



# Challenges in doing practical research


KATHERINE DEANE

UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA

K.DEANE@UEA.AC.UK

# Survey of lab accessibility

- ▶ Recruited scientists with interest in lab access
- ▶ 152 respondents
  - ▶ 55% disabled, 93% experience of lab working, 87% UK based
- ▶ Biology & biomedical dominated, mostly in universities or healthcare settings
- ▶ Invisible impairments most common



*“My lab broke  
me –*

*I hope others  
are better”*

# Survey results

- ▶ Structural access to buildings and labs is poor
- ▶ Behaviour, attitudes, and knowledge is poor
- ▶ Initiatives to change ableism are tokenistic and ineffective
- ▶ Web pages and conferences are often inaccessible
  
- ▶ Poor access = poor safety, unlawful practices, poor recruitment, poor retention
- ▶ Suite of access guidelines

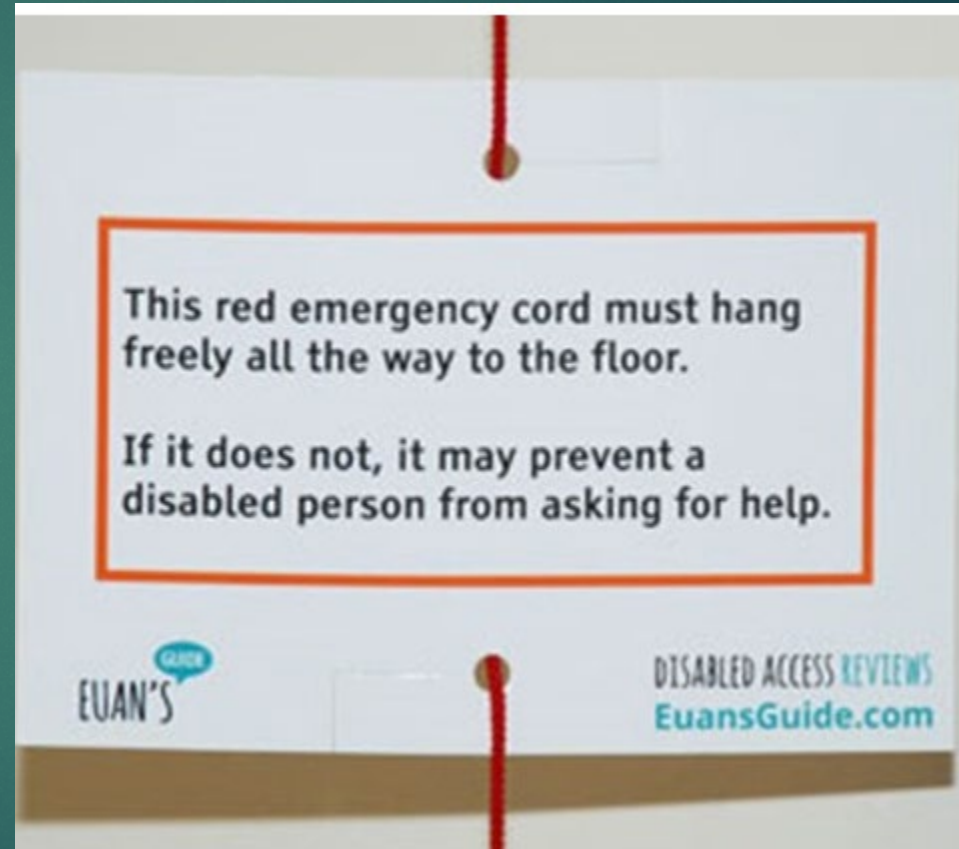
# Lab accessibility targets – behaviour – immediate to 5 years

- ▶ Audit PEEPs and lone working plans
- ▶ Implement reasonable accommodations passport into annual reviews
- ▶ Normalise reasonable workloads and flexible working
- ▶ Allyship and bystander training
  - ▶ All staff responsibility for fault reporting
- ▶ Mentorship programs
- ▶ Access hackathons/ Pride events
- ▶ Access to external advocacy expertise

# Lab accessibility targets

## Structural - immediate

- ▶ New builds and refurbishments to guideline standards
- ▶ New equipment and its placement to guideline standards
- ▶ Evac chairs or alternatives
- ▶ Microphones, PA systems, and portable hearing loops
- ▶ Euan's guide red cord cards
- ▶ Colour contrast in accessible toilets (pot of paint)



# Lab accessibility targets

## Structural & equipment – 5 years

- ▶ Funders require minimum access standards for eligibility for funds
  - ▶ Includes mandatory training and audits
- ▶ An accessible toilet in any building with standard toilets
- ▶ Dual alert fire alarms
- ▶ Equipment connectivity standards
- ▶ Hearing technology standards
- ▶ Ergonomics – seating, lighting, acoustic environment
- ▶ Key routes – light doors, step free
- ▶ Lever taps and D handles
- ▶ Changing Place accessible toilets within 20 min

# Lab accessibility targets

## Structural & equipment – 10 years

- ▶ “Maximum” access requirements necessary for funding
- ▶ Disinvest / repurpose buildings that cannot be made accessible
- ▶ Where possible
  - ▶ Fire safe lifts
  - ▶ Step free fire exits
- ▶ Most routes – light doors, step free
- ▶ Changing Place accessible toilets within 10 min
- ▶ Accessible fieldwork, boats, planes, etc etc



# Funding access

- ▶ Flexible deadlines
- ▶ Flexible duration – FT/PT/ extensions
- ▶ Flexible working - WFH
- ▶ Flexible roles – shared PI
- ▶ Separate researcher reasonable accommodation fund
- ▶ Rapid response research access fund (2 weeks)
  - ▶ E.g. BSL interpreters for interviews
- ▶ Fund accessible practice for events
- ▶ Prizes

# Research design access

- ▶ **EXPECT DISABLED PARTICIPANTS**
- ▶ Good quality PE/ PPI
- ▶ Audit EDI of researchers & participants
- ▶ Accessible written info
  - ▶ Simple
  - ▶ Clear text/ large font etc
  - ▶ “How we made this project accessible” section in info sheet
- ▶ PI/ Ethics committee training
- ▶ Budget for access costs
  - ▶ Venues
  - ▶ BSL, captions, audio descriptions, videos, Easy Read
  - ▶ Carers, travel, food, etc.

# References

- ▶ Deane KHO and the Access All Areas in Labs Team. 2023. Access All Areas in Labs: Access Guidelines. Version 1. March 2023. University of East Anglia, Norwich. <https://www.uea.ac.uk/web/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs>
- ▶ Deane K, Delbecque L, Gorbenko O, et al. Co-creation of patient engagement quality guidance for medicines development: an international multistakeholder initiative. 2019 *BMJ Innovations*. 13. <https://innovations.bmj.com/content/5/1/43> (Table 3)
- ▶ Schroeder K, Bertelsen N, Scott J, Deane K, et al. Building from Patient Experiences to Deliver Patient-Focused Healthcare Systems in Collaboration with Patients: A Call to Action. 2022. *Therapeutic Innovation & Regulatory Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43441-022-00432-x>
- ▶ Brage T, Lövkrona I, Eldh C, et al. (2016). Core values work in academia: – with experiences from Lund University. Lund University [https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/core\\_values\\_work\\_brage\\_lovkrona.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/core_values_work_brage_lovkrona.pdf)

# Other talks

- ▶ Lab access sucks – so here are guidelines to start solving this. Vitae 2023.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9H9tdPjpQw&t=10s>
- ▶ Change Makers Toolkit (with a disability focus). Vitae 2023.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWuX-8iO73s>
- ▶ Starting Change Making. Cultural Forum Norwich. 2022 <https://youtu.be/XZ72o4fbuh8>
- ▶ Values, disability, saying no, and how fabulous it is to fail during the research process. 2021  
[https://emmaelvidge.wordpress.com/2021/10/26/episode\\_2\\_katherine\\_deane/](https://emmaelvidge.wordpress.com/2021/10/26/episode_2_katherine_deane/)
- ▶ Benefits of being a Disabled Scientist. UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres. 2020  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjMHySCxY2k&feature=youtu.be>

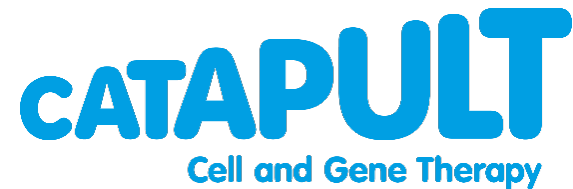


# Contact details and thanks

- ▶ <https://www.uea.ac.uk/web/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs>
- ▶ [k.deane@uea.ac.uk](mailto:k.deane@uea.ac.uk)



University of East Anglia



Innovate  
UK

**NIHR** | Applied Research Collaboration  
East of England