully accessible space (lift, lighting, sound levels and break out space)
- BSL interpretation and audio description were less requested (9% and 12% respectively)

37% of DDN artists would like the opportunity to share their Access rider with organisers before event. Support with transport (37%), especially if not accessible by public transport; payment in instalments (34%); Funding towards access requirements (34%); Support worker (22%); Funding towards caring responsibilities (12%) and an Onsite creche (5%) were also requested.

Open comments:

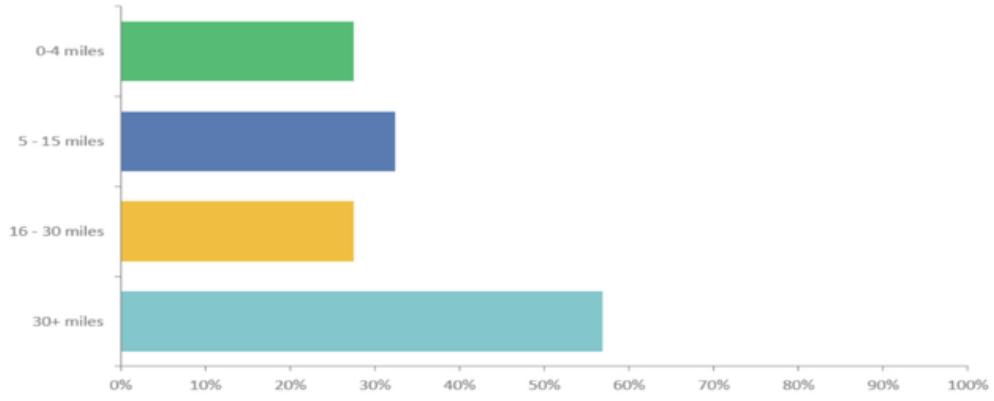
- having a clear schedule in advance;
- mix of live and asynchronous delivery (all online);
- rest space;
- Shorter days/weeks;
- Led light free spaces. It's impossible to access any buildings these days!
- Options to ask more questions
- Live captioning, captions/subtitles and Personal Listening Devices;
- Detailed information about what the training entails so that I know in advance if it is right for me;
- accessible parking x2
- Having an Access Coordinator;
- Some of my friends and I can only do afternoons (between 1-5pm or so) due to having to be available for Home Care which can make attending things difficult.

- Opportunities that pay for time - most freelancers cannot afford to not work.
- Better advertised and easier to apply for (long arduous processes easily abandoned and forgotten about)
- Shorter days, broken up sessions no long hours on zoom
- Inclusive language that encourages engagement from invisible disabilities - even the question in this form “were any of your trainers disabled” pre supposes that you can visibly identify disabled people.
- Lack of transportation and lack of a sense of direction;
- Online sessions are best;
- How training is delivered for neurodivergent participants who have sensory processing and executive function issues requiring shorter bursts of info and visual formats to assimilate info with more movement breaks, processing time;
- Clear instructions;
- Greater understanding of the VI community, greater collaboration with organisations specifically for VI people;
- teachers need to have more awareness of disabilities as several instances of ableism on the teachers’ part have led to me quitting courses I have paid for;
- Transcription of musical notation;
- Timely bookings. For example, offering a space the day before when you like 3 hours away isn't feasible.
- Points of contact/ having a named person to go to;
- Adapted toilets!
- I am a carer who lives in a rural setting. more opportunities closer to home so I can also be near hand;
- I like to be hands on and thrown into the deep end quite quickly. I feel there’s sometimes too much focus on theory in the beginning;
- BSL interpretation;
- opportunities for time alone during event, not having to socialise if not feeling up to it, being able to spread things out over quite a long time period as I often only get small pockets of time away from caring responsibilities;
- Funding is the biggest issue but also not having anyone to accompany me;
- I love online training because I can access it from home. In person training can be challenging and I find it exhausting (I’m neurodivergent and have health conditions which can flare up without warning); I struggle with the social aspect of training;
- Distance. No access to city-based training in person. Travel times prohibitive;
- Quiet space, ability to take breaks;
- For participants to know that my Downs Syndrome doesn't stop me;
- a relaxed meeting or zoom call in advance to meet other people attending;
- adjustable lighting, possible a walk-through of location;
- Provision of alternative lighting for training spaces. The new LED lights cause so many health problems and many people get headaches and migraines working under LED lights. They are much worse than fluorescent lights. Travel is also extremely difficult for light disabled people. Public Transport is completely inaccessible with LED lighting everywhere;

- I'm a carer but care costs funding can't help me. I need shorter days/weeks, and understanding and flexibility due to the unpredictability of being a single parent carer of disabled adult children, plus managing my own energy levels and avoiding burn out. I need a quiet rest space.;
- Access requirements - it's not quite training but in relation to disability, accessing a community can be hard and time for this I have found to be very important in my own teaching and directing work with disabled arts workers;
- More support for disabled people to get the same opportunities just like everyone else instead of been told “you can’t handle it go away You’re never going to achieve” which has sadly said to me to many times before and costing for travel/ accommodation;
- An access pack and information provided beforehand, would be really helpful;
- Quiet comfortable room - good lighting (often overlooked in favour of 'moody' bohemian vibe rooms) Not good for lipreading!;
- trainers need to be disabled themselves;
- Trauma-informed facilitation;
- Studio space (thinking how noise travels, lighting, speakers, teachers awareness);
- Regular breaks. Turning cameras off for online sessions. Full layout of sessions ahead of time;
- support with applications;
- Captions/transcribing,
- hybrid training options

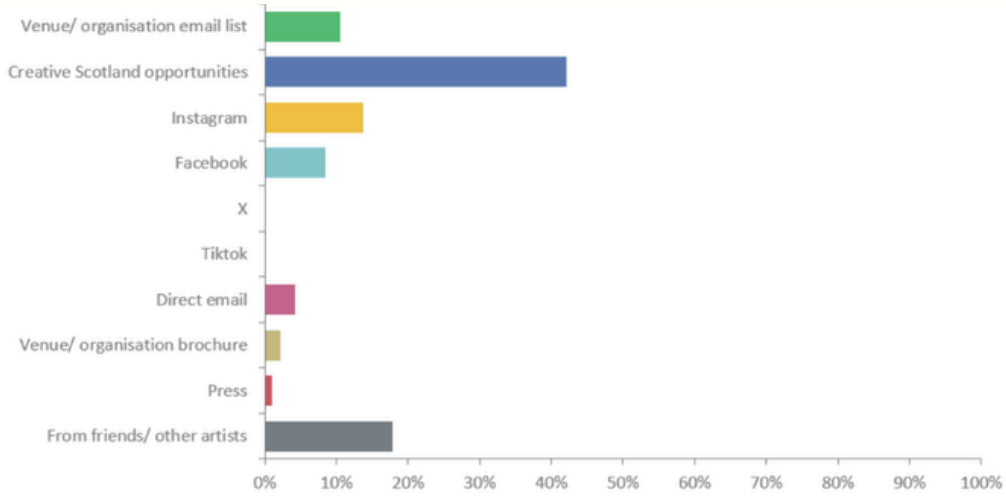
Personal experience: Often training is pitched at the beginner rather than early years. I am in my 50s, I have a masters, I have been published in other genres, but I'm looking to develop my career and be seriously focused on my writing;

How far would you be happy to travel to access training opportunities?



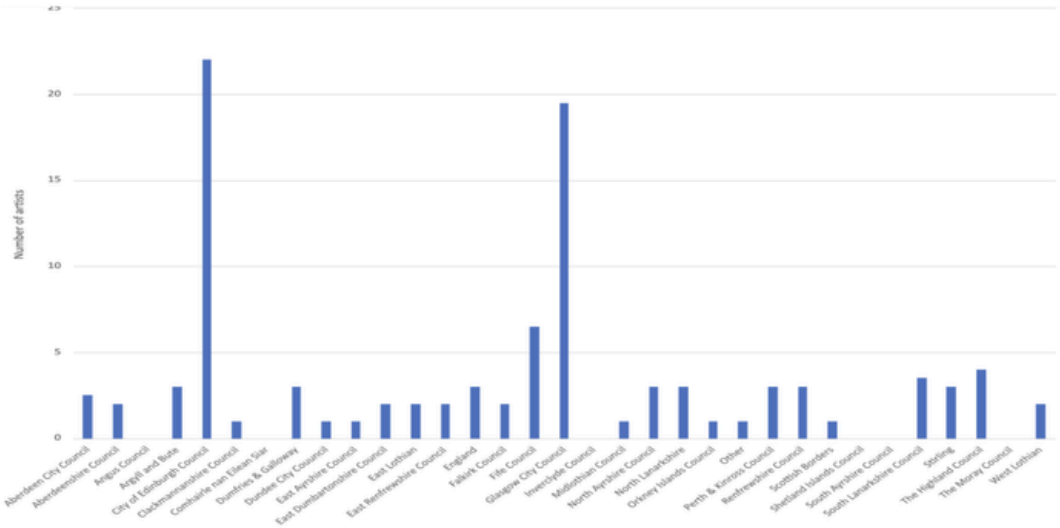
Dependent on the training, most (57%) were willing to travel over 30 miles to participate, with 32% willing to travel between 5-15 miles and 27% identifying travelling under 5 miles, or between 16-30 miles. However, local provision has also been cited as a barrier to accessing training, so thought needs to be given as to how and where training is delivered.

How do you currently find out about training opportunities?



Creative Scotland's opportunities listing is the most popular place to find out about training. Friends and family – 18% and emails from organisation or venues (11%) are key sources of information. The most popular social media source was Instagram (14%) then Facebook (8%) with X and Tiktok not being used for this at all.

Which local authority do you live in?



The majority of respondents were based in the central belt. NB: a couple of people split their time between geographic locations, which explains the .5 in some areas.

Location	Number
Aberdeen City Council	2.5
Aberdeenshire Council	2
Angus Council	0
Argyll and Bute	3
City of Edinburgh Council	22
Clackmannanshire Council	1
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	0
Dumfries & Galloway	3
Dundee City Council	1
East Ayrshire Council	1
East Dumbartonshire Council	2
East Lothian	2
East Renfrewshire Council	2
England	3
Falkirk Council	2
Fife Council	6.5
Glasgow City Council	19.5
Inverclyde Council	0
Midlothian Council	1
North Ayrshire Council	3
North Lanarkshire	3
Orkney Islands Council	1
Other	1
Perth & Kinross Council	3
Renfrewshire Council	3
Scottish Borders	1
Shetland Islands Council	0
South Ayrshire Council	0
South Lanarkshire Council	3.5
Stirling	3
The Highland Council	4
The Moray Council	0
West Lothian	2

Open ended responses:

I'd like to see workshops and training that covers things that are hard for marginalised people to do because they've not been socialised to take up space, things like self-advocacy, communicating needs, putting your ideas forward and expanding your work to have scale and ambition beyond the space you have been previously allowed.

I travel to Glasgow and Edinburgh often but I don't have a network in Aberdeenshire. I've tried, but most writers play with the idea. I need a committed group who will help push me to maintain regular practice. Up until now I have only achieved this through my Masters degree but I cannot afford to keep garnering qualifications as I am unable to focus on a course and on earning money. For me, these don't intersect.

I have been actively seeking a disability trained clarinet teacher since my previous teacher changed jobs in 2022. There is little to nothing out there teacher wise for a 40+ adult with a rare disorder who is frequently misplaced.
More focus on multiple identities and experiences. Disabled and NEurodivergeng. Disabled and lgbt+, Disabled and ethnic minority.

Due to chronic health issues, I have had to change my career multiple times and ultimately decided to focus on art. Unfortunately, there are many barriers and costs associated with developing my skills as an artist. If I were hearing, I could have applied for a part-time job and continued to develop my skills in other areas.

However, my deafness and chronic illness have made this difficult. Seeking support and reducing barriers is exhausting and costly. It's an unfortunate situation for people like me. I have also struggled to find grants, which are rare in Scotland, whereas England has more grant opportunities available for deaf individuals. ATW only offers support for paid roles, leaving out volunteers, workshops, and even conferences that could help individuals develop their professional skills. This limitation highlights the need for ATW to make improvements, as the current process can negatively impact many people's mental health. The delays and lack of responses create unnecessary stress for those seeking assistance in paid roles as well.

Thank you for collating this information

You have not included a vast tract of Scotland in omitting to specify Dumfries & Galloway and the Scottish Borders. If we are just 'other' in a survey looking at how to include 'otherness' I am appalled. Shame on you! Obviously my completion of this survey would be deemed irrelevant!

I think it's really important to understand the inherent vulnerability that comes with being disabled. Whilst we don't want to advertise it or admit it, we are vulnerable and that is very easily taken advantage of. It would be very helpful to have an industry incident recording database, where folk can record things like that slap. Luckily I was trained prior to this by someone who uses stage combat and we used stage combat in the play they directed on and I've also had experience with industry best practice but I'm one of the lucky ones. Its a gift to be trusted in a rehearsal room but folk take it for granted or gatekeep which is exclusion of a different kind. Perhaps more trauma informed practitioners. That head of department I mentioned was definitely not trauma informed and it caused me many issues. We are incredibly capable but other people's misguided ideas about our capacity suppresses our potential and its so frustrating when folk with influence and power don't create safe spaces. It's not hard to do.

The arts community seems to be very much about who you know and social communication and interactions are hard for me as I am autistic and don’t really understand “the rules”.

I think I may be a unique candidate with what I do. There’s nothing that I’ve seen personally in Scotland that would help me progress in my career as a footwear designer, especially someone who is working class with no formal training. I answered “Yes” to online training but wasn’t sure if that meant researching myself and using free tutorials.

Creative Scotland claim to be disability friendly and offer support but this hasn’t been my experience. It’s all a waste of time and virtue signalling as the same Disabled artists will get the support and the rest get left to fight over any scraps
I really enjoyed this survey, well made 💟👁️

About the survey - “Really interesting results, thanks for sharing.”
“it's good to have that feedback after completing such an in-depth survey.”

other research findings

Arts Council England (ACE), 2025

In its new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Review, ACE says the proportion of arts organisations funded through its national portfolio programme who have a disabled Chair has trebled in four years (from five to 15 per cent).

The proportion of funded arts bodies with a disabled Chief Executive has also risen, from 9% in 2018-19 to 13% in 2022-23, while the proportion with a disabled Artistic Director rose from 8% to 10%, and the proportion of board members identifying as disabled increased from 8% to 12%.

Barriers to progression & Employment in dance for disabled people (ACE research), 2025

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

They mean business. The Working Group acts 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

Cutting Edge Theatre

In 2019 Cutting Edge Theatre were supported by Creative Scotland to conduct a mapping and research project into the current provision of theatre and performance training for Learning Disabled, Autistic and Neuro-divergent (LD) individuals in Scotland with the aims to:

- See where the strengths are and find examples of best practice in the delivery of high-quality drama provisions for the Community.
- See where the gaps are and look to establish opportunities where there is no provision.
- Create an accessible website where people can find out information about high quality arts. provision in their area. This will help begin to connect participants to training and vice versa.
- Begin to connect inclusive arts companies and practitioners, thus creating a network and community of practice, which will develop as we progress.

As a result of the key findings that identified Scotland's dispersed population and geography, together with the company's knowledge of their theatre ecology and learning needs of LD performers, Cutting Edge Theatre plan to explore a model where training is delivered in several centres across the country. Plans for the website are still in development and require further investment. (Ref: Springboard CS report of findings, Katrina Caldwell for Cutting Edge Theatre)



Image Credit: Cutting Edge Theatre

Europe Beyond Access (EBA)

Europe Beyond Access (EBA) is an international project that supports the creation of new works by Deaf and/or disabled artists from across Europe. It involves 10 European dance and performing arts organisations and is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. EBA is the biggest transnational project in the world supporting disabled and/or Deaf artists, to break the glass ceilings of contemporary dance and theatre and to become Europe's next artistic leaders.

Currently researching on the access, lack of access and experience of disabled students in higher education institutions in the performing arts in Creative Europe countries and the UK – that is, theatre schools, dance academies, conservatories, and similar institutions that provide practical, skills-based education for those seeking to enter the professional performing arts. For example, as actors, dancers, technicians, directors, choreographers, producers, stage managers, lighting or costume or stage designers, or production managers. Research will also analyse what alternative educational and professional development paths have been followed by disabled people who could not access mainstream educational institutions.

Based on previous research that led to the groundbreaking research series Time to Act. The research team includes disabled and non-disabled members. Their final report - Learning to Change, was published on 3 December 2025, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



Image Credit: Busan Cultural Foundation with Marc Brew Company

Neuk Collective

A recent survey carried out by the Neuk Collective found that 90.7% of respondents wanted tailored mentoring schemes that supported neurodivergent artists as well as more flexible working conditions.

Stopgap Future Leaders Programme

Stopgap's Future Leaders Programme is a unique, paid initiative designed for Deaf, Disabled, and neurodivergent mid-career arts professionals. Annie-Rose Grantham joined StopGap in 2024 as Assistant Producer, in the first Future Leaders cohort.

For the Assistant Producer role, half of the course was around building confidence. Growing to understand the different communication needs and allowing the Assistant Producer time to re-work documents e.g. spreadsheets, to make them work for them. Giving them ownership of a specific project, with support, enabled them to grow into the role and achieve the experience needed to allow them to be considered for producing roles in the wider sector.

Why do we need more Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent leaders in the Dance sector?

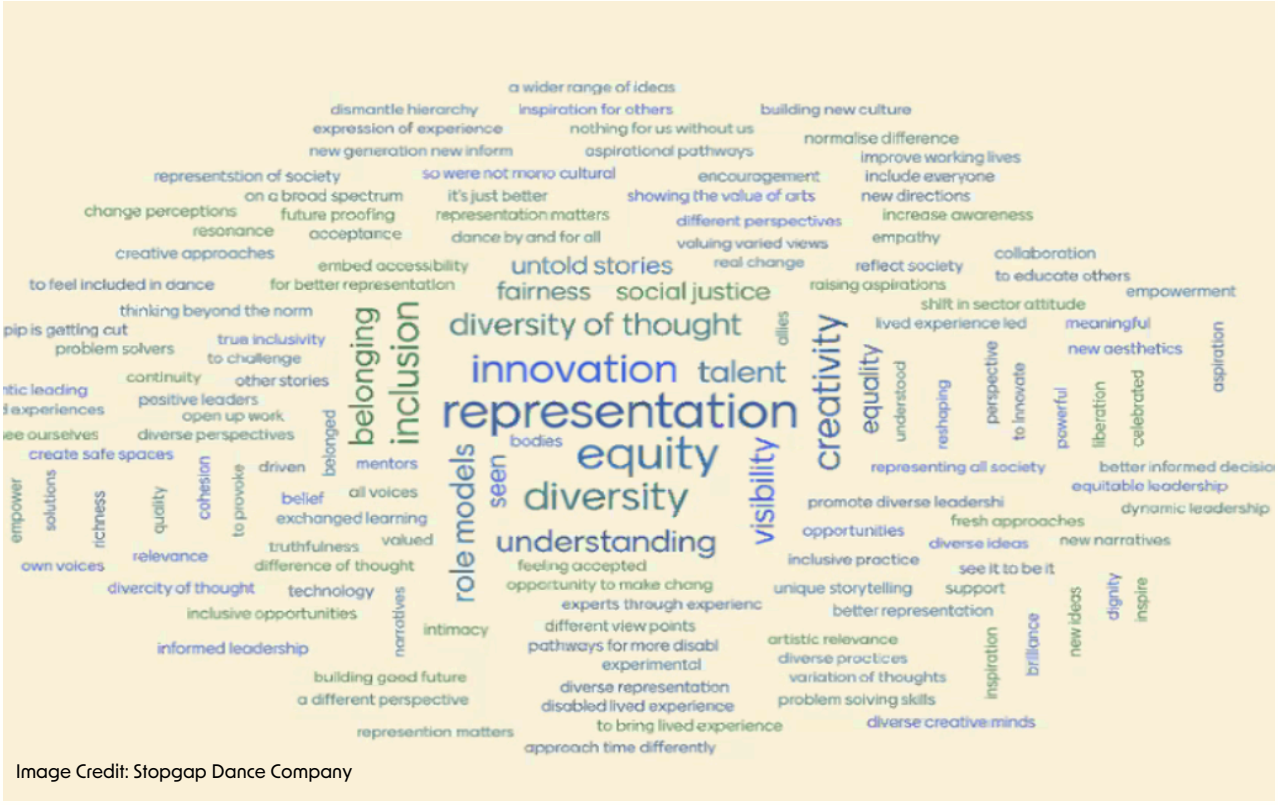


Image Credit: Stopgap Dance Company

The following were identified as required to support disabled leaders:

- Flexibility – need to attend hospital appointments, carers, etc.
- Understanding – good inclusive practise is good practise i.e. person-centric approach.
- Personal Value – the key things individuals have as a disabled person – adaptability, empathy, resilience – are also key leadership skills. Leadership is different for different people.
- Mentors - crucial they have knowledge of DDN artists.
- Connecting and collaborating – ways to support making and nurturing these connections.
- Professional Advocacy – 'there is an expectation that you are a change maker or advocate for DDN community' – it should either be made part of someone's job or paid extra, not an assumed additional part of their role.
- More opportunity and role models – there was a lack of seen opportunities open to DDN, or DDN leaders as inspiration.

What support is needed for Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent leaders to thrive?



Image Credit: Stopgap Dance Company

training offerings/ case studies from partner organisations

Marc Brew Company

Marc Brew Company (MBC) is a disabled and queer led, inclusive contemporary dance company that collaborates with diverse artists to create powerful performances and inspire participation.

The company travels the world delivering masterclasses, training and workshops on inclusive practice, and creative workshops for young people and masterclasses for professional disabled and non-disabled dancers. Organisations, such as the British Council regularly invite the company as an advocate for disabled artists and to participate in their programmes - Unlimited and Europe Beyond Access - and to share the Artistic Director's methodology and inclusive practice.

The Company's engagement strategy supports their aims to: be a catalyst for change, though performance and inclusive engagement by increasing access to contemporary dance performance and opportunities; nurture and support the next generation of disabled artists and continue to work collaboratively to create new work and inspire ambition. This work is underpinned by a belief that through difference there are possibilities.



Image Credit: Anna Spindelndreier

The Company's key offerings include:

- Masterclasses
- Workshops & residencies
- Choreographic intensives
- Teacher training
- Mentoring


Image Credit: Marcin Lewandowski

Examples of past work:

- Paid internships for students from Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh University and Dundee College. Mentorship and performance opportunities for young musicians and dancers across Scotland through BREWBAND.
- Artistic Director Marc Brew is a leader in Scotland's disabled performing arts community, regularly mentoring younger artists for companies such as National Theatre of Scotland (NTS), Imaginate and The Work Room.
- Marc delivered Laboratorio de movimiento at the facilities of Instituto Technológico y de Estudios
- Superiores de Occidente (ITESO) and Teacher Training for dancers, professionals and educators for Cultural Ministry Jalisco in partnership with British Council.
- The company has delivered training, masterclasses and workshops for Dance agencies, Festivals and Companies such as: The Work Room; Indepen-dance; AXIS Dance Company; USA; Touch Compass, New Zealand; Junction 25; The Space, Dundee; Brazil; Korea, STEPS Festival; rum für Dans (Sweden); Hessisches Staatsballet (Germany); CODA Festival; Europe Beyond Access and many more.

Future plans - training for disabled artists

1. The company plans to offer several retreats for disabled artists led by disabled artists. In response to the research these will be a hybrid of in person and online training, focused on an individualized approach to developing personal practice that will be underpinned by MBC's inclusive practice making dance accessible for all.
2. Supporting the next generation of disabled artists is an ambition of a collective of organisations which have entered early-stage discussion to develop a programme of work in this area – MBC join Birds of Paradise (BOP), Dance Base, National Theatre of Scotland (NTS), Paragon, YDance , Solar Bear and Indepen-dance in these conversations and is committed to securing a future for a specific initiative and model for disabled-led artistic development for Scotland.
3. Plans for a bi-annual Choreolab, based on a successful model developed by Marc Brew whilst Artistic Director for Axis Dance Company in USA. The Choreolab will invite dancers and two disabled choreographers into a space to explore working with different bodies and develop their creative practice.
4. Marc and the company will continue to offer and nurture mentoring opportunities as part of their ongoing investment into artists at all stages of their career; supported by the overwhelming interest identified in the research for this kind of support.

Birds of Paradise Theatre Company

For over 30 years, Birds of Paradise Theatre Company (BOP) has been a key pipeline for disabled talent in Scotland's theatre sector. The company creates theatre and works to build the workforce of the future, including disabled artists, through its own work and strategic impact on the landscape around us.

The BOP Development strand actively dismantles the barriers that exclude disabled people from professional training, moving beyond "participation" to genuine career progression.

The BOP Strategic strand covers training and consultation work and through this they often support other organisations to develop their own offer to disabled artists, workers and audiences.

The BOP Young Artists programme identifies young people who have faced exclusion from mainstream education and/or sector opportunities, offering mentorship and a platform to create professionally supported work, such as the digital arts space Locked World.

The BOP Writers work nurtures new voices, while initiatives like The Mary Dick Award provide funding for emerging makers.

PAST work gives context to the company's systemic impact. For instance, the Looking for Talent project and subsequent Barriers Report (2016) reshaped the sector's understanding of why young disabled people were missing from the arts, directly leading to the creation of dedicated development roles. The BOP Artists (2017) project partnered with the National Theatre of Scotland to create tailored residency opportunities for disabled artists. Alumni from early programmes are now established professionals working across the UK, and the company's strategic influence has upskilled venues nationwide and internationally to better support disabled artists.

FUTURE work includes expanding focus to include offstage roles. Cue Backstage (2025) addresses the critical lack of disabled technicians, designers, and stage managers. BOP Young Artists has secured National Lottery investment to increase training opportunities and BOP continue to work with partners such as Playwrights Studio Scotland, Citizens Theatre and the National Theatre of Scotland to develop opportunities for developing disabled artists.



Image Credit: Robert Sofiley Gale BOP Theatre

Cutting Edge Theatre

Cutting Edge Theatre is one of Scotland's leading small theatre companies based in Edinburgh, having won several Awards for their Inclusion work mainly with marginalised people.

With 30 years of history, the company aims to make a difference in the lives of the people and communities they work with.

Cutting Edge Theatre believe that everyone should have equal access to the Performing Arts as audience members, participants and professionals and to do this they:

- Work with learning/disabled young people and adults who attend weekly INSPIRE Disability Arts sessions. These are tailored to meet their individual requirements. We currently run 10 weekly drama groups for those aged 8+ and these are provided free of charge.
- Engage with diverse communities in our open-air promenade plays and our touring theatre productions around Scotland

The company's main objective is to strive for an equitable society and recognise that access to drama experience provides a springboard to positive change and improved wellbeing. They achieve this by using one of the major strengths of Cutting Edge Theatre - an ability to harness the transformative power of theatre to promote awareness, provoke dialogue, and inspire action.



Image Credit: Colin Hattersley



Image Credit: Cutting Edge Theatre

Key offerings:

- Weekly drama classes for learning/disabled people aged 8+ in Edinburgh and Fife
- An annual Community production in Edinburgh
- A 3-year training Young Company for learning disabled young people aged 18 – 25
- A Youth Theatre for learning disabled young people aged 13 – 17
- Mentoring through placements
- Recommendations for supporting disabled people to work behind the camera in Film/TV in Scotland (currently in development).

Examples of past work:

- Involved in producing the annual Community Theatre production since 2005 in Edinburgh.
- Actively working with disabled people through free drama classes and groups since 2012.

- Working with marginalised people through a variety of projects over the years
- Working in prisons both in Scotland and overseas [USA, Brazil and Italy], mentoring inmates in creating productions.
- Mentoring emerging artists through placements, working with Edinburgh College and informal placements.
- Creating new productions with disability at the heart [Downs with Love, Phased Out and Locked Downs]
- Creating new musical theatre in Scotland.

Future plans -

1. Developing Phased Out and Locked Downs as productions
2. Continuing provision of free drama groups



Image Credit: Cutting Edge Theatre

Dance Base, Scotland's National Centre for Dance

Throughout the year Dance Base:

- Run a programme of classes, workshops and practice sessions for professional dance and movement artists.
- Provide robust, free-to-access, personal advice and practical support for dance and movement artists across Scotland.
- Provide opportunities for dance and movement professionals to showcase work and develop their careers at Dance Base.
- Provide studio space: as part of the Paid Artist Residency Programme, through In-Kind Studio Space & Support or using Open Studio Space.
- Provide opportunities to share work through Scratch nights, Edinburgh Festival Fringe programme and offering teaching opportunities.

Dance Base supports a rolling programme of paid opportunities for dance and movement professionals, including artist residencies, scratch nights, surgeries, and professional development events. Participants are often selected via an open call process and they strive to offer equality of opportunity, regardless of experience or access needs.

There is also a dedicated inclusive offering as part of the programme, with classes specifically designed for disabled dancers to dance in a supportive environment together with their non-disabled peers, friends, families, and carers.



Drake Music Scotland

Drake Music Scotland is a member of the UK-wide Talent Development Network supported by the PRS for Music Foundation, and has developed its artists' mentoring programme over several years in conjunction with our Associate Composer and the Disabled Artist Network.

Drake Music's Associate Composer and mentor is currently Ben Lunn, who is neurodivergent, and the Creative Access team - which organises support for artists' participation in a variety of opportunities - includes Sorcha Pringle, a visually impaired consultant and access advisor.

In 24-5 DMS supported 22 disabled artists, composers and music creators to work in the mainstream music sector through our artist-led Create programme. Create provides support for those working in any genre of music to develop their professional careers through commissions, creative projects, training, mentoring and other activities on an ongoing basis. Participants have a wide range of access requirements and are at varying careers stages from early and emerging to more experienced. Those who have built up a track record of work often continue to need support to progress to the next level. The range of training/artist career development activities varies depending on individual needs.

The company also engages with the wider sector to promote more accessible career development opportunities, for example through partnership working with other members of the Talent Development Network and Sound & Music's Fair Access Principles.

Case Study - AA was engaged in a series of interactions with DMS through the Create programme. She first contacted DMS by phone, which led to an in-person discussion about her aspiration to become a composer. In May 2023 she observed a composer's workshop exploring new pieces with a quintet from the Hebrides Ensemble. She commented, 'to experience sitting in on a composers/performers workshop and hear people's work was really exciting. I came away with a sense that I could maybe write a piece like that in 5 years' time! I wasn't sure what might be next but it did help me build my confidence'. AA was commissioned to write a piece for a concert in June 2024 performed by the Hebrides Ensemble with mentoring from Ben Lunn and renowned Scottish composer Stuart Macrae, who guided her towards the Composition Summer School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Ben Lunn mentored her to develop her portfolio of work for an application to study composition at the Royal Conservatoire and she successfully gained a place starting in the 2025-6 academic year. DMS also helped secure her a new commission from the Merchant Sinfonia Orchestra for December 2025.



Image Credit: Drake Music Scotland

Indepen-dance

Opportunity through inclusive dance

Indepen-dance is an award-winning inclusive dance company for disabled and non-disabled people to enjoy, express, and fulfil their potential through dance.

The company's mission is to enable participation in high quality arts provision and improve wellbeing, quality of life and provide opportunities for disabled and non-disabled dancers in both the professional and non-professional dance sectors.

Indepen-dance provide weekly creative movement and dance classes throughout the year, where participants become lifelong members and join a thriving social network. They also provide bespoke professional training, career development and employment opportunities.

Indepen-dance has a youth company, a young adult performance company and a professional touring company.



Image Credit: Brian Hartley

Lung Ha Theatre Company

Lung Ha Theatre Company is Scotland's leading theatre company for actors and theatre makers with a learning disability and autism. The company works with a large acting ensemble who are engaged in actor training, performances and creative development.

Since 1984, the Company has worked with over four hundred performers with a learning disability creating over forty original productions. The Company and has also worked with some of the leading artists and creative organisations across the country and toured internationally to England, France, Ireland, Poland, Sweden and Finland.

Key offerings:

- Weekly actor training with Artistic Director and specialist guest facilitators.
- Performance opportunities in professional productions.
- Creative development projects that look at non-acting based skills.
- Past training offerings for disabled artists (for those engaged in the ensemble):
- Mentoring (Directing, playwriting).
- One to one creative practice development (i.e. clowning, filmmaking, poetry, dance, autobiographical storytelling).
- Theatre criticism.

Pathway for Progression features six strands of work where actors can access training and performing opportunities in an inclusive and welcoming environment and on an established platform. These are: the Lung Ha Ensemble, Lung Ha Touring Company, Lung Ha Across Scotland (an online nationwide actor training workshop series), Creative Development (one to one skills development, mentoring and critical response), Sharing our Expertise (via our Access and Creative Principles Toolkit and workshop leader training) and Supporting External Opportunities (where the Lung Ha team prepares and supports people with their creative ambitions outwith Lung Ha).

Future plans for training/supporting disabled artists (for those engaged in the ensemble)

- As above, and workshop leader training


Image Credit: Lung Ha Theatre

National Theatre of Scotland

We aim to be a “theatre for everyone”.

As Scotland’s National Theatre company, it is the National Theatre of Scotland’s (NTS) unique responsibility to make work by the broadest range of artists for the biggest and broadest audiences across Scotland (and where successful at home, abroad).

NTS are an artist and ideas led, audience focused company.

To begin building these new connections, NTS offer a range of free, year-round opportunities for artists, as well as a range of paid opportunities, all available through open call to help.

Free opportunities for creatives include:

- Script Reading Programme – open all year round
- Access to Resources – access to in-kind expertise and advice, space and equipment
- Attendance at your work/sharings

- Rehearsal shadowing, workshops, discussions with our programmed artists, attending our shows, script surgeries, introduction meetings and a whole series of other opportunities are offered by open call throughout the year.
- Feedback on audition self tapes
- Acting and performance workshops

Paid opportunities include:

- Creative team roles on our productions
- Trainee, Assistant and Associate positions on our projects, across a range of roles
- Artist Residency programme

Past activity

- Cultural Leader Fellowship programme
- Artist Residency programme
- NEUROSTAGES - paid mentorship opportunities for neurodivergent artists based in Scotland and a two-day festival of workshops, provocations, discussions, and performances curated by the Scottish Neurodiversity Performance Network (SNPN) and presented by National Theatre of Scotland and SNPN, in partnership with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and National Autistic Society

Paragon Ensemble

Paragon Ensemble believe in the power of music and the arts to create inclusion and equality.

Key offerings:

- Mentoring programme for young people
- Groove artist development programme 18+
- Music and dance workshops
- Staff training, Accessibility Consultation and Disability Equality Training
- International projects

Future plans

- Train and play: 5 day programme for artists



Image Credit: Paragon Ensemble

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)

The RCS provides the only degree course (BA Performance for Deaf and HoH actors) for deaf and hard of hearing performers in the UK, that Prepares students for a career in the creative industries.

Solar Bear Theatre Company

Solar Bear Theatre Company is a Glasgow-based arts organisation that specialises in creating innovative and inclusive theatre and screen experiences for deaf* and hard of hearing (HoH) artists and audiences. The company are committed to providing opportunities for both professional artists, young people, children and the deaf communities to explore and develop their creative talents.

Core activities include a variety of training, mentorship, and performance opportunities, ensuring that deaf and HoH people are not only included in the creative process but also take a leading role in shaping and delivering the work. With aims to Tell Untold Stories, Celebrate Inclusion and Create Change.

Solar Bear educates, advocates, and celebrates. Their mission is to add value and a diverse perspective to Scotland's arts landscape by building a platform for deaf stories, told by deaf professionals, deaf young people, and deaf communities with the aim of enriching our society.

The company also model and advocate for best practice within the arts sector, to encourage others to take a creative perspective when considering EDI.

Key Offerings

- Showcasing untold stories: facilitating opportunities for deaf and HoH professionals to lead and to be employed in all parts of the artistic programme.
- Creative Learning (central to work): developing new work shaped by deaf children and young people's ideas, stories and questions.
- Making Training and skills development a priority in company and sector development - investing in people to create change.
- Providing and supporting clear pathways for deaf creatives into the theatre, TV and film industries.
- Driving change in the wider cultural sector through advocacy, advice and best practice: celebrating deaf culture, language and heritage.
- Reaching new audiences who don't usually access the arts.

*This includes perspectives from the DeafBlind community, diverse language usage, deaf refugees, deaf multilingualism, deaf individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, deaf neurodiversity, and deaf people with other disabilities.



Image Credit: Solar Bear

Past and Present Training Offerings for deaf and HoH Artists

- Deaf Youth Theatre: A youth theatre designed for deaf and HoH young people aged 11-21. This deaf-led youth theatre is ongoing, launched in 2007/2008 as the UK's first youth theatre for deaf young people. Each year we a new role is offered as co-director of DYT, giving the opportunity for a deaf facilitator/director to develop their skills in a safe environment with mentorship from the company's Creative Director. The young people are part of the company's Steering Committee who meet quarterly and feedback to the Board and Executive team to instigate future planning.
- Creative Learning: Solar Bear regularly lead workshops in the community including schools, youth groups and deaf clubs across Scotland.
- Solar Reach: In 2024 a team of 10 deaf/HoH workshop leaders were recruited to take part in 4 training sessions with SB's Creative Director, Jennifer Bates. The sessions were focused on developing workshop leading skills with the aim of this team of freelancers engaging in Solar Bear's community engagement work.
- BA Performance for Deaf and HoH Actors: Solar Bear instigated this course and remain strong partners in its development. The team regularly lead sessions and workshops with the students and will continue to do so.
- Solar Hub: Deaf Artists Network: aimed at deaf and HoH artists but all are welcome. The Hub meet 4 times a year and participate in learning opportunities, often led by external invited guests, networking events and socialising with the aim of developing potential collaborations and projects. Most recently Solar Bear produced a speed networking event with Lumo TV (formally BSL BT/BSL Zone).
- Deaf Arts Leadership Training: with the aim of creating and developing deaf arts leaders Solar Bear offer training, mentoring and professional opportunities. In 2025 the company hosted a dedicated Deaf Arts Leadership Day in partnership with Sign Wow's CEO, Joel Kelhoffer MBE, bringing together some of Scotland's leading deaf artists and cultural professionals - laying the groundwork for a long-term plan to nurture and support Deaf leaders across the sector.
- Solar Reels Film School: ran in the summer 2023 and 2025 with deaf emerging filmmakers earning and developing digital skills. Designed by deaf film and television professionals it gave 3 deaf emerging artists the opportunity to learn story development, production skills, filming and editing. Each artist has been fully supported to create their own 3-minute film.



Image Credit: Solar Bear

Future Plans for Training/ Supporting Deaf and HoH Artists

- To continue existing programme.
- To review and design possible pathways for deaf and HoH artists to work in screen, TV and film.
- To work in consultation with the deaf and HoH artists to analysis and design future training for arts leaders.

Sonic Bothy

Sonic Bothy is an award-winning arts charity that supports Disabled artists and adults and young people (age 16+) with additional support for learning needs (ASLN) to compose and perform original contemporary and experimental music. All activities are participant-led and free of charge. The company is based in Glasgow, Scotland.

The company's comprehensive suite of inclusive workshops, mentorship, professional performance and artistic development opportunities offer natural progression pathways for any Disabled person to be inspired, engaged and develop artistic identities. They aim to increase the visibility of Disabled people's creativity and foster long-term, positive impact through sustained engagement.

Sonic Bothy is Disability-led, with programmes are shaped by people. There is a significant need and demand for more personal and professional development opportunities in Disabled communities, and cause for advocacy for Disabled people's rights. Sonic Bothy will respond by advocating for autonomy – seeing an artist before Disability.

Their mission is to empower Disabled artists and people with ASLN to contribute to culture as equal citizens.

Their vision is a world where everyone's humanity is celebrated, and diverse perspectives are valued for their contributions.

Key offerings

- Professional Ensemble
- Inclusive Workshops
- Youth Workshops
- Pathways Mentorship
- Artist Residency (paused for 2025/26)
- New archive collection of works by Disabled artists (w/ Scottish Music Centre)

Past training offerings for disabled artists:

1. Youth Traineeship:
A hands-on music facilitation training opportunity for early career Disabled artists, working with young people (age 16+) transitioning from adolescents to adult support services. In 2 ASN schools and a palliative care hospice in Glasgow.

2. Artist Residency:
The self-directed Artist Residency offers career development opportunities for disabled artists who wish to engage in substantial development of their original ideas and works. The alumni artists include Gregor Gillespie, Ben Lunn, and David Nicholson.

In Autumn 2024, Sorcha Pringle collaborated with fellow Dundee-based composer and musician, Shiori Usui, to explore Audio Description in improvisation, in an aim for a culminating, exploratory improvisation performance.

Future plans for training/supporting disabled artists

External:

- Pathways - Mentorship programme for participants with learning Disabilities
- Come and Play - open workshops and selection for participants with learning Disabilities to join the Professional Ensemble
- Youth Traineeship: (as above)

Internal:

- Mentorship training for Disabled staff musicians
- Safeguarding update for Disabled staff musicians
- Equalities and Human Rights first approach



Triple C

TripleC is a BAFTA award-winning disabled led organisation with a mission to drive up the role of deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent people in the arts & media. The company is based in Manchester, England, but has a Scottish strand to its work.

TripleC is key gateway organisation for disabled people's access to the industry, to grow, develop and nurture careers and to support production companies, casting directors, broadcasters and production teams.

Key offerings

- Talent finder
- Access, attitude and action training
- Script consultancy
- Drop ins – cover industry-wide topics in terms of access and employment of deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent talent, from access solutions through to lived experienced story-telling
- Check ins
- Production consultation
- Training for screen
- Access coordinator training

Previous

Funding scheme for deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN) crew on behalf of ScreenSkills supported by the ScreenSkills High-end TV Skills Fund with contributions from UK high-end TV productions to remove access barriers which stop you from entering, progressing or returning to work in HETV.



Image Credit: Triple C

Visually Impaired Creators Scotland (VICS)

VICS (Visually Impaired Creators Scotland) are an award-winning group of artists who work both on their own projects and as a team to inspire, promote and encourage the work of visually impaired artists through:

- Sharing of ideas
- Collaborative performances
- Workshops
- Monthly newsletters

Waterbaby Arts

Waterbaby Arts exists to promote inclusive movement by and for people with disabilities, based in Dunoon. Co-founded by Linda Payne and Clare Cunningham. Now run by Linda, Laura McLauchlan and Ruth Lindsay. The company works with:

- Special schools – movement sessions, PEP funded from schools (this funding strand will be ceasing).
- Trauma units.
- Provides traineeships – all ages to shadow and lead workshops.
- Mini schools tour with choreography created.
- Family sessions to allow parents and disabled children a safe space to move and socialize.
- Project at Beacon Arts Centre, with All or Nothing Aerial Dance.

Support from East Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Council. Past project that worked well was the Talent Hub (2 year funded from Creative Scotland) that provided a pathway into University/College for disabled young people. Partners included: Marc Brew, RSAMD, Janis Parker, Rosina Bonsu, Caroline Bowditch, Linda Payne


Image Credit: Nigel Dunn


Image Credit: Nigel Dunn

YDance

YDance exists to transform the lives of Scotland's children and young people, supporting them to grow and learn through dance.

Their aim being that every child in Scotland have the opportunity to access exceptional dance opportunities to allow them to realize their potential as individuals through dance.

Key offerings:

- Performance opportunities including:
- Horizons Glasgow - Glasgow based inclusive youth dance company for dancers aged 12 – 25, with and without disabilities
- The National Dance Company of Scotland – open for young disabled and non-disabled dancers
- Training including:
- Engage – workshops around Scotland
- Take Flight- graduate training programme specifically designed for emerging choreographers and teaching artists aged 21-25. This unique opportunity supports participants in exploring and refining their choreographic and teaching practices. It aims to build skills for working effectively with dancers, expand professional networks, and enhance teaching and choreographic methodologies.
- Re Charge - CPD for Dance Artists - two-day intensive course in partnership with Dance Base and The Workroom that offers experienced and emerging dance artists and teachers time to come together to reflect on and develop their teaching practice
- Training for school teachers



good practice in the UK and internationally

dance

Candoco Dance Company - London

Bridging the mainstream and the experimental, Candoco's bold approach and powerful collaborations create distinctive performances and far-reaching learning experiences. The company celebrate's different ways of being and of making art, putting them at the forefront of conversation around dance and disability.

Founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker-Arnold OBE and Adam Benjamin, Candoco collaborates with some of the industry's most renowned choreographers and artists. Creating performance work that is presented at prestigious venues and festivals in the UK and internationally.

In 2018, Candoco created a sensation when it became the first contemporary dance company to appear on the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing, performing to over 10 million people. The company also ran a 2-week residential dance training intensive for young disabled and non-disabled dancers supported by fashion retailer ASOS.

Key offerings:

- Teacher Training programmes, including teachers resource packs.
- Professional Lab.
- Dancer Development Days - giving artists the opportunity to introduce themselves to the company, to undertake creative research and participate in choreographic exchange.
- Open Company Class.
- Learning programmes - Weekly dance classes, workshops in schools, residencies and performance projects around the UK and internationally.



Image Credit: Camilla Greenwell

People Dancing

People Dancing is the development organisation for community and participatory dance, driving forward inclusion and excellence and supporting a UK-wide network of members – dance artists and organisations – who make great dance happen in all its diversity.

Key offerings:

- Training and qualifications:
- Professional qualifications
- Online courses
- People Dancing intensives
- Professional standards
- Development Needs Analysis (DNA)
- Membership and insurance
- Programmes:
- Early Years Dance
- Global Majority Heritage Activity & Activism
- Live Well & Dance with Parkinson's
- Disability & Inclusion Programme:
- Disabled Dance Network https://www.communitydance.org.uk/programmes/disability-and-inclusion/are-you-a-disabled-dance-artist
- Disabled Artist One-to-one's
- Training
- Disabled artists from the global majority – Reach! Network



Image Credit: Mark Anderson

Sadler's Wells - London

Sadler's Wells has been a home for the arts for more than three centuries. Their ambitious year-round programme explores and celebrates dance in all its forms. Each year, over half a million people come to their London theatres with many more visiting nationally and internationally touring productions or exploring the company's digital platforms.

The company create and share more new work than any other dance organisation in the world. They support artists by giving them the opportunity to develop their practice, seek out innovative ideas and collaborations, and present world-class work. People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are invited to take part in the company's events and workshops.

Supporting artists is at the heart of Sadler's Wells work. They offer a range of programmes to support choreographers and dance makers to develop their practice in an array of choreographic styles and at different points in their careers.

Key offerings:

- Artist Development Programme.
- Artist-Led Sessions – A bi-monthly programme of sessions devised and delivered by artists for artists.
- Disabled Artists Programme.
- A free practice-based session once a month led by disabled artists.
- Support during the session from an Artist Support Practitioner.
- Peer-to-peer support and exchange through a network of disabled artists.
- South Asian Dance Development Programme – two year programme for eight developing choreographers whose practice is rooted in South Asian Dance.
- Mentorship Programme – mentoring for 10 choreographers and dance makers.
- Time & Space Commissions.
- Open Sessions.
- One-to-One Artist-Led Support Sessions – free 121 drop in sessions for artists to have discussions and support with their development.
- Sadler's Wells Young Associates.
- Rose Choreographic School.
- Associate Artists – The company works closely with a range of individual artists from diverse dance backgrounds and lived experiences, providing a foundation for them to create exciting work. Associate Artists are at the heart of Sadler's Wells artistic vision, commissioning new work from them, helping them develop ideas and providing resources such as rehearsal studios and technical expertise.
- Resident, Associate, International Associate and National Partner Companies.
- Resident Companies not only appear on Sadler's Wells stages, but also have offices at Sadler's Wells in Angel.
- National Partner Companies help develop and strengthen the network.

Stopgap Dance Company

Stopgap Dance Company is driven by a diverse creative team who uses dance as a movement for change.

Their mission is to create an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted but pursued, a world where no one is limited by prejudice against Deaf, Disabled, or neurodivergent people.

Working with an artform shaped by human touch and energised by the spark of connectivity, StogGap's work demonstrates the compelling power of diversity and inclusivity. By moving together to create a remarkable experience that transforms society's perceptions of difference and dismantle the inequity of privilege, in dance and in all aspects of living, collaborating, and creating together as humans.

The company's work is both focused on and born out of a rigorous investment in equity and inclusive culture. They are committed to removing barriers to dance, nurturing the talents of dancers born into any body and any mind. And are in coalition with a wave of organisations moving towards a better representation of diversity on our stages and in society.

They are a global leader of disability access in dance and continuously examine best practice, actively advocating for the industry and the wider world to become more inclusive.


Image Credit: Stopgap Dance Company by Chris Parkes

Key offerings:

- Professional training - a range of online and in-person training opportunities for disabled and non-disabled dance artists and teachers.
- Dance Practitioner Training - with a track record of training inclusive dance artists and teachers that stretches back over 25 years, they currently run a range of online and in-person training opportunities for disabled and non-disabled dance artists and teachers. These include Home Practice - a free online dance classes (Home Practice is a self-guided programme of inclusive contemporary dance classes and workshops that introduce a variety of approaches to inclusive dance practice), and Seedbed - a weekly online training programme for teachers.
- Future Leaders - a Programme for Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent mid-career arts professionals to join the company in paid positions, where they are immersed in the company's activities through the support of an experienced and inclusive mentor. [see case study on pg 23].
- Resources.
- Practitioner training.
- Beginners Guide to inclusive Dance - free video series introducing what inclusive dance teaching is all about.
- Creative Tank – inclusive dance intensive - A three-day intensive opening up the company's current inclusive practice to other like-minded dance artists.
- Open Company Class – professional level inclusive contemporary dance class.
- IRIS - an inclusive dance syllabus that gives teachers a framework to develop the disabled dancers of tomorrow. A consolidation of Stopgap's experience of training professional disabled dancers, containing tried and tested methods that the company has developed since 1995.
- Apprenticeships and mentoring.



Image Credit: Stopgap Dance Company by Chris Parkes

SLiDE – London

Co-founded in 2013 by Gemma Coldicott and Anita Wadsworth, SLiDE is built on over eight years of collaboration and partnership with local residents, education settings and organisations.

The company strives to remove barriers to participation in dance faced by learning disabled people, addressing power imbalances. Their wider aim is to bring disabled and non-disabled people together through dance. The company engages with the wider community, uniting diverse groups through classes, performance projects and social events (ceilidhs and discos).

Key offerings:

- Dance sessions – includes adult performance group.
- SLiDE Collective – includes 10 LD artists to support workshops, perform and undertake training.
- Performances.
- Fuse: Inclusive arts event - SLiDE, Club Soda and MOSS work together on a project called FUSE that supports and shares the work of artists and performers with learning disabilities. Fuse has three strands: quarterly inclusive arts event, a mentor programme and regular arts workshops.

VIDARE, Sweden

VIDARE aims to make professional dance accessible and create pathways for everyone to continue developing within the dance field, regardless of their abilities.

They support this through offering a daily training routine, that everyone can participate in, aimed at deepening dance practice. Danscentrum Väst's Monday classes are held in the accessibility-adapted Spinn Studio.

Participants have the opportunity to meet professional dancers with and without disabilities, exploring how they can develop their own practice. They receive support before, during, and after class tailored to individual needs. Guidance prior to the sessions via written material and an initial meeting (either in person or online) mean that individual needs can be discussed and met, with support being provided in the studio if needed. There is also time for reflection and discussion after each class.

The idea behind Monday classes is for members to experiment regardless of their experience, working across abilities, together, creating a safe space without compromising on professional training.

MORE ABOUT VIDARE: Språng received support from the Swedish Arts Council and the City of Gothenburg to conduct the VIDARE development project for three years. The project aims to develop a cross-ability dance practice at a professional level, both locally and nationally. Within the project framework, Språng, together with Danscentrum Väst and national partners such as the national Danscentrum, Dance Company Spinn, Regionteater Väst, and the Dance Alliance, offer daily training, as well as in-depth artistic workshops and discussions. Dance classes and workshops are open to professional dancers, choreographers, or those with extensive dance experience, regardless of their ability. During the classes, participants explore how to achieve a more cross-ability dance practice and sustainability as a dancer throughout life, regardless of how the body may change.

music

Orchestra Live, Leeds

Orchestra Live aims to broaden the range of music leaders who work in the sector to deliver workshops and projects, particularly cultivating skilled Deaf and Disabled music leaders.

multi arts

On the Move

On the Move was created as a website by IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts in 2002, became an independent association (Belgium asbl) in 2005, and was then structured as a network in 2009.

It's central mission has been to inform artists and cultural workers of the opportunities that exist for them to work across borders. In the process, the network have tried to keep track of what's happening now to help imagine what's coming next in the mobility field.

Today, On the Move's network counts more than 70 organisations – from national funders, to other networks and info points, to centres for creation. Joined by a small number of individual members, they share a commitment to promoting cultural mobility in all its forms while striving for a fairer sector. The network meets once a year for its annual Cultural Mobility Forum, but collaborates on projects and activities all year round.

The network has a handful of working groups which focus on specific topics. Currently these are: the Mobility Information Points group; the (En)forced Mobility group; the Mobility Funders group; the Green Context-specific group; and the International Professional Development Programmes group.

Professional development programmes are always undertaken in partnership with national, regional or local organisations that cover the costs for participants (for example, with the French Ministry of Culture, Institut français, Le théâtre des Doms, Eleusis 2023 / Busart, IN SITU etc.).

The goal is to guide artists and organisations through a process of reflection that will leave them more open, flexible and inventive in their international work.

Sense – England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Sense Scotland

Sense believe that every disabled person should have the opportunity to connect with others and be included in the world. They offer personalised, creative and flexible support at every stage of life, no matter how complex someone's disability.

The company supports all art forms but prioritises music, visual arts, and dance as part of their diverse programme. By focusing on these disciplines, we create opportunities for authentic leadership, amplify diverse voices, and provide space for disabled, Deaf, and neurodivergent artists to lead and inspire.

Key Offerings:

- Disability arts programmes for professionals.
- Sense Scotland provides arts summer programmes for children, young people and adults with communication support needs.

Shape Arts, London

Shape Arts are a disability-led arts organisation which works to improve access to culture for disabled people by providing opportunities for disabled creatives, and training cultural institutions to be more open to disabled people, through running participatory arts and development programmes.

Key Offerings:

- A creative programme, working directly with disabled creatives.
- Adam Reynolds Award for mid-career disabled artists, offering a bursary and residency opportunity to one artist each year.
- ARA Shortlist with an exhibition and small bursary award.
- Emergent - delivered in partnership with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art - a three-month hybrid residency for early career disabled artist with a £5k bursary plus a tailored package of support.
- Shape Open – annual exhibition.
- Shape Arts Podcast.
- Heritage projects, documenting the social history of disabled people.
- Access consultancy, including training and auditing.

Past training includes:

- Transforming leadership.
- Equal Voices – arts and wellbeing performance training opportunities for D/deaf community.

University of Atypical for arts and disability – Northern Ireland

University of Atypical is a disabled-led organisation working within the arts sector in Northern Ireland. supporting and promoting work by d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists. The organisation delivers a year-round programme of visual art exhibitions and an annual Arts festival. The organisation delivers funding from the Arts Council for Northern Ireland to support artists and projects, facilitating support and advice on completing applications. They run Arts and Disability Access Awards, an accreditation scheme to support best practice for other arts organisations and an Inclusion Mark Scheme, marking the standard of excellence towards improved accessibility for one- off events. The organisation has run training for and by d/Deaf, disabled and Neurodivergent artists through the Digital Horizon. Atypical also hire out an intimate venue space at reduced costs for individual artists and charities for events, talks and rehearsal space.

Key offerings and Activities:

- Gallery and Bounce Arts Festival Programming.
- ADAA – training, support and accreditation scheme for organisations to improve venue accessibility standards.
- Delivery of Social Narrative videos.
- Support – working with freelance contractors to support the completion of application forms.
- Delivery of grant award schemes for Arts Council for Northern Ireland and Belfast City Council.
- Inclusive volunteering programme.
- Sign language and Deaf Awareness Programme.

Examples of past work (training)

- Free Digital Masterclass Sessions including digital animation, creating social media content, using Procreate, using motion sensors in performance, creating a digital press pack, sounds session, BSL presenting and broadcasting.
- Bounce Arts Festival 2024 held in Belfast and Derry, with events happening in a variety of venues covering a wide range of the creative arts including performance art, poetry readings, live music, installations, talks, performance art masterclass, Gamelan workshop, Digital Horizon seminar, theatre pieces, comedy night and exhibitions.
- Delivery of artist support to complete funding application forms for individual applications for Arts Council Single Individual Artist Payment Awards, D/Deaf and Disabled Artist Support Fund, Belfast City Council Music Grant Award Scheme.
- Full gallery programming that includes solo and group exhibitions, an Ulster University Fine Art Graduate Award solo exhibition, pop up exhibitions during the summer. The gallery often includes a community craft space where visitors can create their own work in response the current exhibition.

Future Plans for training/supporting disabled artists:

- Secure funding to ensure the continuation of the Bounce Arts Festival.
- Berlin - Belfast collaborative project investigating queerness and Disability in Public Urban Space.
- Build up community engagement and development of the membership programme.
- Continue coordination of gallery to promote the work of d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent

theatre

Bradford Producing Hub

Bradford Producing Hub runs Empowered – a wide-spanning programme of projects, workshops and events focusing on artist and ally empowerment, training and development.

Empowered: Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent Artists is part of a wider series focussing on supporting, responding to the needs of, and ultimately empowering marginalised artists. The programme launched in November 2022 with Empowered: Black and Global Majority Artists, followed by a series for LGBTQIA+ artists, and returned in 2024 to collaborate with deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists.

The 15 selected artists are eligible for bursaries to attend, plus access and travel costs to participate in each of the sessions with meals will also provided.

Face Front Inclusive Theatre - London

Face Front has been creating inclusive theatre since 1998, becoming an independent company in 2004 and registered charity in 2007.

The company create's accessible theatre for schools and the public, with disabled and non-disabled performers. Their shows and activities transform the lives of disadvantaged people, improving emotional well-being and addressing social injustice.

The company are based in Edmonton (north London), working across London and touring nationally with innovative shows.

Key offerings:

- Theatre in Schools
- Act the Part
- Training: master-classes, work experience and placements, support and mentoring
- master-classes
- work experience and placements
- support and mentoring

The company aims to:

- Use the arts as a tool for social engagement in all aspects of society, in schools, community and theatre venues.
- Provide programmes that enable disadvantaged adults and children to participate in the arts.
- Develop productions that explore social issues, raise awareness and enable people to engage in the process of change.
- Create pathways to employment in the arts for disabled people and those not traditionally involved in the arts.
- Provide training for disabled artists, professionals and carers, arts and community organisations and companies.

Graeae Theatre Company

Since its official opening in 1980, Graeae Theatre Company has been an international leader and innovator in accessible world-class theatre.

The company was founded by Nabil Shaban and Richard Tomlinson after the duo met when Shaban was interviewing for a place at Hereward College in 1972. Shaban had a great desire to be an actor, however, at the time drama schools refused admission based on disability. Tomlinson, finding out about Shaban's ambition for the stage, invited him to come work alongside, and eventually act in his theatre workshop. The workshop allowed participants to break the myths and stigmas that surround disability, and it was out of this workshop that Graeae was born.

Graeae is founded on the mission to create theatrical excellence through the vision and practice of Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent artists. The experiences of these artists are part of Graeae's genesis, the early productions devised by the company were specifically written to combat societal expectations of disabled people. Over time, the company has produced original works, cabarets, Shakespeare, musicals, and everything in between. While not every show specifically speaks to the Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent experience, they are all inherently Graeae.

Graeae champions creative platforms for Deaf and disabled artists, children and young people through inclusive and collaborative productions, creative learning and new writing projects. In addition, they run training courses and consultancy for arts venues, theatre companies, and outside of the arts sectors. Graeae also has its own premises and rents out rehearsal studio, meeting room and break-out spaces.

Key offerings:

- Bespoke Artist Development Programme - Graeae teamed up with 8 leading venues across England to create a national network of artistic support and development for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists: Octagon Theatre in Bolton; Nottingham Playhouse; Cast in Doncaster; Hull Truck Theatre; Shakespeare North in Prescot; Everyman in Liverpool; Derby Theatre and Mercury Theatre in Colchester.
- New Writing Festival - aims to foster inclusivity and dialogue around new writing, particularly highlighting the invaluable contributions of Deaf, Disabled, and neurodivergent playwrights.



Image Credit: Becky Bailey

Hijinx - Wales

Hijinx is a professional theatre company working to pioneer, produce and promote opportunities for actors with learning disabilities and/or autism to create outstanding productions. Hijinx is dedicated to creating development opportunities for the creative sector, and freelance workers who who the company relies on to create their work. To support the arts community of Wales, Hijinx are offering Transformational Coaching

Key offerings:

- Performance training
- Hijinx Academies – training to become a professional performer
- Drama Foundations – introduction to acting through weekly classes
- Pathways – online training route
- Business training
- ReFocus - Learning Disability Inclusion training for the screen industry
- Creative Enabler Training
- Coaching for Creatives



Image Credit: Mark Douet

opportunities for disabled artists

Cultural Bridge

Cultural Bridge funds UK and Germany social arts partnerships.

Funding is for partnerships that will share expertise and skills, exchange ideas and collaborate on artistic practices and projects that explore themes and issues faced by communities across both countries.

Co-investors: Arts Council England, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, British Council, the National Lottery through Creative Scotland, Fonds Soziokultur, Goethe-Institut London and Wales Arts International / Arts Council of Wales.

Funding in 2026 will support work exploring youth leadership, digital storytelling and emerging technologies, disability-led dance and movement, the intersection of LGBTQI+, neurodivergence and disability, West-African craft and puppetry, circus arts, diaspora communities, music, age inclusion, environmental and climate issues, industrial heritage and more.

Following an open call to attend matchmaking sessions in September 2024, Cultural Bridge received over 130 applications, which were assessed and reviewed by an independent jury of professionals from the UK and Germany. A further year of funding is confirmed for 2026 – 2027.

Funding is awarded across two tiers with up to £10k for new partnerships and up to £30k for existing partnerships. Recent funding supported twelve new and eight established connections, including six partnerships that will receive continued funding from Cultural Bridge.

The funding network launched in 2021 and has now supported 49 partnerships through 62 awards. It enables hundreds of artists and practitioners to work with thousands of community members across a range of art forms and themes.

Unlimited

Unlimited is the world's largest disabled arts commissioner, backing disabled artists since 2013.

The company:
Commissions extraordinary artworks.
Backs disabled artists.
Challenges the cultural sector.
Is changing perceptions of disability.
Is UNLIMITED

Their mission is to commission extraordinary work from disabled artists that will change and challenge the world, until the whole of the cultural sector does. They want to create a world where disabled artists have equity throughout the cultural sector, nationally and internationally.

The SUPPORT strand of Unlimited's work aims to support disabled artists to make the work they want to make. This strand is also working to push the sector and society to improve access and inclusion and redeveloping the company's own evaluation and support structures for artists.

DEVELOP is a strand of work that focuses on developing alumni artists and the sector.
It's been created to look at the variety of ways to support building sustainable careers for disabled artists. This includes upskilling and broadening knowledge, as well as offering ongoing opportunities to an ever-growing pool of alumni artists. Some of the ways Unlimited develops alumni artists are through bursaries, events, and upskilling sessions, and responding to the ever-changing needs of alumni artists.



interesting publications

Dance 4 / Fabric - Changing Perceptions - 2013 report into barriers to training for disabled people.

Drake Music resources

Europe Beyond Access - Learning Journey for Disabled Artists

Impact of Stopgap Dance Company's inclusive dance syllabus

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.

ISTD trial of 'adapting' syllabi - ISTD piloted adapting their syllabus for disabled learners and the process was evaluated

Making a Shift - Arts Council England report from 2017 into barriers into creative industries employment for disabled people.

Permission to stare, Arts and disability

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.

Research into inclusive dance training and education in UK, Greece, Sweden and Netherlands - Commissioned by Onassis Cultural Centre.

Removing Barriers for ND artists – Neuk Collective

https://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/disability-related-support-services

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

11Million Reasons to Dance evaluation report - Includes useful content and data from national inclusive dance project.

https://withoutwalls.uk.com/resources/accessible-practice-artist-workshop/

useful networks

Creative Edinburgh

Edinburgh Performing Arts Development (EPAD)

For Performing Arts -There is also the Federation of Scottish Theatres that many venues are part of

Neuk Collective: an organisation which brings together, supports, and advocates for neurodivergent artists in Scotland. They run weekly body doubling sessions online

Sonic Bothy: an award-winning inclusive arts charity based in Glasgow that makes new & experimental music with disabled people. They host numerous workshops and have an Ensemble who perform semi-regularly at gigs and festivals.

There is the Disabled Artist Network, led by Drake Music Scotland

Visually Impaired Creators Scotland (VICS)

appendices

Appendix 1 - Focus Group key findings

While over 20% of survey respondents were interested in participating further, focus groups ended up being small intimate groups of between 5-10 people.
The focus group gave us the opportunity to find out more about people's pathways into the sector – both through formal and non-formal training, with some excelling in other areas of sport or academia, before finding their preferred career in the arts.
Training - what does it look for you?

Want to learn more ideas to take into teaching
How to include more cultures in our practices?
How to understand what I'm worth
How could an access worker support me?

I would like to do a workshop with Marc.

BSL
Work with/ assist other dance companies
Skilled workshops England/Australian based

Balancing dance for you and dance for working
121 mentoring
Workshops with other companies - new ideas

BSL/ Makaton
Collaborating with other performing arts - time to share the space for collaboration - set design, lights, - have an understanding of what it takes to put on a show.

Understanding autism/other people's perspective
Understand breakdowns - make things interactive, play, more exciting - hybrid learning - videos not just worksheets

Collaboration, working with peers
International exchange

Doing different workshops and learning new things

Exchange, to be challenged, explore new things

What would it look like to you?
Gap between higher education and vocational dance training
Perception of dance - classical, large companies. Connect dance education and dance companies in Europe - lots of partners to join and participate to open doors in traditional companies as well. Choreography, yourself as an artist, etc

Access for some is access for all.

Something that has enough time - over more than one day, so time to rest, work, etc.

Dance for pregnant women, dance for Parkinsons- feed into new pedagogy for 6 dance courses in UK - good source to connect to.

Contextualise training - so can work out how it can be used in your work. Meeting before hand to clarify this.

Working with different dance companies and learning their routines. Working together to make something new.

Choreographic workshops - opportunities for performance makers for deaf, disabled and neurodivergent dancers, includes mentoring by DDN artists.

What are the skills you would like improved through training?

- How to work on collaborative projects
- Audience development training; - how to get people interested in what you do - brand, marketing, etc. Sad that you create amazing work, but not get audiences. Battling against non-disabled world to get audience - can we work collaboratively?
- Making your play together - acting/backstage
- getting into mainstream acting/screen work with support
- organisational skills - tax return, running a business, marketing, who to contact, make emails personal, getting an agent.
- Coaching in applying for funding - have been able to use access support worker (funded CS)
- Managing conflict
- Greek tragedy
- GeckoTheatre, Ipswich
- Bouffon (including outdoor interactive performance)
- Space and time to develop personal work around for practice
- Whole training - month or 2-3 months - make a play from the beginning writing to the performing stage - looking at all aspects of the creation and production - back stage, front stage and show they all fit in together, so you know what to deal with everything

More support for drama schools to train for additional needs
Funding for travel expenses for auditions, etc

Opportunities to put non-disabled artists and gatekeepers at ease - reviewed a script recently re. How they used disabled characters, but they took them out instead of following recommendations for giving them more time.

Time within project - Taken me time to be confident to have a conversation with people about what I can and can't do with my body.

During the pandemic - was able to do more - Red Bastard, NY Movement Centre & Jamie Mears ran online courses
All have to make money, training is a luxury. Need training that pays toward something and is paid to do it. United we stand divided we fall. Disabled community very disparate. Want to do collaborative work looking at it from a VI perspective

What would it look like?

- A lot of different art forms in one space with all paid for
- More zoom online courses?
- Need to bring people up here and bring kids into another space; create a supportive space for people to be able to participate
- Disability Arts Festival - platform different work, in person and zoom. NB it would need to Connect into the main stream or we are at risk of ghettoising ourselves. Work cleverly so that main stream stop boxing people and working with what they want to, ignoring others. Invite Shadow minister of parliament - raise awareness.

Need to get us united - need that space - physical or on zoom. Need regularity eg every Thursday at Dance Base - disabled artists cup of tea.
Solar Bear, BoP, VICS - need to talk to each other. Fear of competition for funding/space. If support each other collaboratively to make a bigger difference. Doesn't seem to happen in Scotland.

Include NE England as nothing there either

Feel isolated - need to explain all my access needs if I want to join. Want them to come to us. Never get spoken to at networking events. Good to have introductory people to help with networking. Can be overwhelming.

"I just wanted to say thank you for the Focus group it really helped being able to talk to people similar to me in the industry, it was lovely to meet everyone"

Appendix 2 - 121 responses

- In-person training that is local to me, as I have caring responsibilities. Need to feel nourished
- administration – not good at marketing or sharing our achievements
- Did a week-long workshop with Marc on choreography, building confidence, so like the idea of the choreolab.
- how to run a business
- How to monitise self
- how to get commissions
- sell expertise on haptic interfaces
- networking support/ benefactor
- Mentoring
- Arts and homelessness training

Mapping the training needs of d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists in Scotland

marcbrew.com

