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Welcome to the NADSN 4th Annual Conference.

Today's event will have live subtitles by 121Captions.

>> Good morning, everybody!

>> Good morning.

HAMIED: A very, very warm welcome to this, which is our fourth Annual Conference for the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks. We are absolutely thrilled to be here at the University College London. So, I'm going to kick off with a bit of an introduction, give you a bit of background about NADSN, what we've been up to, what we hope to do and then I'm going to pass over to Rex Knight, who is Vice Provost here, and he will give the official welcome from UCL. So NADSN, our main mission is to connect and represent disabled staff networks, mainly in the tertiary education sector, across the UK and beyond, so we have people subscribed to NADSN who are from Germany and the Republic of Ireland and Canada and other places. So, there is lot of interest in what we're trying to do. What are we? Let me say thank you so much for coming here today with all of the distractions going on in London today and that lovely balloon apparently that's up in the sky! I think you've seen that already today and our wonderful guest who is in London from across the pond, the leader of the free world!

NADSN is a super network with a mission to connect and represent disabled staff networks. We focus on the tertiary education sector. We are, however, open to any individual in an organisation interested in the equality of disabled staff. So, we act as a collective platform to share experiences and good practice and examine the challenges and opportunities that we hold. We are independent and totally self‑determining. We are made up of passioned people. Okay. So, these are some of the aims we hold for the association and we are trying to work towards these. We have a longer list on our internet. These are our missions: To promote the interests of disabled staff on a national level, to challenge the stereotypes by endorsing the social model of disability, promoting that positive image of disabled people, and eliminating the deficit or medical model, to organise and deliver accessible events, such as these, that can bring disabled staff and disability equality allies together, to create regional hubs, to make it easier for members to meet each other around the country, to support relevant research projects, policies and guidance for disabled staff, managers institutions, tertiary education and government agencies, and also to link with disabled students particularly at a postgraduate level where there is that transition process from being a student to becoming staff. We launched back in 2014 in the University of Manchester when we held a conference called What are we Hiding, for disabled staff there. It was a hugely successful day. NADSN was launched there. We now have on our mailing list 0 members from more than 80 different organisations, including 51 universities in the UK. We are led by a steering committee, so I chair the steering committee right now and we have two vice chairs, Jackie, wave to us, she's vice‑chair, and Stewart, wave to us Stewart, and we have a secretary who is about to be appointed ‑‑ Nicole Brown ‑‑ I don't think she's in the room right now but she will be talking shortly. We have a fundraiser and treasurer but we have no money right now! We have a communications lead, Katie, wave to us. And we are looking for somebody to take on the events lead role in the steering committee. We also have a network of regional leads around the country, working towards this aim of creating regional hubs. Angela Getty, wave to us! No, you don't want to wave. Angela doesn't want to wave to us but she's our regional lead in the Midlands.

>> [Inaudible].

HAMIED: All right. So that was a bit embarrassing. Sorry about that. So, yeah, in Northern Ireland there's Angela. In the north‑west, it is Lakara, and Mona at Manchester University. We have Gill and Rose. We have Erica at Cardiff university. In south‑west England, it's Katie who is also our communications lead. In Scotland, it's Jackie at the University of Aberdeen. In north‑east England we have nothing, so if you know anybody interested that would be great. In the Midlands, it's Angela Breene at the University of Birmingham. In eastern England, there's nobody there right now. Again, if anyone is interested. And London and south‑east England, we have Stewart who is the lead right now. So, these are the organisations and campaigns we're working with at the moment. Purple Space and the wonderful Kate Nash, right at the back there. Kate Nash OBE, the creator of Purple Space. We are trying to work with her and connect with the amazing work they're doing including the Purple Light‑up, launched last year on 3rd December. We hope to work more closely with her team for this year's Purple Light Up campaign. We have also been involved in the national day for staff networks, run by the power of staff networks, and involved in that a first celebration on a national level of staff networks in various sectors. We've nominated people for the rep 2021, for the panels and subpanels for that. Unfortunately, we've not had our nominees selected so far but we hope in the next few stages it will happen. We are involved in a project with the EPSRC, led by Kate Sang up in Edinburgh, around technology and accessible technology for disabled people. We're also involved with Chronically Academic. We are also involved with them in some work they're doing very closely with the Wellcome Trust around promoting disabled researchers in the field. We have I think the chief opinion editor for nature, so nature is like THE best journal to get your papers in, scientists would die to get a paper in that journal and we have one of their senior editors here today and it is a huge privilege to be talking to her about having a piece in Nature on disability equality.

Today we have started with me blabbering on. Next is Rex Knight, who is the Vice Provost for operations and disability equality champion at UCL who will give the formal introduction and welcome from this institution. Then we will go on to Patrick Johnson and a talk on where disability is. Patrick is a very good friend of mine. He is head of equality, diversity and inclusion at the University of Manchester. Then my very good friends Jane and Hormoz will come and give a session, a hopefully very interactive session, on equality and discovering and becoming fully yourself. After that we will have a talk from Nicole Brown on how accessible academia is. It will touch on the recent conference. Are we all right, Michelle? Nicole will talk about that. Then we'll have lunch. After lunch we will have a talk from colleagues from the NHS England Disability Rights UK will be talking about a project they've been doing on sustaining effective disabled staff networks. Then we'll have an open debate which I hope everybody will get involved with on the value of a charter mark on disability in our sector. Mike Higgins will lead that debate. He's going to moderate on that. We have Diane Lightfoot and Tim Livine who will be part of the debate. We will need a break after that. We will then have a keynote speech from Professor Anna Lawson on equality and inclusion for disabled people after Brexit. It is hugely relevant to the time we're living in right now. We will then round up and conclude and have our drinks reception out in the hallway and then we'll close by six o'clock. I want to say a huge, huge thank you to Mike Higgins and all of his team who have been involved in making this event happen today at the wonderful UCL. Thank you all very much. In fact, let's give them a round of applause right now.

[Applause]

HAMIED: So, you will see around the room and out in the hallway as well that we have plenty of volunteers to help if anyone needs anything. They are the guys with the NADSN ribbon around themselves, led by the lovely Michele over here, and they're all willing to help with anything that anyone needs. They will also be doing the roving microphones around the lecture theatre. The speakers will speak for about 20 minutes and then we will have 10 minutes for questions. I want to say a big thank you to all of the sponsors and supporters for this conference. UCL have spoiled us, there is also the Business Disability Forum, which brought together their corporate organisations to sponsor the event. Each one has given something towards making this happen. A signed video and providing the BSL interpreters, we have the Global AutoCorrect. We have DNA, they're here represented. Sun assent, nuance and 121 Captions who are providing the live captions today. All of them have sponsored us. All of their stalls are here in the lobby and in the side rooms, where the food and refreshments are available. Please go around all of the areas and go and visit everybody who is here, please.

So, you will find in your delegate packs a map of the outlay here. We're in this space here, this main lecture theatre. Next door there is spaces for people to have their lunch, there's a video going on as well in there from a campaign and then there is a quiet room so I'm sorry it is not projecting very well on this screen but you will be able to see this on your maps. There is a quiet room facility. Have I forgotten anything, Michele?

MICHELE: The toilets.

HAMIED: We have disabled toilets out there.

On Torrington Place, there are many cafes and restaurants and many facilities in terms of toilets, so hopefully we shouldn't have a problem with that. I think those are the main things. I think that's all covered on that.

In terms of a fire evacuation, if there is a fire evacuation, the volunteers will direct you in the right direction for getting out of the building. There is no refuge point on this floor so you have to get out! Just get out!

>> Two exits.

HAMIED: There are two exits on either side of this building, both accessible. So, what's really important for today is your feedback, please. We have a flip chart sheet outside that Jackie is looking after and we'll be asking people to give their feedback. There's Post It notes out there, so if you pick up a pen and write your thoughts on the Post It notes and let's have your thoughts. Please contribute your questions or comments or any nice feedback or any bad feedback, whatever you'd like to say about your experience today, that will be fantastic. You can also do this on Twitter. We have Twitterers in the room who will be keeping everybody around the world up‑to‑date on what is going on here. You can use the Twitter handle and the hashtag there to also offer your suggestions and questions and feedback. There's a form available online on that address there, so the conference website, there is a feedback form there where you can download it, fill it in and email it back to us. The last thing I want to say is please do consider joining NADSN, it would be amazing to have you all. So now I shall move on to welcome Rex to the stage.

REX: Thank you. Thank you much, Hamied. Thank you for your warm words about UCL. Michele is going to sort me out.

I can do this without the slides. There are only two slides anyway.

HAMIED: There is WiFi available. How do we do that, Mike?

MIKE: There is a code up there. It is also in your packs. We have free WiFi available if you use that log‑in. Can you repeat that because I don't have a microphone?

HAMIED: The WiFi pass code, does anyone know what it is?

REX: Sorry about this, ladies and gentlemen.

HAMIED: So, it is UCL guest. The password is NADSN, all in capitals. In terms of comfort breaks, this morning we have three talks after Rex has done his welcome. We have three talks back‑to‑back, so we don't have a break planned this morning because then we'll have an hour for lunch. But if anyone does need to go out for a break, then please do. There is also a quiet room if anyone needs to relax in there for some time. Is that all right, Mike?

MIKE: Lovely, thanks.

HAMIED: Rex, would you be able to do your talk without your slides?

REX: Absolutely. I can do it without the slides. It is probably what we should do, apologies for that.

HAMIED: Maybe if we just have the captioning up.

REX: That's what we're trying to do. Let's do it like that. Well, apologies for that. I will now keep it brief. I'll also take out the reference I was going to make to UCL being at the forefront of technology! I wasn't really going to say that anyway! All I really want to say is a very warm welcome to all. I hope you have a fantastic day here. It's a real honour for us to host this NADSN conference, and we're delighted to be able to do so and to welcome you to these facilities.

I've been the SMT disability champion now for about five years. We have a champion for each area of equalities and we also have a champion for each area on our governing body. It's been a fantastic and exhilarating experience for me to work with colleagues across the institution on moving things forward. We certainly don't pretend that everything is right. We have all of the challenges that large organisations do at UCL. We are tackling those but some remain challenging. I think as well as the issues that all organisations have, of course, we have issues around things like the structure of academic careers and cultures and norms in higher education. I'm pleased to see that Nicole will be talking a little bit about that later on and I'm sure that will be a fascinating part of the day. If I reflect on the progress that we've made over the last few years, that's obviously partly down to the work of the equalities team and to Mike and other members of the team and all credit to them. It's also down to the work of colleagues in our estates function, in IT and in academic departments and so on. But it has also been very clear that a lot of the motivation and enthusiasm and driving force behind it all has been from our own staff networks and student networks across UCL. In that regard, it's particularly a pleasure to be able to welcome a national conference for staff networks today. Our own group Enable has done a fantastic job in bringing people together in enabling us to have ways of sharing expertise informally face‑to‑face and through technology, in helping us to shape the kinds of initiatives, the priorities that we put behind elements of the strategy and also on occasion in making life slightly more challenging for me and other colleagues in terms of just pushing us to do more and to do faster and that's also been very much appreciated.

The other thing I wanted to highlight is one particular development we're pleased to be able to be launching today at UCL and that's our Agreement of Consistent Treatment. At UCL, we just love to be able to say we're the first to do something! We think we're the first university in the Russell Group to introduce an ACT. The slides I had were going to show you a little more detail about what it is all about. I'm sure we can circulate the slides after the event. The essence of this is to ensure for staff who are working in a large and complex organisation, we have a clear way of recording adjustments that have been made to enable them to give their best and fulfil their potential and that record is transferred when people move around the organisation, change jobs or whatever. It doesn't just apply to staff with disabilities, it can also apply to other caring responsibilities and so on so this is not something that is simply about disabled staff. We're very proud of it. It's taken quite a bit of work to put it together and the mechanisms and systems that sit behind it ‑‑ we've got our slides, which is fantastic! As I say we're launching it today for the first time. It is part of our Disability Equality Action plan. We are the first Russell Group university to announce such a scheme. It relates to a whole range of activities, travel to work, physical adaptations, flexible working and so on. That really was all of the slides! I think it's great we have been able to put them up there.

Finally, I just wanted to say I've mentioned the contribution that the equalities team has made. I think it's important that I acknowledge the contribution of one of the key members of the equalities team Sarah Guys. Sadly, Sarah died a few months ago. She was a prime mover behind the beginnings of the ACT, as with so many other initiatives, at UCL. So, I just wanted to pay tribute to Sarah's work and acknowledge that we all miss her very much. Really, that's all I wanted to say. I hope you have a fantastic day. Enjoy the rest of the talks. I think we're now moving over to Patrick. Thank you.

[Applause]

HAMIED: Would people mind moving down the rows so people can get into the seats at the end? Would people shuffle towards the middle of their rows so more people can get in at the side here please?

HAMIED: I'm very pleased to welcome Patrick Johnson on to the stage. Patrick is the head of equality, diversity and inclusion at the University of Manchester, where I work. Over to you, Patrick.

PATRICK: Thank you, Hamied. I'm delighted to be here talking to you about charter marks in education. Where is disability? It is an interesting question. I want to touch a bit upon charter marks within higher education and maybe finish with talking about the potential in terms of a charter mark in relation to disability. So, what it we know about staff diversity in higher education? I think generally we know in relation to representation that there's a lack of representation particularly in terms of diverse representation in terms of senior leadership across higher education more generally. I think in terms if we look at the student body as well and how reflective is the student body of staff within higher education, I think we see a disconnect there as well.

But it is not all just about recruitment and representation. There's no point in terms of recruiting a diverse workforce and having them represented if they don't feel valued within the workplace. The environment is incredibly important as well. So that's another aspect to this. The third thing is around that progression. As I mentioned before, we don't see everyone progressing at the same rate within higher education, so if we look at all of these things we're seeing sort of limited progress generally in terms of diversity within higher education. Absolutely, there is progress going on and each institution can talk about what they're doing. But generally, there's a lack of progression for diverse staff within higher education.

Do we need another badge to solve this issue? I don't know how many of you have got on the bottom of your email signature a whole range of badges, or maybe on the letterhead there's a whole range of badges there, do we need another one to solve this particular issue in terms of lack of diversity within higher education?

First, I'll touch upon some of the existing charter marks. What was the equality challenge unit, it is now part of Advance HE. They have two particular charter marks, one in relation to gender and one in relation to race. Both of those charter marks are very similar in terms of what they look at. So, the first thing that you need to look at, they've all got guiding principles that each institution signs up to. What you look at is the data, the quantitative side of things, what is your evidence? We all know within higher education you need to have evidence to move forward with anything within the institution. You need lots and lots of data, it seems, with charter marks. Anyone who is involved with any of these charter marks will tell you there's a lot of data you need to get, whether it's around promotions, equal pay, different staff contracts, the colour of your mother's hair, it covers everybody that you need to evidence within these charter marks. There is also the qualitative side as well. It is not just about the numbers; it is also about what people think as well. The second part of that is about reviewing your policies and practices as well. So how do your policies actually impact on people within your organisation, whether it be staff or students? You have got to review those policies as well and their outcome. I mentioned about the qualitative side and that's a really important aspect. So, reviewing the results of staff and student surveys and some of these charter marks have their own specific surveys you have to follow for staff and students. It is quite important to really know about their experiences of the institution and what you need to do then in terms of generating an action plan. So, once you look at your data and you see where the issues are, you've spoken to staff and students and you've got an idea of the issues, you then come up with a really SMART action plan in terms of what you're going to do to address these issues.

It also includes a lot of involvement and consultation of other groups as well. So, staff network groups are really important within that as well. You have to make sure you are engaging with your staff network groups in terms of looking at some of the key issues around the particular agenda. There's also staff and student unions who people engage with within this as well. Management is also crucially important in terms of that management level buy‑in, and in terms of making any changes and in terms of agreeing your actions you need that management buy‑in and engagement.

The charter marks have three levels of award. Bronze, it gives you a sense that you understand your base and where you're at and what you need to do to progress. Your silver is much more about your impact. So now that that you've had time addressing those issues, what has been the impact? Gold is looking beyond your own institution and how you engage with a wider group of colleagues.

I'll very briefly follow that through in terms of looking at those two charter marks. So, gender equality: Athena SWAN, most people if you are within higher education will have heard of Athena SWAN. It started I think around 13 years or so ago, where it very much focused on women in STEM subjects, science, technology, engineering and maths. It now covers all academic disciplines, so your arts and humanities, as well as your professional and support services staff. It also includes trans staff and students as well, so it has got much wider in terms of looking at gender equality rather than just the focus on women in STEMM and academic women in STEMM. What is difference about it? It is higher education specific. There are lots of different charter marks out there with different organisations. I think what institutions like is this is specific to higher education and it looks specifically at issues concerning higher education. What is different with Athena SWAN compared to the Race Equality Charter mark, it is about local level action and debate and discussions as well. So not only do you have an institution level award, you have also had local level, school and department awards as well. That's quite important in terms of having those local level discussions and in terms of trying to move things forward at a local level. At an institutional level, sometimes things can get lost. Although it's good in terms of consistency, in terms of that Local Offer support we find there is a lot more action that seems to take place. The other key things with Athena SWAN is different to the Race Equality Charter is that link to funding. A few years ago, you will be aware of the link with funding from Department of Health in relation to medical schools. So that was quite important and a real game changer in terms of charter marks within higher education, particularly around gender. There's a real concern about that link to funding, certainly from institutions around this. The Race Equality Charter covers very similar areas as Athena SWAN. The key detail with Race Equality Charter, it is around students and that engagement with students and looking particularly around attainment and the diversity of the curriculum as well, so that side, many people will be aware of the attainment gap in higher education between different ethnic groups. It was there to try to look at address parts of that as part of the charter mark as well. So, they are the two charter marks. I suppose ‑‑ I'm not sure which came first, but certainly at Manchester what we find in terms of gender and ethnicity, there's a real focus at Manchester and it is part of our key performance indicators and strategy. We are looking to increase our staff profile in relation to gender and also ethnicity as well. So, for us, a lot of the focus and a lot of the actions and the things that we do focus on gender and ethnicity. And so, a lot of people say that a lot of the things we talk about in senior management meetings tends to have that flavour and focus around gender and ethnicity. Is that in relation to the charter marks? Is that to do with something else? I suppose it's a discussion. It will lead us to think about whether there is a hierarchy of protected characteristics within higher education. I think it has been a debate for quite a while in terms of talking about equality, diversity and inclusion and everybody being treated fairly and the same but is there some sort of difference in terms of different protected characteristics where people talk about gender as being number 1 in terms of the focus and a lot of institutions focusing on gender. From my experience, a lot of the things is around the evidence that I've mentioned to begin with, but also that numbers game as well. So, we know in terms of gender in terms of half the population, there is real evidence there in terms of numbers and in terms of looking at issues in relation to gender. Similarly, around race and ethnicity as well. When we think about disability within that space, I think nationally ‑‑ some of you will correct me if I'm wrong ‑‑ it may be around 5% of staff who have a disability, within higher education. It is similar at Manchester as well if you look at our HR systems. If we actually look at those who are registered with our staff disability advisory and support service, we get a slightly different picture, we have closer to 9% of our staff who are registered with them. So, I think when we look back at what is in the HR systems we can have a look at a lot of detail in terms of recruitment, progression and promotion of staff, but we can't within the staff system. So, when we look at changes it tends to be year on year 1%, 0.5% in relation to disability in different areas and it is very difficult in gathering that evidence base to challenge and talk about things meaningfully. In some respects, the data is not as helpful in relation to disability within higher education.

But I also think it doesn't just stop there. That's a lovely picture of Hamied. Did I ask for your permission? I hope that's okay! But certainly, it is looking at how we define ourselves as well. Talking very much around these charter marks where we look at gender and race and ethnicity or disability, we don't have just one protected characteristics, some of us have two, three or more protected characteristics. I think what is important is how do we define ourselves. In terms of charter marks, how does that play out within that space? Certainly, with Athena SWAN and others, they're starting to look at intersectionality, but it tends to focus a lot around gender and ethnicity, and not really looking at the space around disability and that intersection as well. I think there's a lot of talk within the sector about whether we should have one all‑encompassing charter mark looking at all of the protected characteristics. It may be an interesting debate that Mike can pick up on a bit later.

For me, the other interesting area is around disability equality and what is important to staff and also what is important for institutions as well. What is crucial is absolutely around reasonable adjustments but what I tend to find is that it almost seems to be all that is talked about and discussed. There is no real discussion about actually disabled staff and their promotion and progression and actually in terms of what do they think about their own career development. There tends to be more at looking at reasonable adjustments within that space. So, I think there needs to be a shift which the charter marks can help with in terms of not just the focus on the adjustments, which is important, but on that progression and supporting staff who want to progress within institutions and in their careers. I will end with a last couple of slides and just thinking about the future I suppose and what is possible. Up north is referring to Scotland. Certainly, Advance HE that works within Scotland. They're actively exploring a disability‑focus charter mark at the moment and they have got some funding to pilot some work but that's actually within the FE sector. The key focus ‑‑ the way they're looking at it is starting from a gender focus but intersectionally looking at disability as well. They're looking at that to try and really gather the evidence base and to start to explore the rationale around having disability and disability having its own charter mark as well. It is just in its final stages and looking to start in the next two to three years or so and they'll use that evidence to look at what they may then consider further across the UK. In terms of Advance HE and what they're saying in this space, for them one of the critical things is around having a wide range of people talking about and expressing an interest and a need for this within the sector, so it is whether you feel there is a need for a disability‑related charter mark and it is about then people coming together and actually going to Advance HE and say that we want this and I think already some conversations have already started within that space. I think there needs to be more conversations wider than this network in terms of getting people engaged with that. They do talk about a danger of charter fatigue as well. We are starting to see a bit of that already. When we look at Athena SWAN and the Race Charter Mark, people are making decisions about where they should focus their efforts and funds. I think bringing in another charter mark in that area needs to be considered.

In Advance HE, they've finished part of the restructure in terms of the senior management team. A lot of the staff involved in the charter marks are actually waiting to hear whether they're going be made redundant or not. They've got their largest round in terms of Athena SWAN applications at the moment and it is a very difficult time, as you can imagine, for them. So, for them to think about another charter mark at the moment is not possible, they don't have the space for that. So, I think it is probably looking at another sort of nine to 12 months before things will settle down and they will have the space to consider whether they should be having another charter mark and I think looking to restart some of those conversations about having a group to look at a disability related charter mark. My final slide, why get involved with a charter mark? I suppose for me personally the key thing, I'm not a huge fan of charter marks. But they do allow you to have that conversation and be able to hold senior management to account within this space. If it's agreed and signed off by the institution in relation to actions for four years, I can speak to senior managers about what needs to happen to progress things. It also means you have access to senior management to talk about some of these issues and to develop those actions as well. For me, it is one of the crucial things around race and gender that helps and it may be missing in terms of the disability space in terms of having those conversations as well. Okay, I will finish there and invite questions.

HAMIED: Thank you, Patrick.

[Applause]

HAMIED: We have roving microphones going around. If anybody needs to ask a question in BSL, the interpreters can help us to vocalise those. If you have any questions, put your hands up.

(Sorry, the Skype call stopped.)

CAPTIONER: I'm trying to connect with you via Skype.

>> And working organically from that in terms of including other protected characteristics.

>> I suppose on which day it is. I think I move between the two. It is not necessarily an easy or right or answer with that. From an institutional perspective, I think I can absolutely see the benefit of having an all-encompassing charter mark in terms of looking at intersectionality and bringing everyone together to discuss the issues. I fear that you lose the focus of the individual protected characteristic as well. So, I think that focus on gender or that focus on race, there's really making you think carefully and coming up with specific actions for that group. With an all-encompassing charter mark, I think that's a challenge. It's whether you can still have that within it.

HAMIED: We have one last question, I'm afraid. In the middle of the front row, there's a question.

FLOOR: Thank you, Patrick. Yeah, I often wonder whether we should be talking more about disablement. I think sometimes the conversation should be focused on disablement rather than just disabilities. I mean ‑‑ it sounds cryptic, but to change the disclosure rates for people and to make that challenge. For students themselves to be able to normalise coming forward, particularly from cultural backgrounds where hidden differences have a social taboo, seeing the students and the faculty coming together and sharing the charter and the focus is on the collective disablement and the impact is a lot stronger than "this is a charter for staff" and "this is a reactive dynamic for students". Is there an example from a university that has already championed this, other than Manchester, and it has buy‑in from senior management, particularly the Chancellor's?

PATRICK: I should just say UCL, shouldn't I! It may be... Mike may want to pick up on this but I think actually at UCL they're doing some amazing work in this space. I think there are lots of institutions where there is good work happening within this space but I think particularly at UCL, what I have witnessed over the last few years there has been a real push within this area. Mike, do you want to say something?

MIKE: I will save it for the panel this afternoon.

HAMIED: If it's a quick one, go for it?

FLOOR: I just want to ask, right, if you have a charter mark that's well and good, but how are we going to actually monitor it? Different people monitor it in different ways.

PATRICK: Sure.

FLOOR: You need to actually make it to a purpose.

PATRICK: Thank you. I will quickly answer that. So, one of the things that I didn't mention, I didn't go into enough detail about the charter marks, but there is a self‑assessment team, a group of people from across the university who come together and where the action plan I suppose is that key document that goes forward over the sort of four‑year period. That group keeps together and ensures that those actions are being met and they will work together. If I give Manchester as an example, we have local school equality, diversity and inclusion committees and they have those actions within those. What does it mean for them at a local level? What actions are they taking to address those who have been identified? It goes back up the governance structure where we have annual performance reviews where it's looked at to see if there is progress made. It needs to be built into the governance structure and ensure it is kept alive during the duration. What is different here compared to the other charter marks, you get your badge, you can wear it proudly and then that's it, but you have to show that you are working and there's an impact because you have to reapply and you need to show there has been movement there.

HAMIED: Thank you very much, Patrick and thank you for bringing us back to time. We will move on to the next speaker. A round of applause for Patrick!

[Applause]

HAMIED: Patrick will be here until lunch time. If you have any more questions, grab him then. Our next speakers Hormoz and Jane will give a presentation on their work. Over to you guys.

HORMOZ: Hello, everyone. A warm welcome from Jane Cordell and myself, Hormoz Ahmadzadeh ‑‑ a good Lancashire name for you there! We have from Result CIC. We would really like to thank Hamied for inviting us here to be part of this great day. We want to take you through a bit of a journey in a way in terms of introducing ourselves and then our work, but also to make you think hopefully. That's the purpose of our presentation today.

JANE: Patrick posed a good question in his presentation; how do we define ourselves? With the tech problems, I think I'm allergic to tech, does anybody at UCL want to research me? Things go wrong at certain moments. The mouse isn't responding!

PATRICK: Over to you.

JANE: Thank you, Patrick. We're all complex human beings. How do we define ourselves? This is a quick plan of what we're talking about today and the big question of "who are you?". The next is our story and our journey. Our stories led us to create Result CIC. Say something about that story and its impact. Finally, we will do a little bit of reflection on the session and see what actions you might like to take. Then we will have time for questions, we hope. Any questions at this point? Nobody. Thank you.

So, get your pen out. Who are you?

>> What a strange question!

JANE: So, we like to do things differently at Result CIC. Doing things differently, here we are, you are all innovators, researchers, it's important to think about a new angle on who you are. We would like you to consider each character in the pictures. Which one do you maybe identify with? You recognise the four main characters from the wizard of Oz. On the left we have the Scarecrow. He has no brain and he feels everyone around him is cleverer to him. Does everybody sometimes identify with the scarecrow? Put your hands up. Right. We have some scarecrows.

HORMOZ: Or could you be the Tin Man who didn't have a heart? He found it very, very difficult to deal with feelings. Who would put their hand up about that? A few of you.

JANE: Then we have Dorothy. Dorothy has lost her way. She's trying to find her way home. She's looking for the right direction for herself. Does anybody identify with Dorothy? Yes, we have some honest people.

HORMOZ: Quite a few Dorothys in the room! Or do you identify with the Cowardly Lion? It is about the fear, it is about the fear of going forwards and what is stopping you. Who identifies with that? Okay. Less of you. But what's interesting about this story is that by going on this journey, they each displayed things that naturally went against what they thought. They actually achieved quite a lot within this journey. So let's go further with this.

What we talk about here is using this development cycle of discovery. This is what we entitled the talk: Discovering. Going through a period of discovering things, developing and becoming something and then being. The final thing we talked about was being yourself, fully yourself. How do we develop that? How do we go around that? And then reflecting further so that you add to what you have learnt and achieved and going on. Okay.

JANE: So, we will tell our stories to tell you why we created our company, called Result CIC. I'm going to try to use the technology but I hope I'm not jinxed this time. I chose to represent myself in four visual symbols in my story. Here's the first one. It's sign language. That's me, really. I'm a musician. Do we have any musicians in the audience? Yes, we do. I love operatics. Those of you who sing and play will know why music is so important. It's physical, it's intellectual, it's emotional and it's spiritual. It's all of those things together. I see some nods. If you are playing, you can't worry about any of your problems. It's a wonderful escape. Maybe the worst thing that could happen to a musician is this? I had tinnitus. At that stage, I would have said that is the worst thing that could happen, the music is gone. It is not the worst thing that could happen. I found out later there are worse things, like you can lose someone you love, or discrimination, I will talk about that later. But when the worst things happen, you find resilience within yourself and your strength. You are forced to. You are forced to push the boundaries of who you are. You can give up, do nothing, or you can try. I decided to try. At the age of seven, I wanted to be a hairdresser or a teacher. I was a teacher for the first part of my career. Paradoxically, my deafness has pushed me to do other things. It is a weird story. I want to talk about discrimination. I won't name and shame the university involved, but I had to wait ten times longer for a job interview result. It turned out the boss didn't want a deaf person working there. It was a harsh environment to be in. That pushed me to move on, go further, look for an environment where I feel I could thrive. There is some identification in the front row! I applied to the Foreign Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. There was an evening in the Evening Standard. They felt I had the skills. I met an inappropriate boyfriend... where is all of this going? I had learned some Polish, another language. The Foreign Office was a massive culture shock in terms of intersectionality. A deaf woman at the Foreign Office, whoa, it was tricky at times. But again, it's a bit like sink or swim. You can hide and go nowhere, or you can stand up like Dorothy, wear red shoes, and be the only deaf woman at your level. I started to apply for postings. The first posting I got was in Poland. Here's Anna, welcome.

ANNA: Thank you.

JANE: Our fantastic keynote speaking. A deaf woman who speaks Polish, a challenge, a challenge. Surely if you really try at your assignment, you can get there. It was a small team of 12. I had also had the honour of being able to lobby and influence the Polish Government on disability. I was riding high. Fantastic. And then what? Anybody like to guess? Some of you know the story. What happened next? Where did I choose the scales? Yes. I mentioned the word earlier. It was quite tough. The discrimination related to a new job. Having done four years in Poland, receiving accolades for the work, really feeling I had proved myself. A new job was offered but it was in 2009. What was happening in the financial world in 2009? The Lehman Brothers crashed. The financial crisis. In the central Government departments, I had a small budget. I had to make a decision again, sink or swim, do nothing, do something? At that point, I had to do something for my own integrity. This was about my values. I'd been promoting equality and disability rights for four solid years. Then the Foreign Office said, sorry, this is unreasonable. I'm the unreasonable woman from Manchester! Kazakhstan is too far away, it's all so unreasonable. I had to challenge it because otherwise I would have looked like a hypocrite. So, I brought a court case against the Foreign Office. It was like a David and Goliath challenge. I pushed the boundaries again. I experienced digestive problem, mental health problems, sleep loss, weight loss. I felt it wasn't fair. It was serious stuff. Yes, again, pushing the boundaries. I had to go somewhere now. The new place I went to was here today. The decision I had to take, how can I use who I am, music, performance, teaching, editing, diplomacy, languages, my skills, how can you uniquely contribute? I will pause there. You will hear more about what happened. Now, there's an even better story.

HORMOZ: I'm not sure about this. This is such a difficult story to follow!

JANE: What this thought me is to never abandon your values. Know your values and stick to them like a limpet. The next point is really important. You can define your success. You need to do it on your terms. When you define it, it will change the game, which is wonderful when it happens. I became more resilient. It was tough. I'm more relaxed and less bothered about people's perceptions. I'm wearing red shoes today. I'm still me. I'm playing in a concert on Sunday, anybody want to come all of the way up to Swinton? I'm playing with the orchestra. I have a sense of humour, which was really important. I'm happier. On that note, over to the even better story!

HORMOZ: No pressure! So, I came over age 15 to the UK from Iran. I came here to make use the great education system that existed here. I then went as far as degree level in Manchester to become an electronic engineer. If you come from the Middle East and several other countries, you are deemed to be successful only if you are an engineer or a doctor! Yes! So, I had a lot of pressure to follow that. I then and my family had to become refugees to be able to stay in this country. A real privilege. The period building up to it was really pretty nerve wracking to see what the result would be. But then the good news is that I followed on, I could stay in this country and had a great successful career in business development, engineering first but then in business development. So far so good. But there was something within me which is really not quite right. I could not come to terms with quite a few things within me. Partly and largely actually because I am gay. There was a real inner struggle coming from the Middle East, the culture pressures, expectations, et cetera. It was a very, very tough struggle. Even though I came out aged 20, I now look back and I really didn't fully come out at all. I had a real struggle still. I had a dual life. I had an imaginary girlfriend for some occasions. The family, some of the family really did not respond very well to this situation. Eighteen years ago, I had a phenomenally major breakdown. Somebody who had not been depressive, I had the deepest of depressions which, you know, went on and on, so much so that they had to rush me into hospital and the doctors were really worried about my life. It was that deep, you know, that dramatic. Over a two‑year period, I lived with that depression. With a lot of help from the NHS and the hospital, I had some really great support, and I came out and then I went right up the other way. It was a time when I was standing on top of a bridge, looking down which was the height of my bipolar situation that I really realised that I badly needed some help. I was rushed into hospital again both times. When I had the depression and the bipolar, I was sectioned. They had to deal with the situation considerably. Having said all of this, I now can say with hindsight that it was probably the best thing that happened to me. It is a very strange thing for me to say but I really mean it. I would not wish that kind of experience on anybody but what that meant was that I got to the core of myself. It was a total period of re‑inventing myself and really thinking about who I was and what I wanted to happen, what my values were, et cetera, and creating a new me which I'm glad to say is the happiest me that has ever been. My partner of 28 years stood by me throughout all of this period. My family have rallied around beyond this kind of dramatic situation that I had and I really discovered so much about myself. So, some points. I really didn't think I was but I was such a closed person. I would not share anything that meant much with too many people. I was gregarious but I was really a closed person. Fearful of sharing too much of myself. I felt that I had to hide behind certain personas. And this was a big one, I really saw asking for help as a weakness. I felt as though I had to carry everything myself, I had to be resilient myself, I had to deal with everything myself and even though I did ‑‑ I'm from a loving family with friends, et cetera, but I really disliked the idea of asking for help. As I said to you, I really re‑examined my values. I became much more aware. The strengths, there were too many question marks in my head, I really recognised what my strengths were and what I wanted to happen not the pressures of things around me. The things that stopped me: Too many limiting beliefs. I broke them one by one. Actually, by getting very, very, very useful cognitive behavioural therapy when I was in hospital and then coaching later on. And really, really, I can stand here and say I'm now the authentic me, with all the intersectionality bits to choose from that we've talked about. Here I am!

JANE: Lots of intersectionality. Lots going on.

HORMOZ: So, this really does lead on naturally to why we're working the way we are working at Result CIC and the impact. We bring ourselves into our work and you'll see more of the results now.

JANE: So, the CIC stands for Community Interest Company. We put ourselves at the heart of this. We are here to empower anybody who feels pushed out, excluded, marginalised. We're doing it so they can be fully themselves. Also, we want them to be able to become positive role models to others, to have a really powerful knock‑on effect. We're seeing that happening.

HORMOZ: So, our programmes for disabled staff, one of the early and big ones was with the University of Manchester, so thank you Patrick and Hamied. You were on the first one?

HAMIED: Oh, yes!

HORMOZ: It was called Achieving your Potential. It is a combination of workshop days and one‑to‑one coaching. It's a model that has worked extremely well since then. The University of Manchester, it is the fifth year we're running it there. We run it at Liverpool's John Moore university. We concentrate on assertive communication and making connections with others, so networks.

JANE: So, we'd like to show you some numbers, some quantitative and qualitative numbers. The programmes on the next slides have been run at the two universities that Hormoz mentioned. We are happy to share the slides if anybody wants a copy. We have along the top the programmes. They do workshops, usually three workshops, and some one‑to‑one coaching sessions. We have group learning and sharing of experience. There is an individual focus on who you are and what you want to do. In yellow, you have a self‑assessed, I think it's 40%. Just a word on the methodology. We use quite a simple method. We ask participants to fill in against six criteria where they feel like are, like a self‑assessment, on a scale of one to ten. We ask them at the end of the programme to measure it again against a scale of one to ten. It is quite striking that the two highest individual scores are around an increase in self‑confidence, 44% on average across those groups. An increase in the ability to state disability needs. So, the qualitative feedback, this is genuine and given freely. We have people describing it saying it is life changing and others noticing that they feel they've improved, and other colleagues are noticing. It is very easy to feel overwhelmed in a competitive environment. Somebody else said they felt set free. A lot of people highlight they want the one‑to‑one coach sessions and learning about themselves and gaining any insights. Somebody saying they would recommend the programme because it helped to build confidence.

HORMOZ: The missing piece, for a long‑time, Result CIC is six years old now and I remember from when I met Jane the emphasis on managers of disabled staff being the missing part of the jigsaw. Quite often, they have such a strong influence in terms of what happens and there was constant feedback that if you had a good manager you could have a great experience, but if you didn't have a good manager you could have a very tough time. So, the good news as far as we're concerned is that we've got involved now with two programmes, one at the BBC with hiring managers, not just to do with disability but across the range of diverse talent, and also at the NHS particularly NHS Greater Manchester, particularly concentrating on managers of disabled staff.

JANE: And just to highlight the programme in Liverpool. We have a colleague at the Liverpool John Moores and doing a pilot where managers are trained. If you would like to know more about that, let us know.

HORMOZ: And these are the recent programmes. So, end of 2017 and 2018, these are some of the feedback comments that we've had so far. "Most memorable and honest training I've ever attended." That was in response to our own stories, that comment. "Engaging and positive, one of the best sessions." This was really encouraging to hear this that I have immediately challenged one colleague about their attitude towards a staff member.

JANE: Personally, I found that the most gratifying that the managers ‑‑ not just ticking a box ‑‑ but they are thinking about how they behave and the capacity they have to make change, so that's wonderful. Result CIC will work with anyone who feels excluded or feel that their potential is being overlooked. This is a picture from the sickle cell centre. We do one‑to‑one coaching on assertiveness and talking about your health condition. This is one example of the diverse work we do. We work with people from black and Asian minority backgrounds. We have worked with working‑class people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

HORMOZ: We'll be working with the BAME staff at University of Manchester next. We are looking forward to that.

JANE: Now there is a missing slide. Do you remember the picture of the characters from the Wizard of Oz? Who was missing?

FLOOR: The wizard?

HORMOZ: Who else?

FLOOR: The wicked witch!

HORMOZ: The wicked witch, who put so many barriers in front of the characters in the story.

JANE: Does anybody have a witch at this university? I won't name and shame!

HORMOZ: The way we think about it in this story is what I mentioned personally in terms of limiting beliefs, those limiting beliefs get in the way. The barriers that we know with time we are able to break. It is some of the things we concentrate on in the programmes we do. The wizard, they thought the wizard had all of the answers. They then found out that he was actually an ordinary man, no wizard, nothing wizardy about him. We are the people who can make things happen.

JANE: As promised, we're going to ask for a minute's silence. We want you to reflect for a moment, we found quiet reflection is important, to just think about the stories you've heard, the information, just pause for one minute. Can you think of one thing that you'd like to do, one step to being more fully yourself? One minute's silence.

HORMOZ: One minute is a long time, isn't it?

JANE: Now we want to do one more radical thing. Can you share with the person next to you about your moment, if you don't mind sharing? It reinforces what you thought.

HORMOZ: That's another minute. That was a much shorter minute, wasn't it? Some people are still talking, which is great to see. Great, great to see. You can carry on talking about this through the day. So, any questions for us?

HAMIED: I'm afraid we don't have much time, but we have time for one question. If you could pass the other mic to Hormoz, please.

FLOOR: Hello. I'm Ashok from Royal Holloway. When I was talking to Anna, I think we were really interested with the coaching interventions and right at the end you talked about limiting beliefs and Wizard of Oz and so on. I myself, when I did a leadership programme, I found that almost to be the most powerful thing and I've done coaching since then. But I just wondered whether, as a network ourselves, there may be quite a few of us who are coaches who could somehow help one another, because it is a very powerful tool to use and there is lots of tools and tips and techniques you can use, so rather than just ‑‑ I know I did it at my institution, but thinking as a wider network, do you think there's scope to help one another in that manner?

HORMOZ: Well knowing Jane as well as I do, we both agree that that's a great idea so yes indeed! Absolutely, sir.

JANE: Wonderful. Thank you. One more question. Hello.

FLOOR: Hello. Just picking up on the point on leadership training, I did a paper about disabled leaders in higher education and one of the things that disabled leaders were saying was sometimes the leadership training is full of discriminatory language, inaccessible venues and everything else. So, targeting leadership trainers is quite important so that they are much more disability aware and intersectionality aware than they perhaps are now, because quite often they perpetuate a stereotype, as I've found in my research.

HAMIED: Great advice.

JANE: We don't do leadership training. It is a person‑centric approach. It is about people in the room and encouraging them to share. You may have 17 people learning from each other. I agree with you: There is a lot of unconscious bias knowing what we don't know. I'm sure people don't intend to use discriminatory language but inadvertently it can happen. Buildings solidarity and building networks, it is something that has happened at University of Manchester and Jon Moores.

HORMOZ: We have had that feedback before from the courses we have run. They say this is so refreshing and you are approaching this in a completely different way. As Jane says, it is all about the people there. It's people's stories and, you know, where they need to go basically with it.

HAMIED: I'm afraid we don't have any more time for questions. Jane and Hormoz, are you guys staying around?

HORMOZ: Yes, we are.

HAMIED: Awesome. You can catch Jane and Hormoz in the breaks. I hope you appreciate now why I love these guys so much and how much of a difference they've made at our university. We hope that relationship continues and strengthens. And yeah, I will never watch the Wizard of Oz in the same way again!

[Laughter]

HAMIED: Thank you so much, Jane and Hormoz. A round of applause, please.

[Applause]

HAMIED: Now, I invite Nicole Brown to come to the stage to give us her talk.

NICOLE: Hello, my name is Nicole Brown. I've been invited to talk to you today about how successful is academia, on the back of a conference I organised earlier this year which was called ablement in academia. I have been given 40 minutes to present. I promise you, it won't take 40 minutes. I will leave plenty of time at the end for questions. I want to talk to you about my research background and how all of this started. I will demonstrate to you some of the things that came out from our conference and I'll finish off with some concluding thoughts as to what our next steps are and what my next steps are.

If I show you initially a photo. My research is the construction of academic identity under the influence of fibromyalgia. I know it is a bit of a mouthful. It means that trying to find out how academics deal with the illness that is fibromyalgia. A lot of you may not have heard of it. It is basically quite similar to chronic fatigue syndrome, but it also comes with pain. A lot of people find it difficult to express what it feels like so what people have ‑‑ I'm sorry about this. We've got some sort of visual representations of what it feels like to have fibromyalgia. If this is visible, this is the pain you would feel. On the right is a picture that depicts somebody behind the fog, which is the brain fog that people get. From those conversations that I had with my research participants, I suddenly realised there was a real tension that I thought was there and it wasn't there as much as I thought was there. I thought there was a tension between the body impacting on the mind and you can't produce the kind of brain work you are supposed to be producing as an academic. This is important to the people I was talking to, but there was a whole set of extra ideas that came out that I hadn't thought about or expected. This is the ivory tower, this is a picture from Never Ending Story, the ivory tower is seen like that, what we strive for, the ultimate best place to work, all of the flexibility you want, you have got autonomy about the work you do, you can do what you like because you enjoy the research and aspects you are embarking on. However, here we've got another image from the Never-Ending Story. This is the hero trying to escape the Nothing that eats away on Fantasia, that fantasy country. This is how the people were describing the reality of academia, they were saying actually the work pressures we're under, the insecurity in jobs that we've got, all of these things eat away on the substance on my body, on my mind, on me. Suddenly the whole discussion I had anticipated moved into this discussion of what is it that we're expecting academics to be like. It led me to explore a little bit more about ableism within academia. I asked the question who are all of these disabled academics. We know we're out there. Where are all of these academics then suddenly? This is an article that I co‑wrote with a colleague of mine. We basically identified some key issues. I'm not going into great detail. The article is out there. It is open access so you can read it by yourself. But basically, the concerns that were raised in the article were that there's a difference between disabilities, illness and neuro diversities, yes, but at the same time there is not because all of these people feel that they can't actually say they have got something that makes them different from the average or the expected person. Disclosure as a personal commitment, for some disability or the illness is invisible so we can kind of decide on whether or not we present ourselves as disabled. But it means that you have to come to terms with saying, actually, I have got dyslexia, or I am diagnosed with fibromyalgia, whatever it is. So, there is a personal journey as well as the public journey to consider. For most people, it's really a cost benefit analysis whether to disclose or not. It is really worth for me to put myself out there as vulnerable and weak. What do I get in return? Do I get in return more that outweighs the potential vulnerability or not? This is the starting point of all of this. When I started reading into it a little bit more, I came across this book, Academic Ableism. I was really excited about it because it is talking about the university of Berkeley and how it's doing whatever it can to reduce disability in their environment. There was a book launch. I was totally excited about this! But obviously Berkeley being a little bit far away, I contacted them and said, oh, can I watch your live stream? We don't do that. Oh, can I have your materials? We don't share those. So, I said, "This is a book about ableism and disabilities and accessibility and you're telling me right now that I can't actually access any of this?" They're like, yeah. This is the point where I then felt, well, this is just weird. A colleague, somebody else from one of our networks of people also piped up on Twitter and she tweeted and she said, "Oh, this is odd and we should do something like this in the UK but make it fully accessible." Yeah, I'm in it. So, I then connected with some other people who felt exactly the same way from different universities, different interest groups and we put on this conference Ableists in Academic. Initially I was one of many. Once we decided we would host it at UCL and me being the only person from UCL amongst these people, a lot of it ended up with me and I was the person running the show really. I had a lot of huge amounts of support financially and in materials and in time and whatever from a huge number of people, but ultimate I became suddenly the public face of this conference, which is why Hamied has asked me to come and talk about it. So, our conference was live streamed, we had live captioning, we have British Sign Language interpreters. We had food for every possible dietary requirement. We had even a dog bowl in case someone would bring a service dog. I even had the water bowl really! We didn't have a service dog on the day but the bowl was there. We took it very, very seriously to put this event on. At the same time, the talks themselves were from academics talking about how they were neurodiverse, how they were affected by illness or disabilities. Those were people that came together from whichever background they were, so we had people from legal studies, from disability studies, from sociology and philosophy. It was completely interdisciplinary. It was the beauty of it because everybody talked from their own experiences. We theorised it but at the same time it was everybody's experience. What I would like to share with you is what comes out of that conference. So, what we've got from the conference, the stairway conversation. This takes me now to the point of how accessible academia is. How often is happening that people meet in the stairways or on the corridors as they come out of a meeting and then they go down the stairways together and continue whatever is being said in the meeting? That kind of informal conversation where the British Sign Language interpreter is no longer there, where the people who need to take the lift because they've got mobility issues are automatically excluded. So how accessible is academia in this particular case? Well, not very is the answer. It's the simple answer. Had she the kind of things that we are now looking at changing and that's the culture change that was mentioned earlier this morning, where we are saying we need to have a change in culture. We need to accept that a stairway conversation is not okay. Equally, the person that talked about the stairway conversation, that's Carla Finesilver, when you go out for a social after work and you are the one that wants a chair to sit down and everybody suddenly is on the bar and they move along a little bit and you're still stuck there with your chair. It is the same situation. We're actually reducing the options for those people to engage in meaningful conversations. Another issue that came up was the self‑advocacy. Obviously, you need double doors because of the wheelchair, I need the hearing loop to work, I need a sign language interpreter. Yes, nobody is saying it is difficult but it requires huge amounts of energy and huge amounts of money, because the immediate budget may not be available to you and it may mean there is work, yes, there is Access to Work but actually the administration of Access to Work runs requires energy because you have to fill in the forms and fight for the budget money to go into the right pot where you then have the right code so you can draw it out from there again. All of these things, they're not difficult. Nobody is saying it is a difficult task to do but it is something that eats away on people and it eats away from the substance. The other thing is conferences. Now, conferences themselves can or cannot be accessible. But that's not my point. My point really is about conferences in relation to the lunchtime queue, for example. Have you ever tried, if you don't have any disabilities or any chronic illnesses or anything at all, have you ever tried to find the named plate where your name is on, having the conference bag in one hand, having your cutlery in the other hand, and then you have a Zimmer frame or other mobility aid? How are you going to do that? This is something that people just do not think about. It's not... this is the kind of ingrained ableism in all of us and we just assume that everybody can do that. But actually, in reality this is not the case and this is where we have to re‑think certain things. As for the lunchtime queue, when I had the conference, we delivered the lunchboxes to the people. There was no queue. We delivered the food boxes to the people so we cut out that lunch time queue. To go back one thing, the lunch time queue, also what often happens is the named plate with your name on it, the special food, often it looks quite delicious so people grab it even if it is not their name and you end up with the salad leaves and you chomp on those like a rabbit. This is the kind of situation that we're trying to avoid basically. The next thing is the interpreter. These two people are here not because you need them, but because I don't sign. If I was able to speak your language they wouldn't need to be here. Again, we are doing that at every level. We are kind of assuming that these people are there to help whoever needs them and that's the kind of the thinking shift that we need to achieve. Career progression, it goes back to the conferences as well. Career progression was mentioned earlier. The big thing about career progression is in the nitty‑gritty details. Because on paper, everybody can progress, it is not a problem. Have you tried to attend an international conference with a wheelchair? You will find that's one heck of a lot of work. If you eventually get there, at least you have been able to demonstrate your impact on an international level. But if for whatever reason, you haven't got the funding, the energy, the logistics that is required for all of this, you are not going to attend that conference. How is your impact? How can you demonstrate within the career discussion you have got all of those things? Well, you're not going to meet all of those requirements. The career progression and conference attendance are an important point. If I can just point out this particular point because I'm talking about the conference attendance, the conference attendance for ableism in academia conference, there was one person that tweeted, "This is the first conference I've been attending in eight years." How can we allow any kind of discussion on progression if on the other hand we have people who can't attend conferences in eight years because they've not been made accessible to them?

A final point on this slide is the publications. Now, I have mentioned earlier that self‑advocacy requires money and energy. Now, imagine you spend a day teaching, you don't teach the whole day, I appreciate that, but you will still be teaching an hour or two. You then do this energetic conversation about getting your Access to Work and at the end of that day, you are then supposed to be sitting down and trying to write for a publication or grant. On the student side, when a student has got dyslexia, for example, they get a reasonable adjustment of extension for a week, two weeks, whatever it is. Where is that extension for an academic, they are also dyslexic? Yet there is no reasonable adjustment or any kind of support for those people when it comes to grant writing and publications. We expect everybody to have the same kind of output in the same kind of way. Again, what we need to get to is a shift in thinking. So, these are now statements. I don't have to ‑‑ I will just read them out to everybody. But I'm not going to refer to them or talk about them much because these are things that people have said as part of the conference, that it is the direct words of the people who were there. Actually, they stand for themselves. They're quite self‑explanatory here. 1. The recognition of the relationship between the neo‑liberal academic and the disability. We require an integration of ideas and protocols produced in these forums in university policy. We need better networks, we need to network.

HAMIED: Sorry, Nicole. As you may have noticed, we have a photographer in the room. The photographer is official from UCL. If anybody has a problem with their picture being taken, please do let one of the volunteers know, or let me know. Thank you.

NICOLE: I never even noticed that. What people have also said more conversations around ableism is required and wider awareness. The change from reasonable adjustment to not requiring adjustments, better representation. Now, these are all things that people have said that are important to them, so where does that take me with my next steps? I've got grand plans! One of the things we have already done on the back of our conference was we produced a one‑pager, the report Thompson and I largely produced this one pager of how to make events accessible. It is not "you must be doing X, Y and Z". It is things to think about. Try and include some of them in your event. Yes, we appreciate you may not have the budget to do everything but even just a tiny little bit is helpful. Actually, some of the stuff that is mentioned on here is free of charge, so you could implement them quite easily. This one‑pager has been taken up by the UCL events team, so they are now putting that as part into their events training management training group and that's being sort of filtered through the university that way. So that's one of the things that has come out. Another thing that has come out actually is also a publication which details this one‑pager and is currently under review. This one pager is just a summary and the article will demonstrate the thinking processes that go behind all of that. From the conference also, I have already got one book commissioned with UCL Press. The second book is currently under negotiation with a different publisher. We have two different kinds of book. The first book is the theorisation of ableism in academia. The second one will be very, very practical steps. Things like, as somebody who has been diagnosed with dyslexia, I recommend we have slides that are off‑white in background, that these are genuinely not black on white, because that affects my eyes and my dyslexia too much. So, things like that where we can actually go back and really have practical strategies. I've also been invited by the Wellcome Trust to come and meet them, which I will do in August. They have asked me for input on how to help with research grants and how to make research grant writing more accessible to academics. I have been involved in development work in the Imperial College, University of Westminster, LSE, and it is more to do with wellbeing and mental health. As you can see, there's a lot happening around that. I think all of these little things, I'm not one that's going to introduce a new policy or a new strategy but I think from my experience by leading by example I can demonstrate that I can do that. A lot of people can access it. If I can do it, everybody else can. That's really the message I would like to leave you with. I could go on for hours but I'm not going to. I would to open up the floor and be open to questions.

[Applause]

HAMIED: Thank you, Nicole. Any questions?

FLOOR: Have you had any involvement in the Ref2020 exercise and adjustments for disabled staff within that? I know there is an equality advisory panel but I wonder whether the rules are actually going to be different. They have to be different because before you could have four, now it's a maximum of five and a minimum of one. What adjustments are there being discussed for staff within the REF2020 exercise?

NICOLE: On the next ref exercise, I was nominated to be on the panel but unfortunately, I didn't get selected for it so I've got no involvement with that. I agree with what you're saying. At the end of the day this is why I'm keen with working with the Wellcome on the grant applications because the principle is the same. We have to somehow help these people to be able to achieve the best possible. So, I'm afraid I haven't got an answer to your immediate question, but perhaps if there's anybody out there or here, I'm more than happy to be involved in the Ref discussions.

HAMIED: The next question is just there, the gentleman.

FLOOR: Sorry, I have written down my question because I'm uncomfortable to speak directly if I have to speak in person. I'm autistic, diabetic and I have fibromyalgia. Just for the point, seven months ago I didn't use a stick, now I have a disabled badge and I use a stick and probably I need crutches. I was asked if I'm going for a Masters or a PhD and I said no. I have five degrees and counting. I just realised that one of the worst hidden ableism in academia is having gone from the sanctity of academic freedom to paragraphs, chapters and submission rules. This leaves neurodivergent lateral thinkers like myself with a... philosophical understanding of words and thoughts falling prey to write papers about the architectural order of words on pages. Philosophy, it seems to have been chased out of PhDs. My question is: Is there any thoughts of changing this?

NICOLE: In order to answer this, there are several strands to my answer. First of all, the way I conduct my research is very much away from the text, so I do have conversations with participants, I deliberately do not call them interviews. I don't have interviews. I've got conversations. But all of those conversations are based on objects that people are bringing to answer my questions. So, the first step is I'm asking them a question and they have to send me an object or send me a picture of that object and we later on, a few weeks later, we talk about those. It as conversation but it is actually going away from that. I know that with that approach I'm at the moment quite lonely. There aren't that many people that are doing that. But having said that there is a shift within research where due to other reasons, mostly to do with power differentials and that, people are moving away from the word and that also means that now we have got all of this word of data that isn't word so suddenly people are realising dissemination has to be different, too. It can't be a journal article anymore. It has to be something else. One way of disseminating for example, is an arts exhibition which I have done as well as part of my research. And there are other people that are doing it as performances with theatres, et cetera. There are shifts. But as we all know change doesn't go overnight. So as far as I'm concerned, I think there is a shift happening but whether that's fast enough for people on that scale, like you just described, where you are experiencing the frustrations of it, I would suggest it probably isn't fast enough. But I would suggest on a personal level, I would suggest that you try and find an multidisciplinary approach to, for example, Masters or PhD and whether you want to do them or not is a different question, but I'm trying to say that nowadays there is a shift towards the interdisciplinary, we no longer have to be confined by our disciplinary silos, so there is a possibility of actually opening up exactly for those people like yourselves, thinking of the box and thinking laterally and making connections that people are not making. I suggest there is hope, let's put it that way.

HAMIED: A question at the back.

FLOOR: I think, first of all, I'd like to say that that was brilliant. So, thank you. I really identified with what you said about self‑advocacy taking more energy. It is definitely something I identify with. I just wanted to know what you see as the role of network groups, disability network groups in helping to facilitate change in organisations.

NICOLE: Absolutely. I agree with you. I think that also came out from those statements that people were saying we need to better networks, we need to network. From somebody who's working here at UCL, we have got the Enable group. This group of people is trying to make changes but that takes me back to the article that I described earlier. A lot of people may not be comfortable saying actually I ought to be in this group. So, I think that yes, as a collective of people we would have more, you know, impetus of making change within higher education but there is a lot of requirement on the individual to say actually I belong to that belong, you know, especially where for example, the illness or the disability is concerned are perhaps fluctuating because of chronic illness rather than a permanent disability. You have just described yourself about six months ago you didn't use any kind of mobility aids and now you do. So, at that stage, how do you as somebody with a progressive illness how do you come to terms with that journey? How are you able at what point to say actually I do belong to that group? From my point of view, there are two things to that. I think we shouldn't have categories of academic staff and students. We should just have accessibility for all, whether that's helping the students or the staff, it doesn't really matter. Equally, we shouldn't have ‑‑ I do understand why we have BAME groups and LGBT groups, but at the same time we all need to work on this together because, like we just heard earlier in the talks, there is a problem of intersectionality so if we're all working together with these different groups, we've got even more impetus for change. So, I think the networks are important but I think the way they've structured at the moment is perhaps not ideal and there is some change required there. There was a question here at the front and there's one at the back as well.

HAMIED: A question over here.

FLOOR: I don't really have questions but more sort of points to raise in a way that I've been thinking of because I went to both conference and seminar. I'm probably one of the longest PhD students in the UK with the most interruptions and extensions. On the basis of that, I think something that needs to be address and doesn't really fit in the staff nor student sector of academia is the position of PhD students. Logically in a lot of countries, PhD students are actually employees and very often we actually do work in teaching. I think there are various parts to this. I think one is that the neurotypical issue of how you are being trained as a PhD student and how you are trained to think or work, both actually, so construction of knowledge which is a step further I think. But also, like how you are supposed to work and very ableist suggestions and teaching not just about neurotypical or neuro‑normativity, and in the courses that you take, I don't know, speed reading, for example. It is all about how you write and all of these sorts of things. Another really big issue, thank God not for me, but a lot of other PhD students, what I hear about and have read about from is that they're feel like they're looked down on or they're excluded from the programme if they have to take interruptions or extensions. There is a financial issue to that obviously. But I know schools where you're just not allowed to take a certain amount of interruptions, so there is one. There is a thing when you finish a PhD, how will you actually get into academia? The idea of PhD students as just students is not helpful. We have to think of PhD students as pre‑academics and I think it is necessary to think about this and mentoring and how to navigate that. Is it actually possible if you've had interruptions, I think I've had 11 interruptions and extensions, maybe ten? Anyway. I think then there is something about the two‑tick programme so this is in response to the previous... but it is related to this, the accessibility, the doorstep, like if you are saying that you are disabled will you get an interview, will you actually not get an interview. I think definitely as a PhD student, it is an issue because it is reason enough not to invite you but I also noticed this among other academics it is a real fear.

NICOLE: It's true. Thank you much for those comments. I agree; there's a lot of contention there. I'm not going to respond into great detail, just to say Alexander Lee is sitting at the back and she's waving at people. She's the chair of an Enable at UCL. She's very, very heavily involved in trying to get changes made around the contractual issues of precarious staff, especially in view of disabilities. She may be the person that you really want to speak to. I know also at the back there I had a strong wave of hand in response to your comments, so could we have somebody send the microphone, please, thank you.

HAMIED: This will have to be the last question because lunch is getting cold.

FLOOR: It's all right. I'm good at being succinct. I did a lot of research with autistic academics who have difficulty getting into academia on a proper paid basis because of the barriers they experience in terms of employment. One thing we've set up at London and South Bank University, we have set up the participatory autistic collective. They bring themselves together. It is convened by an autistic academic, who has a proper job which is incredibly rare, we bid for research together, write research together, but that solidarity and support. A principle within my research centre that says if you do autism research, you need autistic people to lead it. Otherwise we're all just flailing about individually, really. That's just a comment.

NICOLE: In view of the lunchtime queue...

FLOOR: [inaudible].

FLOOR: I will come and find you.

NICOLE: In view of the lunch waiting for us, for those people that have named plates, I've been told there is a special room where we can collect our food because I'm one of them too. Also, I will be hanging around so if you want to come and find me, please feel free to do so. I have copies of the article here, so if you are interested come and see me.

HAMIED: Enjoy your lunch. Can I have the speakers to come up to the front and give them a round of applause?

[Applause]