



Access is more than a bathroom

The Importance of Accessibility
for Student Engagement

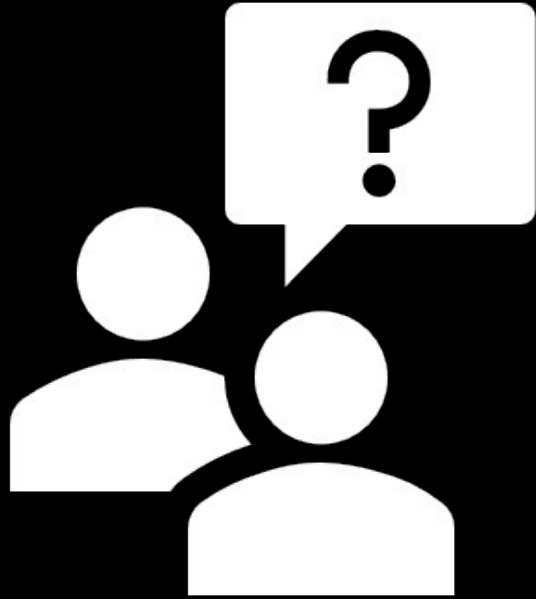


Housekeeping

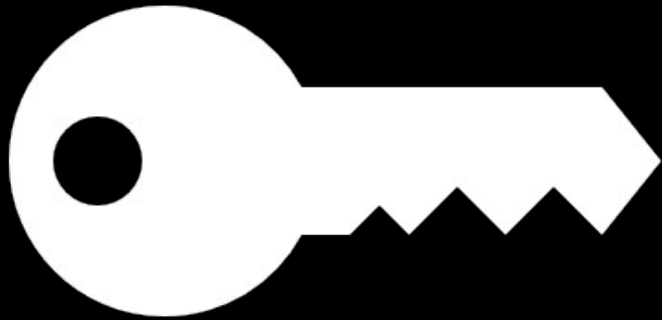
Your presenter:

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Xe/xem/xyrs pronouns
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Tell me...



Access and Participation

Why it matters: general living

- **There are approximately 16 million disabled people in the UK** (DWP, *Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022*, last updated 2023)
- **In work by Scope on attitudes to disability: 3 in 4 people (72% of those surveyed) experienced negative attitudes toward their disabilities in the last 5 years.**
 - **9 out of 10 disabled people (87%) in this group said this influenced their daily lives. This increased to 96% of disabled people aged 18 to 34 and was most reported by disabled women.**
 - **1 in 5 disabled people (23%) avoided going out to social gatherings following negative attitudes and behaviour. Younger disabled people were over twice as likely to avoid going out (35%), compared to disabled people 55 or over (15%).**

(All Scope, *Attitudes* research, pub. 2022)

Why it matters: education and employment

- **Students who reported disabilities were more likely to drop out from higher education, and less likely to achieve a first or upper second-class degree.**
 - **Highest drop-out rates were from students with mental health conditions.**
 - **Disabled students are less likely to enter highly skilled employment or higher study soon after completing their first degree.**
(UK Government/House of Commons, *Equality of access and outcomes in higher education in England*, pub. 2023)
- **The UK's disability employment gap is around 29.8%.**
(DWP, *Employment of disabled people 2022*, pub. 2023)
- **30% of disabled people looking for education or training said they avoided doing so because of the attitudes they had experienced, and that this was also more common in disabled people aged 18 to 34 at a rate of 36%.**
(Scope, *Attitudes research*, pub. 2022)

Why it matters: money

- **A disabled household faces an extra £975 in costs per month**
(Scope, *The Disability Price Tag*, pub. 2023)
- **Families with at least 1 disabled person in them have a combined spending power of £274 billion a year**
(DWP, *Households below average income: 1994/95 to 2017/18*, pub. 2019, via analysis by Scope)
- **Businesses lose approximately £2 billion a month by ignoring the needs of disabled customers**
- **The loss of revenue from the pub, club and restaurant sector alone from disabled people who have found their services inaccessible is £163 million a year**
- **75% of people have walked away from a service or business because of poor attitudes, bad customer service, or inaccessibility**
(All via Purple, *The Purple Pound Infographic*, pub. 2020)

Why it matters: summary

- Disabled students are more likely to have increased costs of living. They also have important, selective spending power.
- **This spending is highly influenced by the quality of services provided to them as disabled students, and they are not afraid to turn away from bad service.**
- Businesses shouldn't assume they have no problems because they have no complaints. They may be losing disabled customers before they even make a purchase from their services.
- **Young people with disabilities - overlapping with student-age demographics - are less likely to go out, socialise, or attend events due to inaccessibility, negative stereotyping and attitudes.**
- Young people with disabilities are also affected within education by negative attitudes, lack of disability support, and are less likely to complete a first-time degree.
- **Societies, social groups and ways to build networks during education go a long way to improving disabled student wellbeing and challenging day-to-day negative attitudes from the wider public.**
- Lower degree attainment from students with disabilities may have a tangible correlation with the disabled employment gap rising in percentage.
- **People with disabilities deserve a positive, non-tokenistic, inclusive environment to work and live in. They are likely to spend with, revisit, or recommend somewhere that provides them this.**

Areas to think about

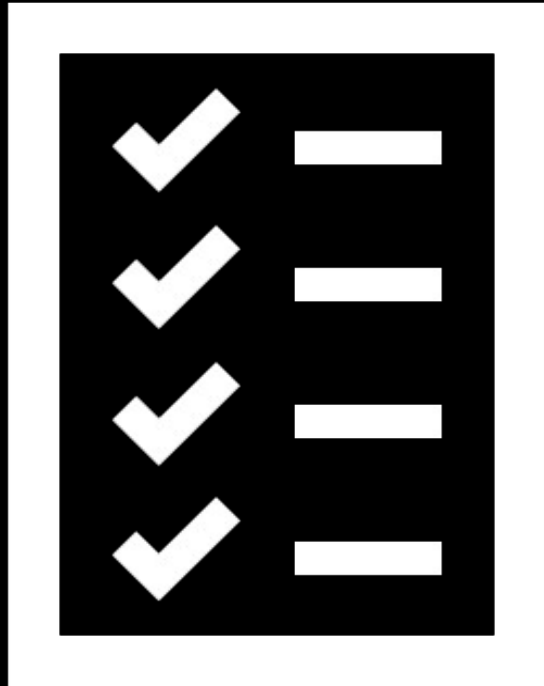
- **Physical Accessibility**
- **Sensory Considerations**
- **Inclusive Communication**
- **Virtual Participation**
- **Liaisons and Pre-planning**
- **Alternative Formats**
- **Cost and Value**
- **Sensitivity and Training**
- **Feedback Loop**

Fostering authentic participation

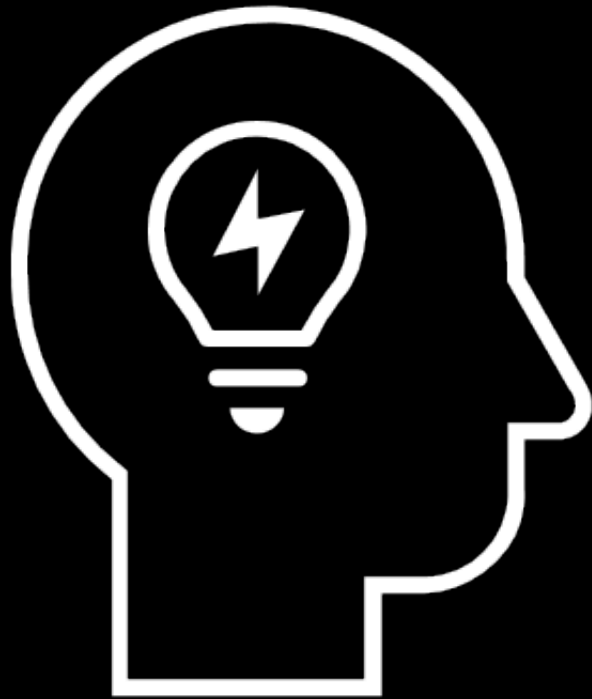
- **Direct involvement**
- **Inclusion benefits everyone**
- **Audit your services**
- **Train your people**
- **Challenge your biases**
- **Stay focused and positive**
- **Do your research**
- **Not your inspiration**

Challenges and difficulties

- **Planning and legal challenges**
- **Cost and capacity**
- **Coming to a middle ground**
- **Inability to deliver adjustments**
- **Lack of engagement**



Positive examples



Problem- sharing, problem solving

Thank you!

You can contact me at eli.cullen@su.ntu.ac.uk.

Please let me know if you'd like any of my sources, including some of my case studies that informed some of the work here.

Enjoy the conference!

Font: "OpenDyslexic" by Abbie Gonzalez