

Louise Wildish.  
Photo: FCD



# Physically Being Me

**Louise Wildish**, a Producer at the Foundation for Community Dance, reflects upon the creation of a film based around the positive journeys and thoughts of six disabled people working in dance

**In 2013 FCD received funding from the Community Film Fund to create Physically Being Me, a film based on the real stories of Deaf and disabled dancers who are at different stages in their working lives and for whom dance is important and a passion.**

Over the course of two days' filming at Siobhan Davies studios in London, I was privileged to meet some amazing people and to help tell their very inspiring and frank stories.

Hearing similarities within the stories of how the dancers started out, how they 'found' dance, was particularly interesting. There was little talk of the

traditional, educational and higher educational routes (don't get me wrong – there were a lot of degrees in the room) but for most, they started out in dance by attending a workshop on either impulse or with absolutely no expectation about the final destination or outcome. In fact the one-off workshop was the start of a domino of events that led them to where they are today. With more time perhaps we could have debated whether the provision for the more 'traditional' educational route was an option or even available for them when dancing.

For some of the dancers what

made the one-off workshop or residency possible was the support and opportunity given from 'inclusive' dance companies reaching out into their neighbourhoods. Proof that we need to get disabled role models and leaders into communities to reach disabled people who want to, or already do, dance.

In the film Kate Marsh states, "The biggest obstacle I have found is a lack of disabled role models to follow".

We need to encourage disabled people who want to take the lead, to nurture leaders to come forward. There is creativity through dance by disabled >

Louise Dickson, Physically Being Me film. Photo: [www.communityfilmunit.co.uk](http://www.communityfilmunit.co.uk)





people in every community but how can we empower and elevate those people to become role models and/or leaders, if indeed the individuals want to?

Although specific disabilities aren't the focus of the film, it is important to us that a dancer with an 'invisible disability' took part. This perhaps highlights and potentially opens the discussion around the difficulties faced by dancers like Louise Dickson, who has Fibromyalgia, when taking part in what we know to be a standardised structure of rehearsals

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and performance. Can everyone with a disability really follow the same rehearsal process that practitioners, organisations and companies have followed for decades? What models of work truly explore and challenge this? What open discussions around rehearsals and performance do we still need to have and are many people still excluded? Many of you have already been in touch to say how interested you are in this debate.

Throughout the filming we asked the question, "What does dance mean to you?" I think Welly O'Brien speaks for many of us when she says "it feeds my soul" and that, disability or not, is what unites us.

You can view *Physically Being Me* on our website and YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/FoundCommunityDance](http://www.youtube.com/FoundCommunityDance)

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Clockwise: Welly O'Brien, Chisato Minamimura, Kate Marsh, Tom Thomasson and DJ (centre). Physically Being Me film. All Photos: [www.communityfilmunit.co.uk](http://www.communityfilmunit.co.uk)

