Challenges in doing practical research

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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 PEEP 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.


Other talks

- Lab access sucks – so here are guidelines to start solving this. Vitae 2023. 
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9H9tdPjpQw&t=10s
  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/
- 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](https://www.uea.ac.uk/web/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs)
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