

STUDENT RESOURCE PACK

This Student Resource Pack is designed to provide students from a range of settings with in depth information direct from Candoco Dance Company staff and dancers. The interviews cover a variety of topics from the perspective of individuals within the company. We hope you find this Pack useful in your research.



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ABOUT CANDOCO DANCE COMPANY

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Candoco Dance Company is the company of disabled and non-disabled dancers. We create profound experiences for audiences and participants that excite, challenge and broaden perceptions of art and ability, and place people and collaboration at the heart of our work. We commission and produce work by world-class choreographers for our core company of seven dancers, which we tour nationally and across the globe.

We deliver an extensive Learning Programme to provide access to the highest quality of dance, either as part of a developing career or for pure enjoyment. Our programme has three distinct strands: Artists, Youth Dance and Schools & Colleges. For disabled and non-disabled artists we deliver tailored training nationally and internationally through our Teacher Training Intensive, International Lab, Dancer Development Days, and Choreographic Hothouses.

Our Youth Dance programme offers regular dance classes, performance opportunities and exciting partnership projects, through which we aim to introduce young people to creative dance practice in different settings and at varying stages of their training.

For Schools and Colleges, we cater to students and teachers through workshops, resource packs and bespoke projects upon request.

Candoco is also proud to be an Arts Award Supporter.

To find out more about Candoco's Learning Programme please visit www.candoco.co.uk/learning



2. CANDOCO'S ARTISTIC VISION

We are curious about what dance can be, how we can provide new ways into dance and how our company of disabled and non-disabled dancers can change and reimagine perceptions of ability.

All our work, from performances by our professional and youth companies, to our workshops, regular classes, intensives and training modules, seeks to make a long term change in the vibrancy of dance and the range of dancers you see on stage.

**To find out more about Candoco's Artistic Vision please visit
www.candoco.co.uk/about-us/artistic-vision**

3. HISTORY

Candoco Dance Company was founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker-Arnold and Adam Benjamin. The Company developed out of integrated workshops at London's Aspire Centre for Spinal Injury and quickly grew into the first company of its kind in the UK – a professional dance company focused on the integration of disabled and non-disabled artists.

Candoco's current Artistic Co-Directors Stine Nilsen and Pedro Machado were appointed as Celeste's successors in 2007. Having danced with the company for seven and nine years respectively, they brought a natural understanding of the company's ethos to the role and continued to push the boundaries of the definition of dance with bold and diverse commissions.

**To find out more about Candoco's background please visit
www.candoco.co.uk/about-us/background**

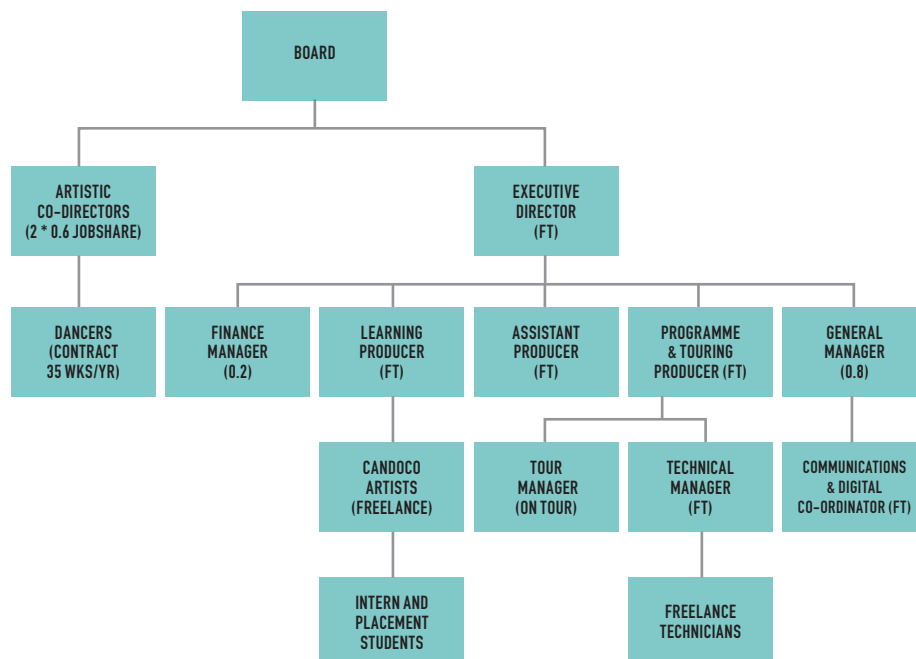


4. THE NATURE OF THE COMPANY, ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND OWNERSHIP

Candoco Dance Company is a non-profit company and a registered charity. Candoco is limited by guarantee and governed by a Board of Directors. The senior management team consists of the Artistic Co-Directors and the Executive Director who have joint and equal responsibility for the management of the company – the team of office staff, dancers and freelancers.

The company is based in London with an office in Islington and a rehearsal studio theatre located at Aspire Leisure Centre in Stanmore.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



5. PRINCIPLE SOURCES OF FUNDING

VOLUNTARY INCOME

Candoco Dance Company is funded as a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England. Depending on circumstances, the annual grant constitutes 50-60 % of the company's income. The company's international touring is also frequently supported by British Council.

The most recent support for the company's work includes: Without Walls fund for the duet by Arlene Phillips *You and I Know*, Cockayne and The London Community Foundation's support for Hetain Patel's *Let's Talk About Dis* and The Idlewild Trust for Alexander Whitley's *Beheld*.

Previous significant funders have included Arts Council England's Catalyst, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn, Children in Need, Henry Smith Charitable Trust, The John Ellerman Foundation and individual donors.

EARNED INCOME

Other sources of income include income earned through performances: co-commissions, touring guaranteed fee, foreign fees, merchandise, and income earned through learning programmes, including workshop and consultancy fees, Youth classes, Candoco Artists, Candoco Dialogues and Candoco Learning International.



CANDOCO'S ARTISTIC VISION AND WHAT IT IMPLIES

An interview with Candoco's artistic co-directors Stine Nilsen (SN) and Pedro Machado (PM)



**Q. Candoco's Artistic Vision is to explore what dance can be.
How is this reflected in your choice of choreographers to work with?**

SN: When we choose choreographers, Pedro or I see their work, we meet with them to hear about their process and interest in working with us, and then invite them to spend a few days in the studio with the dancers to do practical research together. If we are all interested and excited about working together then we plan ahead for the next 1-3 years as to when we will work with the choreographer. We are generally interested in choreographers who place a great emphasis on exploring the body and how the body works - both in theatrical and abstract ways.



PM: The advantage of being a company without a fixed choreographer is that we don't need to build our repertoire around a single artistic voice. Of course there's still an element of taste – and that's one of the nicest parts of my job, as Stine and I need to like anyone we commission. But even that is negotiated, as there are two of us. We do enjoy a certain freedom and this allows us to be agile, explore diverse paths and take risks. Think of Sarah Michelson, Nigel Charnock, Rachid Ouramdane... even Javier de Frutos back in 2000. Ultimately, we look for distinct voices as well as artists who propose a form of change within dance, as this is a major driving force for Candoco. Dance is a great medium but it can be very 'selective' in regards to who can take part. We want to change that.

Q. How do you choose dancers to work with? What in particular do you look for in dancers?

SN: We hold auditions regularly to look for new dancers and always look out for people who join our workshops as potential future dancers. Our audition process is to send an application with a statement of why they want to join Candoco, plus a CV and any footage of them dancing. We then shortlist people and ask around 20-30 people to join an audition.

PM: In the audition we do technical class, improvisation, learn material from the repertoire and create new material. We shortlist throughout the audition process and interview the final candidates for the job. On top of that there are two parallel ongoing processes that support auditions: Stine and I are always scouting, seeing other works, talking to other Directors, looking for potential talent elsewhere. But dancers also seek us out. They come to classes, labs, research days...





Photo by Hugo Glendinning, 2012

SN: In terms of qualities and skills, we look for dancers who enjoy being physical and who can demonstrate some clarity of movement. We want dancers who are curious and imaginative; who are willing to work in a team but who have a personal interest in their development. A good sense of humour always helps. When we choose dancers we are also building a team with different skills and personalities, so existing cast members can have an effect on our choice.

Q. How important is it for dancers that you work with to have a strong technical basis?

PM: It's desired but not essential as technique can be a useful tool to learn about oneself. However, there are so many forms of technique that if we were looking for technical prowess first we could miss out on something else, something subtler. Technique as something fixed can even get in the way. It's the dancers' relation to dance and to the material they are working with that matters. How they see themselves, their work, their peers, the world...



PM: We're also aware that most disabled artists are denied vocational training and usually come to dance later than their non-disabled counterparts so it would be unfair to prioritise technique.

Sometimes a strong artistic outlook in life and a good understanding of who they are (which includes their body) is worth much more than the ability to reproduce exercises within a particular style.

Q. How do you approach technique training for the company?

SN: It will depend on what we need to do that particular day or week and what we are preparing for. But we do a variety of things. Sometimes set-material class, usually release base, but we've also done ballet, Graham and Limón style classes in the past. Sometimes partner or body work. Other times we do improvisations with different levels of freedom exploration and structure. It depends a lot on the current repertory, on teachers and on the dancers we have at any given time.

PM: In the first years we were more structured and dancers would take turns to deliver fairly formal classes suggesting adaptations to anyone who functioned differently to the teachers. Now we give more choices to everyone in the room. Sometimes dancers do their own warm up and particular exercises.

Q. Are there any challenges or differences in technique that choreographers find in working with both disabled and non-disabled dancers?

PM: It always depends on the extent to which the choreographer knows their own practice and how open they are to challenge it if needed. My experience is that the more experienced the choreographer the fewer





Stine working with dancers during the STEPS festival in Switzerland. Photo by Helen Ree, 2016

issues there are, in fact the differences can be refreshing. One of the hardest challenges is that disabled dancers still find it difficult to acquire experience and training so they might struggle with being playful with their movement. However they often have to consider things about their bodies that other dancers don't, so they already come with a greater self-knowledge, which can be useful for a choreographer. The beauty of working in a mixed environment is that there are many available skills in the room, not to mention what gets created when they meet.

Q. How do you believe inclusive practice impacts the public's perspective on professional dance?

SN: Dance is changing. It's becoming more diverse, more democratic and is constantly transforming as different ideas and techniques come together. I think the public is eager for new ideas, as long as there's quality. The important thing is to encourage young disabled people to train, to get experience, to believe that they can be professional dancers if they wish, like any other kid. There are great disabled artists dancing and making work already but we still haven't seen a critical mass of disabled young artists gaining experience in children's classes, conservatoires and colleges, like their non-disabled counterparts.



Q. How has it changed over the time that you've worked for Candoco?

SN: The scene is developing fast and a lot of positive change has happened since I started with the company and even more since Candoco first began in 1991.

I know it might not feel like it but in terms of physical access the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) in Britain has been an important factor for change. In the early years it was difficult even to have wheelchair accessible studios. It still happens but less frequently now. Even to think of access in broader terms is a development. Now we discuss Sign Language Interpretation and Audio Description with venues and there are companies specialising in 'relaxed performances' aimed at people with Autism, sensory and communication disorders or a learning disability.

PM: Terminology is also changing. We stopped using the term 'integrated' in 2007/8, adopting 'inclusive', which concentrates on the process, on the approach, but even this term is unsatisfactory (although it would be good to start referring to a few companies as 'exclusive' companies...). The lack of appropriate terminology demonstrates how the issue of equality is still unresolved and often divisive. I know that in Brazil for instance most disabled artists reject these terms altogether. Along these lines we've seen a change in how critics talk about Candoco. If you search through the archives, you will come across shocking reviews, rude in how they described physical details of specific dancers. Nowadays, there's more attention to the work done by the choreographers.

One of the big changes for me is that now we encounter young disabled people who want to be part of the dance world, who dream of becoming professional dancers. That was unheard of back in the '90s. I think the Internet has been helpful in allowing people to see each other more easily and on their own terms. Just Google 'lego leg' to get an idea...



This pushes the general media to become more diverse and encourages disabled people to be more confident and bolder with their choice of expression. But we still encounter lots of prejudice and people who were discouraged due to their physical difference, sometimes even after completing their training.

PM: Funding has changed too. Candoco's first Arts Council Grant was about £5,000 to hire an Administrator and it came through the general funding avenues, like most of our funding still does. Now there are specific funding opportunities out there like 'Unlimited', aimed at financing work made by disabled artists. Although it can feel like we are missing a step for disabled choreographers if they don't gain much experience as dancers first. Bigger companies are engaging with disabled artists and participants, but this is often done only on a learning capacity. How many companies deliver 'inclusive' dance training without ever having – or even considering having – a disabled dancer in their main cast? On the other hand companies like Amici, Anjali, StopGap, Mind the Gap, Frontline... all continue to make work, always engaging with the public and artists in different ways. Independent artists such as Claire Cunningham, Caroline Bowditch and Marc Brew are now international references in this area, making a strong case for the robust approach Creative Scotland has on this field. And there are more and more companies abroad, some of them really interesting.

SN: Practically for us this means we have disabled dancers auditioning who have gained experience elsewhere, whereas in the early years we pretty much had to train most people. The public also has more opportunity to see work with disabled performers. This means there is no longer a novelty factor which, in the long term, is positive. The more critical we can be the quicker we will develop.



PM: A lot needs to change still. Dance - and more critically dance training - still favours a homogenized non-disabled body at the expense of excluding people who function differently. However, I believe inclusive dance in the UK- as well as participatory or community dance - is an international reference and it enjoys some prestige and recognition in the Arts sector. Perceptions change gradually and I'd like to think that in the past 25 years Candoco has done a lot to further this change.



Stine and Pedro in *The Human Suite* by Stephen Petronio. Photo by Anthony Crickmay, 2004

Q. What do you think is the difference in how inclusive dance is being received as compared to non-inclusive dance?

SN: I now understand more about the role of empathy and desire in relating to performance than I grasped in my early years as a Co-Director. Our 2015 version of 'The Show Must Go On' made this very evident.



PM: In this sense inclusive dance is very different as some part of the public sees and desires something new, something they haven't allowed themselves to identify with before in a positive way. For another segment of the audience it's an opportunity to see a closer version of themselves, having felt excluded from this realm. This is liberating and re-affirming.

Now we can see a dancer using a wheelchair, or crutches, or someone who brings involuntary spasms into a work, or has a different sense of equilibrium to what we are mostly used to. This is interesting both in a practical and phenomenological way. It also brings more artistic possibilities for choreographers. It's like a visual artist lifting up the tray inside their box of colouring pencils to find a whole new set of colours. New perspectives are also a welcome difference. The biographical work made by Clare Cunningham is a good example of this.

Q. What's your vision for Candoco Dance Company in 20 years and, more broadly, for inclusive dance?

SN: I hope that whoever is leading Candoco then continues to do great exciting work, hopefully different to what we are doing now, setting their own agenda and following their desires. And I hope that by then we have lost the need to have a term like 'inclusive dance'.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PROFESSIONAL DANCER

Interview with Candoco Dancers Toke Broni Strandby and Adam Gain.



Q. When did you audition for Candoco

Toke: I auditioned 2 years ago but I had actually been in contact with the company a long time before that, going for company classes, masterclasses, etc.

Adam: My first audition was in 2011. I had already auditioned twice and eventually got in on my third one. So I've actually had quite a few experiences of auditioning for Candoco.

Q. Did you find it difficult go back and audition again?

Adam: No, in fact I think I became calmer. In between I also took up some of the company classes so I knew the dancers relatively well, even on a personal level, which made it a lot easier. Also I didn't have to start



from scratch, I could just add on. On top of that, it has encouraged me to work on my weak points, which is really important if you intend to work with a company for a long time.

Q. What was the audition day like?

Toke: We went through a technique class, learning small parts of material in groups, and then proceeded to take a more improvised class. At the end of the day, we went on to the more creative part, working on duets and then to showing what we had created. It was a very rounded day, touching on both physical and intellectual skills. Despite the competition, I remember the atmosphere was very nice – everyone within the audition group was very supportive.

Adam: Except from a normal company class, I remember learning different parts of the Company's repertoire – Trisha Brown's *Set and Reset* and Wendy Houstoun's *Imperfect Storm*. Some of it was about learning phrase material to test your ability to retain and reproduce it consistently, and some of it is about your ability to take direction.

For example working on Wendy's piece was focused on the composition – we were improvising with the idea of entering and exiting the space while using some of the movement ideas given to us. It was an opportunity to show your personality as well sensitivity of working with others and being able to read a proposition, rather than going in with your own idea and ignoring the rest. Sometimes there was a need to challenge what had already been setup in the space, and sometimes there was a need to complement others' movement.



Q. Is it similar to how you now work with the choreographers while creating a piece?

Adam: Yes. One thing I've found while working with Candoco is that the choreographers are always very interested to see what you bring as an individual. You are never just a body for them to use in the space. Stine and Pedro, our Artistic Co-Directors, have a very specific idea of how they want their dancers to be used, and you can really see that reflected in the choreographers who are invited to work with us.

Toke: The process has also been very different with each choreographer. Sometimes the energy of the group or of the choreography is light, playful and fun, which makes it easy to work on. But sometimes you have to use other approaches of working, both as an individual and as a group.

Q. What do find most exciting about the company?

Adam: I believe Candoco is well known for two very good reasons - the interesting work they produce and the inspiring people they work with. As a rep company, currently we have 4 pieces from different choreographers and I've really enjoyed the challenge of having to have a different skill set for every piece but also fully remaining yourself. Another thing is getting to work with many different people, and having 7 dancers in the company makes it almost like a family. I also really get along with our Artistic Co-Directors, which altogether makes for a great working environment – a positive one but also encouraging, where one feels very productive.

Toke: I really like Candoco's approach of choosing their people quite carefully – the personality comes first and the dance skills actually come second. It creates a good working environment, which enables things to



happen because we complement each other as individuals. And also it's good to know that I am hired for who I am and not just for what I do.

Q. Except for performing, all company dancers also do a fair amount of teaching – how do you find your role as a teacher within the company?

Toke: I think that through teaching we can make people more aware of each other – we approach the workshops at a very high level, but invite a very diverse group of disabled and non-disabled people to share the space, which is challenging but very exciting at the same time. I also personally learn a lot from teaching because I never know who will come into the class so I end up working with participants differently each time.



Adam performing in Alexander Whitley's *Beheld*. Photo by Hugo Glendinning. 2015



Adam: For me teaching for Candoco was a shift from my previous experience when there was always that element of “I’m here to share with you the valuable information I have”. The teacher-student hierarchy with Candoco is different, much more equal and the sharing of information is mutual, which allows people to connect more. I find it very satisfying to be able to help people to come together in a healthy environment, where they feel safe to explore. Moving away from a strict technical class to guiding and helping participants to learn things themselves is a very difficult yet exciting skill.

Q. It must be quite a varied experience to teach different people all over the world. What is the biggest “surprise” you have had up until now? And how did you find it?

Adam: One of my favourite teaching memories was when we were in Athens, touring a duet. We had a workshop before the show when we worked with a translator, which was a whole new level of craziness we had to overcome. Working with a translator can be really tricky but it makes you focus on what you are actually teaching in a completely different way. It forces you to slow down, choose the right words, the right instruction and you end up demonstrating in a clearer way, which is more helpful for participants to find solutions. Instead of overwhelming with words, I would just give a piece of information and leave that little seed to see what came out of it. There is something really valuable in that – being able to plant something, step back, and just watch what they create. Sometimes you cannot help but have some preconceptions, or set a bar, but those moments, when people come out with something that surprises you and breaks your expectations, are really exciting.



Q. How do you cope with the challenge of both teaching and performing, especially during the busy schedule on tour? What is your motivation?

Adam: It's funny because I would have thought that dance would be my motivation, but it's actually the people I am working with. If there is some kind of a personal issue, it can be really hard to do your job, even if you enjoy the choreography. But the people from Candoco give me the energy I need. Sometimes I lack energy or motivation and sometimes other dancers also feel the same, but then we tackle that together as a group. It's also about having a healthy competition going on – when you see your colleagues exceed your expectations, it encourages and challenges you to be more productive and thus drives you forward.

Toke: I think it is also the excitement that everything we do is going somewhere. We are never just doing things for the sake of doing things. Also, new choreographers come in so we always have something exciting to look forward to.



Set and Reset/Reset performed during STEPS festival. Photo by Christian Attorfer, 2016



Q. How do you manage the repetition of routines – what do you do to keep the work interesting to you and avoid burning yourself out?

Adam: It is important to know what is coming up next – to pace yourself energy wise so you can give all the energy you need when you get on stage. And if you want to stop the boredom from setting in, you need to be engaged in the work in a cognitive way. It's also important to be critical and judge yourself positively. I am someone who always tries to be consistent but sometimes you get used to giving what you think is your 100%, and as you go on, you realise that you could be doing a bit more. Or maybe you could give less in some parts and more in other parts of a piece. There is always a different angle you can come at it from. Trying to be playful and recognising these various attitudes allows you to keep things fresh.

Toke: This is a difficult one, but it really helps when you notice how you are on certain days and the more you can use this, the more you will know how to manage it. It is important to be able to really listen to yourself, especially as that each piece requires a different state of mind and quality of movement. Performances are never the same. You don't know what is going to happen on the stage, which is why you don't need to be alert and present at all times, which keeps things exciting. But it is also about finding the small things that are helpful – for example getting some time to yourself before and after the performance to clear your head.

Q. What would be your advice for aspiring dancers?

Adam: One piece of advice is to always be curious. There is a misconception about dance being only physical and not intellectual. But one of my favourite things to do while working on new choreography is to question: “Why are we doing what we are doing?” “What are we



trying to achieve?”. There’s a long intellectual process behind every choice made for the choreography and there is so much to gain from just being curious about it. Unlike just doing the work physically, it allows you to be really engaged with the piece, test it, question it and push the boundaries a little.

Toke: My first piece of advice for aspiring dancers would be that if you are interested in a company or in a particular choreographer’s work, you need to first of all let them know about it. This could be through attending classes, development days and generally keeping the conversation going. Secondly, familiarising yourself as much as possible with their work allows you to put some ideas into your body, which is a huge advantage when you then go for auditions because it gives you an understanding of what you might face. And do not be scared to talk to people! Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that all of us have our weaknesses but we can turn our weaknesses into strengths. Put them on top of one another, and see how you negotiate between them and see what can come out of it.



Adam and Toke performing Notturmo. Photo by Helen Ree, 2016



Q. Describe one of your most memorable experiences.

Adam: One of the performances in Mexico, when we were performing at the huge theatre, probably 800 seats. I remember that half of the people in the audience were actively talking throughout the show. That threw me off at first, but as it went on, we realised that they were just very enthusiastic and we could feel that electricity from them throughout. It was the convention of this particular theatre and place. There was also one street show we did in Bradford when a kid of around 8 years old spotted us throwing each other around with our wrestling masks on. He rode up to the edge of the performance space on his bike. He stayed there for the whole piece, even though you could see him trying to pretend that he wasn't watching. He was captivated, though he just rode off after and that really stuck in my mind.

Toke: I have quite a few memorable experiences from performing Hetain Patel's piece *Let's talk About Dis* in which we have to interact with the audiences a lot. It is very challenging, especially when there are no responses. When the audience doesn't laugh, or struggles to understand what we are trying to bring across, the whole energy is gone. But that's when we have to be clear in knowing what the tone is like, what the humour is like, and on top of that have an understanding of our audiences – only then are we able to layer things throughout the performance.



AN INSIGHT INTO CANDOCO'S LEARNING PROGRAMME

Interview with Learning Producer Hannah Dye.



Q. What does your job role consist of, who do you work with and who is your line manager?

I'm the Learning Producer at Candoco Dance Company. I curate and deliver a broad programme of activities that aim to engage people in our work in a variety of ways - from complete beginners through to professional dancers. We want to change people's perceptions of who can dance through the wide range of experiences that we offer.



My role is full time, Monday to Friday and my line manager is the Executive Director. Candoco is a small organisation with just 10 members of staff and I'm lucky that I get to work with everyone – from working on fundraising with our General Manager to complicated travel logistics with our Assistant Producer.

Q. What are the positives and negatives of the job and how do you overcome these?

The positives are that I meet a huge variety of people – young dancers, teachers, professional dancers, students, other arts professionals, parents, carers, older adults.... the list is endless! I feed off of the perspective, insight and views of other people and firmly believe that this is what makes our art form so exciting.

I think the main challenge and frustration in my job is the ever-changing landscape of arts (particularly dance) within the school curriculum. I strongly believe that every child and young person should have access to dance but through my job, I continually meet young people who have never experienced a dance class or performance before. It's a big one to overcome but by continually developing our own offer, it's a small step towards allowing young people to enjoy contemporary dance. It's also very important to us to listen to children and young people themselves – what they want, need or like and our Youth Advisory Group is key in communicating this to us.

Q. How does your job fit in within the community?

Candoco tours nationally and internationally and along the way, we try to engage with a wide audience through performance, workshops and



talks. My role is to ensure we reach the community in creative, exciting and innovative ways. This might be establishing a mentoring programme in Nigeria or a school workshop in South East London – the breadth is huge.



Cando2 rehearsals at Trinity Laban, Photo by Camilla Greenwell, 2016

Q. What qualifications do you have? Are they essential for the job?

I have a BA Hons Degree in Dance and Drama and an MA in Creative and Cultural Management. Having these qualifications is certainly attractive to an employer but I believe my practical experience is far more essential to my role.

Before starting my career, I volunteered and undertook placements in a variety of arts settings, which all contributed and prepared me for my degree. During my Masters I then undertook a 7-month placement, which built a foundation of knowledge and experience so I could step



into arts education. Although my academic background is key, my work experience is just as valuable to me.

Q. How did you get the job? What was the process like?

I completed an application form and a few days later, I was invited to an interview with Candoco's Executive Director, Artistic Co-Director and Chair of the Board. I was asked to present on a specific topic and answered a range of questions. I was then invited to a second interview where I met other members of staff and was eventually offered the job!

Although nerve-racking as interviews always are, the process was generally very positive and whilst it allowed for Candoco to work out whether I was the person for the job, it also gave me the opportunity to find out more about the role and company in general.

Q. What was your biggest challenge while working with Candoco?

In my 7th month as Candoco's Learning Producer, I set up a residential Lab where 22 artists came together from across the globe and I really felt the pressure! I wanted to ensure the experience was fulfilling, challenging and everything they hoped it would be.

I remember meeting artists in the pouring rain (great UK welcome!) on the puzzling Lancaster University campus and running around worrying about whether people had towels in their bedrooms, if their beds were comfy and if they knew where they were going! It was logistically challenging but as soon as the work started in the studio, I began to relax and start to enjoy myself! I soon came to realise that Candoco's International Labs are as much about the input from the artists as about



good preparation – a huge and essential learning curve for me in my new role.

Q. What was your best experience while working with Candoco?

Oh so many! I think one highlight was taking Cando2 (our youth company) to Glasgow to take part and perform in the first ever Commonwealth Youth Dance Festival. 16 of us travelled up by train to Glasgow and enjoyed 3 days of workshops, performances, meals with hundreds of other dancers, social dancing and a mass dance in the city centre. It was an exhausting few days but we didn't stop smiling and laughing! It has emphasised to me that these experiences can have a lasting impact on young people and are so important to the development of life skills.



CAREER PROGRESSION FOR A PROFESSIONAL DANCE ARTIST

Interview with Candoco Artist Kimberly Harvey.



Q. What does it mean to be a Candoco Artist? How does your job role fit within the company?

I am part of a 'pool' of Candoco Artists. My job within the company fits predominately in a teaching capacity – I get to work with other Candoco Artists on a wide variety of projects. I am fortunate that my role as a teacher for Candoco takes me around London, the UK and it has taken me abroad too. As a Candoco Artist I have also been asked to be part of projects as a dancer: in the London 2012 Paralympics Closing Ceremony; Research & Development for Caroline Bowditch's Internal Rupture with Welly O'Brien; and part of the first Research &



Development stage for Marc Brew and Claire Cunningham's Unlimited commissions for the company.

For me it means that I have the opportunity to share what I have learnt from the company and give participants a taste of the company's work while simultaneously showing who I am as a dance artist. It is really clear and evident to me that Candoco values each person they work with and they encourage us as Candoco Artists to incorporate our individuality and interests into what we do.



Kimberley teaching Cando2 class at Trinity Laban. Photo by Camilla Greenwell, 2016

Q. How did you become a Candoco Artist?

It began when I got involved in Candoco's Moving Bodies Programme, which was an opportunity to progress as a dancer, teacher and in particular, to become braver as a performer.

The work and training I undertook during the three years was hugely



beneficial and proved to me that both teaching and performing were paths I wanted to pursue in my career. From being the 'Moving Bodies Artist for London' I was asked if I wanted to be considered to be a Candoco Artist.

Q. Do you think that Candoco offers courses or routes for individuals with disabilities to develop to a professional standard?

Without question, Candoco has done in the past and continues to offer courses and routes for individuals to develop to a professional standard. The fact that Candoco focuses on the art and not the disability and that it strives for quality at every level of engagement means that it will challenge every individual to reach their own full potential

I personally have engaged in a wide variety of elements within Candoco's education programme over the years. I didn't train at university or at a dance conservatoire. My dance training was bespoke and Candoco was a huge and essential part of that, both in terms of opportunities and support.

I am now working in the dance sector as a professional performer, choreographer and teacher.

Q. What exactly was your pathway into becoming a professional dance artist?

My first introduction to dance was as a Cando2 member in 2000 when I was 12 years old, and I remember very clearly how I admired and felt empowered by the Candoco Artists that taught me. I had the opportunity to engage in numerous one-off as well as weeklong workshops with different choreographers, making a new dance piece each time. The



piece would then be performed in different places as part of various dance platforms.

After a few years the weekly youth classes began, which I attended until 2012. The phenomenal range of experience gained with Cando2 was my fundamental training as a performer. I performed on stages of all sizes, outside, inside, site-specific, for film, installations and in collaboration with other companies.

Then I successfully auditioned to be part of Candoco's one-year Foundation Course in Dance for Disabled Students and I continued my training as an emerging dance artist on Candoco's three-year Moving Bodies Programme. This coincided with my own bespoke training programme of attending technique classes, residencies, workshops and initiating my own performance projects.

Q. What has been your biggest challenge while pursuing your career as a professional dancer?

My perceptions of the overall dance industry have no doubt evolved over time, but an undeniable challenge is to stay optimistic when you feel lost or isolated in your work. As a freelance dance artist, the only person that can make things happen in your career is you. You have to be proactive, motivated and dedicated. However, as a freelancer, I have found it very challenging to achieve the work-life balance.



Q. Do you think there are enough opportunities for disabled dancers to pursue a professional dance career? Are professional companies open to disabled dancers?

The short answer is 'no' on both counts. Of course there are a few companies and organisations that openly express a desire for diversity and a willingness to employ dancers with a disability. Similarly, I have colleagues that I know work inclusively and would therefore employ disabled dancers.

However, in my experience, the reality of employing a disabled dance artist is a scary one for many companies. In addition, although progress has clearly been made in widening perceptions of what the professional dancer looks like, I think the dance sector as a whole still has a long way to go!



Kimberley creating Muster with Charlotte Darbyshire. Photo by Simon Cooper. 2016



Q. Do you think opportunities for disabled dancers differ depending whether it's a physical or learning disability?

I do think that opportunities differ depending on whether a dancer has a physical or learning disability. There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to any kind of disability, but I do think that learning disabilities, in particular, are often regarded in very stereotypical ways. This, in turn, can make opportunities limited but then again some specialised organisations would specifically focus on engaging people with learning disabilities.

Q. What are the challenges you face as a company when engaging disabled and non-disabled young people in creative dance?

I have seen flux, change; but also reoccurring themes when it comes to the challenges of engaging disabled and non-disabled young people.

First of all, I think there is a real case for promoting contemporary dance further. Young people may not know much about contemporary dance and for some, street dance, commercial or ballet, for example, are more 'attractive' dance forms to engage with.

Another issue is that young people have other commitments. Many are at school and, therefore, there are times during the academic year where the focus needs to be on studying for exams etc. Also for some, it is purely a recreational activity so regular attendance isn't such a priority.

On a practical level, young people (in particular, disabled young people) may be reliant upon others to bring them to the dance class. So, there will be times when they are unable to attend class as there is no way for them to get there.



Q. What has been your best experience while working with Candoco?

It is really difficult to select just one thing as my best experience as a Candoco Artist! I have to include performing at the London 2012 Paralympic Closing Ceremony as one of the 12 Candoco Artists dancing to Coldplay.

Then co-delivering Muster with Charlotte Darbyshire was very complex and challenging, but also a unique and amazing project to be part of. We had such a diverse group of people that worked incredibly well together and I felt very lucky to be trusted by Candoco and the group to be a part of it. It was also a real treat to get to work with Charlotte Darbyshire as she was the first choreographer I worked with when I joined Cando2 back in 2000.

And finally the individuals that are involved in Candoco are an integral part of what sets the company apart from others, in my humble opinion. The genuineness, curiosity, generosity and wealth of experience I encounter within Candoco and amongst the other Artists is wonderful; and I truly enjoy getting to work with, teach with, and learn from them.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DANCER IN A YOUTH COMPANY

Interview with Cando2 dancer Jane Annand.



Q. What is it like to be involved in Cando2? What are the activities and events that you participate in?

There are two Cando2 groups, at Trinity Laban on Mondays and at The Place on Tuesdays, and I'm a member of both. The classes are conducted by two Candoco Artists, who teach us as well as choreograph on us. Sometimes we also have guest choreographers coming in. The classes are scheduled around the school terms and each term we are involved in a new project, working towards performances.



Q. What is the usual Cando2 class like?

Usually we have a warm up and technique section and then the creative part of the class. But as we get closer to the performances, the classes tend to be more focused on developing the choreography. Also the structure varies, depending on what kind of performances we're involved in. For example, with Tuesday's group we worked towards an improvised performance in the Old Church (Stoke Newington) as part of the Breathe Festival. So in the class we were focusing on improving our improvisation skills and interactions with each other.



Jane during the class with Cando2 at Laban. Photo by Camilla Greenwell, 2016

Q. What are some of the projects or events that you've participated in?

There have been so many! A Dolly Parton piece for Glasgow Commonwealth Youth Dance Festival; a site specific piece at Laban about painting walls, or a piece for U.Dance at Laban when we got



through to U.Dance 2015 in Plymouth, to name just a few. It depends on what's there for us to get involved in but our Learning Producer is really great at finding many really different and exciting opportunities for us.

Q. Why did you decide to join Cando2? What excites you about the company?

I joined for a few reasons. First of all, when I found out that my former ballet teacher, Kitty Fedorec, was involved in Cando2 I thought it would be great to dance with her again. Also I didn't want to get involved in adult dance classes, I wanted to be involved in something that would be more focused on the creative process and would give me opportunities to perform. Also my degree was in physiotherapy and I am very interested in dance, its impact on emotional and physical health and the way it increases people's wellbeing. Being a part of Cando2 and having such a variety of people in one room is a great opportunity to observe and learn.

Q. How do you think Cando2 fits within the community? What is the importance of the work that Cando2 does?

First of all Cando2 has become a small community of its own. Because we work together every week, we all get on really well with each other. It's also a very diverse group in terms of ability and age (from 13 up to 25 years old). And on top of that there's the quite unusual setting of relating to each other physically in a way that is different from any other circumstances. Our teachers create a very safe and encouraging environment where you don't feel self-conscious while dancing with other people. This increases our confidence and makes us more willing to take risks and work together to express ourselves. So having this very diverse group of people, who move together and work with physical contact, creates unique ways of communicating within what feels like



a safe community. And then we go out to perform and we become this very eclectic group of people expressing themselves on stage. Audiences can see how we relate to each other and I believe that through our performances we show what people can do and what you can create as an inclusive group.

Q. So you build certain values within the community of Cando2 and then bring them into the wider community through performances?

Yes, it's very much about being inclusive and having support within the group, which I believe then shows through our dance work. Although, it's not only through performances but also through various projects that we get to assist as Cando2 dancers. For example I was involved in a project at Artsdepot, where I assisted a series of tango workshops for young disabled people, during which they created a dance routine, which they then performed at their Club Night. It was great to have the opportunity to support this group and see how young people have explored and improved their physical coordination while engaging in dance and physical contact.

Q. You've been with the company for over 3 years now. How do you think the company has changed during this time?

The biggest change was with the class at Laban. It was very small when I first joined in, and since then it has grown massively – we've gone from handful of people to 12. Another thing is that now we're being more recognised as a youth company, which allows us to have more opportunities to perform as well as collaborate with other youth companies such as the CAT Scheme, Magpie Dance, Laban Youth Company, etc. For example this term we're involved in the LINKED film project at Blackheath Halls with various different youth companies.



Q. Has working and being a part of the company influenced you as a person in any particular way?

I think Cando2 has given me confidence and improved my physicality as well as influenced the way I work with people. I work as a Physiotherapist Assistant and I've helped develop a dance group for older adults at work, which I probably wouldn't have done if I hadn't been a part of Cando2. Also our teachers' approach and some of the class principles have affected the way I've set up the group. For example adaptations – we have standing and sitting versions of each exercise, allowing people to move in their own way, depending on their bodies. I think Cando2 does that very well, and I'm proud to be able to pass on the spirit. But Cando2 has had an influence on my personal wellbeing too – having regular meetings and gaining new friends is something very important to all of us.



Jane performing Splintered Spiral with Cando2 at U.Dance 2015 in Plymouth. Photo by Brian Stater, 2015



Q. What did you find challenging about being in the company?

I'm one of the older ones and I have a full-time job, which makes it challenging to fit in my Cando2 commitments around that. Sometimes I'm late for classes or I have to miss out on some really exciting projects, which can be disappointing. Fortunately we don't have to leave the company if we've missed some rehearsals, but I always want to be there to support my fellow dancers throughout the whole journey.

Q. Would you be able to single out your best experience with Cando2?

There are so many potential best experiences! I just really enjoy walking out on stage with all my friends, showing something that we've made and we are proud of. And I also really appreciate the support we receive throughout the process of creating the pieces – all of our teachers really make sure that we look good and that the audience will take us seriously.



LIFE AS A DANCER WITH CANDOCO DANCE COMPANY

Interview with Candoco dancer Tanja Erhart



Q. What are the different aspects of your job as a dancer with Candoco Dance Company?

For the past 2.5 years of being a professional dancer with Candoco my role within the company has been constantly changing, which for me is really interesting. As a repertory company, we devise dance pieces collaboratively with different choreographers who are invited to work with us by Stine and Pedro, our Artistic Co-Directors. So we first have a research week when we spend some time in the studio to explore various



ideas. Then we have about 3-4 weeks to create a piece, which is usually about 20 minutes long. We collaborate with different choreographers so we explore various stimuli, ideas and tasks to create the movement material that is moulded together by the choreographer. We then tour nationally and internationally, presenting the pieces in different combinations as a double bill performance – two completely different pieces in one performance.

Q. And which choreographer did you particularly enjoy working with?

It is impossible to compare! I've really enjoyed working with all of them. For example with Thomas Hauert we explored an incredible mixture of great improvisation tasks, while Hetain Patel's humour was very contagious and he has given us a lot of food for thought. With Alexander Whitley I've found interesting and different movement qualities in my body and in using my chair. And it was a great privilege to have Abigail Yager share her knowledge about dance and movement with us.

Q. With such variety of experiences, your day-to-day life must be constantly changing then?

Absolutely, working with different choreographers is one thing but also being in the studio and creating a piece is completely different from touring and performing it. A day in the studio begins at 10:30 when you come in and get yourself ready. I found that for me it's really important to take care of all the tiny things and make myself feel comfortable being vulnerable and indulge in all the interesting parts of the creative process. We usually rehearse in the studio from 10:45 till 6 pm. We have an hour's break for lunch and also 15 minute breaks in the morning and afternoon when needed.



When we go on tour our Artistic Co-Directors come with us and have a schedule ready but of course we can always communicate our needs or suggestions. Every day on tour is very different and depends on what time we arrive and how much time we have before the performance. For example we travelled through Switzerland for a month, and had a chance to do the same double bill 12 times in a row. When we started, rehearsals were very intense because the pieces weren't embodied and we had to go through them a lot of times. So we had early starts and we rehearsed a lot before the show, which was quite tiring. But towards the end, the structure of the pieces was solidly within our bodies, so more of our playfulness could come in. We were experimenting with how little 'preparation time' we need and how we can play with the pieces during the performance. It was important for us to keep the works fresh because it's not good to over rehearse or feel like the piece has become like an automatic film that you go through without engaging that much.



Tanja performing Alexander Whitley's *Beheld*. Photo by Hugo Glendinning, 2015



Q. And how did you manage to find this playfulness within the structure of the pieces?

The two pieces that we performed: *Notturnino* and *Set and Reset/ Reset* already have the playfulness in them. *Notturnino* is a structured improvisation piece, which means that we always have to be aware of each other and of what happens on stage. With *Set and Reset/ Reset*, despite having more structured choreography, we always play with who is initiating the move. It's never about doing your set phrase but more about how we engage with each other on stage and I think that's what keeps it exciting.

Q. Did you find it difficult to adjust to the life of a professional dancer?

Oh yes, definitely! Especially as I didn't have any traditional dance training. I discovered my passion for dance when I was around 25. I took part in the AXIS Dance Company summer school in Oakland and I was an Apprentice with them for half a year in 2013. I also started to go to DanceAbility classes and attended workshops I was interested in. So I put my own puzzle of dance training together and by being in that profession now I'm still vastly learning by doing. But the switch into the career as a professional dancer wasn't something that I could suddenly push. When I started with Candoco, I did not see myself at all as a professional dancer. It doesn't come straight away, it's a process that you grow into. And, I think it's a journey to a destination to which you are never going to arrive. There's something beautiful about how people evolve and develop themselves by being an artist, a performer. For me it was hard to grasp what it actually means to be a professional artist. Is it having a job and getting paid for it? Or, is it my habits in the studio while working on the piece? Or, is it my commitment to improving myself independently? I think it's all of these and I needed to recognise them first and then find my own way into being a professional artist myself.



Q. And what is it like for you as a professional performer to be a part of an inclusive company?

I chose to dance with Candoco because it was something I wanted to live in. The first time I got into inclusive practice with AXIS summer school, I thought: 'This is so wonderful!' Before this experience my approach to disability was very stereotypical. In a sense that I was living a pitiful life and people saw me as a pitiful but lovely little girl because I only have one leg. And then experiencing my disability in a setting where it's being perceived completely differently was something incredible. For me as a person living this life as a disabled woman, or whatever identities you want to put on me, it's hard to convince the society of something different than stereotypes. Working within the inclusive environment has taught me that I can embody different perceptions about the disability rather than fight against the stereotypes.

Q. But presumably you meet various people – audience members, workshop participants, etc. who do use certain labels, even if it's unintentional. I think despite Candoco's focus on the creation of quality dance pieces, a big part of the company's work is actually about meeting those perceptions and expectations that people have. Especially on tour when you go to places where the idea of inclusive dance is still quite new or even non-existent.

Yes, with Candoco I think it's impossible to not talk about disability. We create an art form that wants to be looked at. It's quite obvious that some of us are disabled and we display our bodies on stage with an intention for people to look at us. For me, as a Candoco dancer, it's important to be aware of it. Knowing the perceptions helps to then address them. Through dance, Candoco works on changing the preconceptions of what both disability and dance are and what they can be. I think it's also about realising that this is where we are at, now, in



this space, within this society. There is still a lot that needs to be done to show people that nothing is better or worse, only different and can bring such richness into life.



Tanja working with artists from Epic Arts in 'A Practical Encounters' workshop. Photo by Pedro Machado, 2014

Q. And as you meet different people from all parts of the world, do you find that some welcome diversity and others are more reluctant to take on the different perspectives that you offer them?

I think generally people approaching us are interested in our ethos and our way of working. But definitely there are conversations about different ways of engaging in inclusive work. Especially in the dance styles that are strongly connected to techniques designed for very specific body types. People struggle a lot with this inclusive approach because they just can't see how it could work. We still have to work a lot to spread the awareness that it is possible, whatever technique you teach, to bring everyone in. As long as you hold on to your principles of movement or what you want to teach your participants.



Q. So it's more about the principles of movement?

Exactly! It's also important to show that everyone should be encouraged to be creative and find their own understanding of inclusive practice. For example some people who come for teacher training or workshops want to have everything outlined – this is what it is and what you should do. But this is not what inclusive practice is about. You have to be very open, playful and creative in finding your own way into it. The teacher-student relationship is actually more of a dialogue. Teachers also have to learn from the students – because they don't know their physicality, their movement vocabularies, etc. There's a shared responsibility for the process and it's important to create an atmosphere that encourages the dialogue. Usually people who come to us really want to understand more about inclusive practice and often keep in contact with Candoco. It's a whole process that we initiate and they then develop.

Q. There must however be some challenges that you face. If you had to choose your biggest challenge, what would it be?

For me personally it's still about getting this body or muscle memory working so that I don't have to constantly think about the movement. It's probably partially because I didn't go through the professional dance training where you train your body to be able to do that and get this body/brain going. I feel like I'm learning this skill throughout my profession as a dancer. The other thing is finding adaptations for my body – in a quick, easily approachable and constructive way. Time is another issue when it comes to dealing with energy management. Especially when we are on tour, travelling and performing. Recognising when I need to be available but also when I need to take a break. This is something quite challenging in a good way, because you get to know yourself better every time. I have to know what I need in order to sustain my energy levels: the food, water, sunshine, a chat with a friend...





Tanja in Set and Reset/Reset. Photo by Christian Altorfer, 2016

Q. So those dancers we read about in newspapers and see on stage are essentially just people...

We're just people with ordinary needs. Yes, I remember the first time I looked at Candoco dancers and what they do. And when I met one of them my heart was pumping! And now I'm myself a professional dancer but I very much know how people feel when they meet us. Inclusive companies really welcome people who approach them and try to keep in contact – invite them to workshops, classes, etc. In this way they also keep the community growing and the word spreading.

Q. And what has been your best experience while working with Candoco?

I think the best experience I've had while being with Candoco was when I played the tag game for the first time in my life in the studio with



Thomas Hauert and six other dancers. It was a research week and we were playing with ideas. At some point Thomas said 'I think we should play the tag game'. At first I didn't understand what he meant but when he explained to me that the game was about running after people and passing on the tag, I just looked at him and said: 'Thomas, you're so unfair! They're all much faster than me, how can I possibly tag any of them?' But we played the game anyway and I've realised that actually, I have much longer arms than anyone of them. So no matter how fast I run, if I'm quick enough to get the crutch out I can easily tag them!

Also the tour to Mexico... Performing in front of nearly a thousand people and then seeing Frida Kahlo's blue house and museum, one of my favorite artists and greatest heroines!

And last but not least, I remember when a little girl using walking aids came to attend one of our workshops and afterwards her parents told us that they've never seen her moving so freely with everyone else. She was really ambitious to fulfill our tasks and said she definitely wants to keep on dancing.



HAVE YOU FOUND THIS RESOURCE PACK USEFUL?

Candoco is delighted to offer this Resource Pack free of charge. If you would like to support Candoco's development of future resource materials, please see here for ideas:

www.candoco.co.uk/support-us



RESOURCE MATERIAL

Adam Benjamin Making an Entrance: Theory and practice for disabled and non-disabled dancers www.adambenjamin.co.uk

Amici Dance Theatre Company www.amicidance.org

Anjali Dance Company www.anjali.co.uk

Claire Cunningham www.clairecunningham.co.uk

Coral Dance Company www.coral.org.uk

Dance Agent for Change www.scottishdancetheatre.com/index.php?pid=126

Disability Arts Online www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/home

Foundation for Community Dance www.communitydance.org.uk/metadot/index

Gimp Project www.thegimpproject.com/gimp

Gloucestershire Dance www.gloucestershiredance.org.uk

Graeae Theatre Company www.graeae.org

Green Candle Dance Company www.greencandledance.com

Louise Katerega Foot in Hand: Dance for People, People for Dance www.footinhand.co.uk or email: info@footinhand.co.uk

Marc Brew www.marcbrew.com/marcbrew/Home

Stopgap Dance Company www.stopgap.uk.com

Spinn Dance Company www.danskompanietspinn.se

Sync Leadership www.syncleadership.co.uk

Wheelchair Dance Sport Association (UK) (WDSA) www.wdsauk.co.uk

In Dialogue issuu.com/candocodancecompany/docs/in_dialogue_final_publication



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ADDITIONAL INTERNET RESOURCES

Debates about Paralympic Sponsorship:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2195885/The-Paralympics-celebrate-strength-disabled-people--protests-accompany-them.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2012/aug/28/atos-paralympic-involvement-brings-protests>

Department for Education Archive: Every Child matters

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DfES/1081/2004>

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/ukpga_20050013_en_1

Government information about disability living allowance

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/disability>

Blog: “What’s Wrong With You?” – A Critique of the Medical Model of Disability

<http://thelondonfreewheel.com/2015/10/02/whats-wrong-with-you/>

