**Transcript for Inclusive and Accessible Learning and Working in a Post Covid World Webinar – 19 July 2022**

ANNIE: Hello everyone. Welcome to today's webinar. Thank you for joining us on this absolutely sweltering day. It is just gone 1:00. I will just give everyone a chance to join. Do feel free to drop into the

Q&A box and say hi. We have disabled the chat feature. We discovered it can cause problems for some people

using screen readers. I will just leave it a few moments for more people to arrive, then I will get started.

We've got some people saying Hello. Hi, Steven. Glad you could make it today. I hope you're not melting.

Hi, Matthew.

Hi, Rita.

ANNIE: Hi, Rita.

ANNIE: Okay, I can see, a few more people have joined. Hi, Fiona. Folk. Lots more people have joined

now. I think we'll make a start. So, Hello everyone. Well Kim to today's webinar, Higher Education/Public

Sector Update: Addressing Autism, Dyslexia, and Neurodivergence in education and work. Although we know

it is very much still with us. We are thinking about the impact COVID has had on learning and working processes.

My name is Annie Mannion, Marketing Manager at AbilityNet, I will run you through what you can expect working

today. Going through a few bits of housekeeping we have live captions, which are provided by MyClearText,

so, thank you Kim, who is doing those in the background. You can turn on the captions using the closed caption

option on the control panel. Additional captions are available at StreamText. Net/player?

Event equal AbilityNet. You can also access at slide share. And on our website at

[https://abilitynet.org.uk/Greenwich-Webinar](linkshttps://abilitynet.org.uk/Greenwich-Webinar) If you have any technical issues or need to leave early. Don't worry. You'll

see an E-mail with the recording, the transcript, and the slides on Thursday. Depending on how you join the

webinar, you will find the Q&A window. If you want to ask the speakers any questions. Please drop those in the

Q&A area. We'll adjust those later on or after today's session on our website. And then, just finally we

have a feedback page. You will be directed to at the end, please do complete that. That gives us really,

useful information. So, for those of you, who aren't yet familiar with AbilityNet. We support people of any

age living with any impairment to use technology to achieve their goals at home, work, and education and do this

by providing specialist advice, and services and free information, like this webinar and also support

organisations to create an inclusive, accessible customer working and learning environment. I'll share a

little more about our services at the end of the webinar. So, moving on to the next slide. Today we're joined by

Dr. Melanie Thorley who is STAART Manager and Charlie Mayo, a recent graduate of history of art.

And also joining us is Amy Low, Service Delivery Director at AbilityNet. Providing a summary of

the student students UK report and host the discussion with Melanie and Charlie. Before Amy kicks off today's

webinar content. I will just start with a poll. Okay so, we have a bit more understanding of the student

situation amongst our attendees, can you tell us, have students expectations changed post height of

COVID?

The options are yes, our institution has responded to this. Yes, and our institution is struggling to adapt to

this. No, expectations seem broadly as they were. Or I do not work or study at an university. So, depending on

how you join the webinar. You may find you can't see the poll but may respond in the Q&A panel. I'm just

going to leave it a few more moments for anyone who wants to vote. Okay, the last chance to vote. Okay, I will

end the poll now and share the results.

ANNIE: So, the top result is "yes, and our institution has responded to this." So that's 39%. Then yes, and

our institution is struggling to adapt to this. That's at 29%. And then, after that, "I do not work or study at

a university" 25%. Then "no, expectation seem as they were, that's 6%. So, it is good to see those

thoughts on student’s expectations there. I will stop sharing the poll. It is over to Amy to share a bit more

about the disabled student UK report.

AMY: Straw poll there definite three demonstrates the expectations have broadly changed with only 6% saying

they haven't so it would be interesting to um pack some of this research that was undertaken and published earlier

this year, by Disabled Students UK to give a little bit more information on the way expectations might have

changed. So, for anyone who has not come across Disabled Students UK. They're a disabled-student-led

organisations with three interconnected sets of opportunities. They have a community arm, which has brought

together over 500 student activists. They're leading the charge on creating a more accessible learning

environment. They also have a business arm providing consultancy and training from a lived student perspective.

Lastly, they have a research pulling tonight student or student sites to both inform the sector, but also to

set the ambition for a better disabled student experience. This particular report was pulled together even a year

into the pandemic. They conducted a survey to try to understand the lessons they could draw from how

disabled students have experienced the pandemic, and how we should move forward from here. So, they had a

good cross section of respondents, 326 individual students from 69 individual home and education providers. And the

report was sort of summed up with five, key lessons. Those lessons were inspired by the answers received to

the following question. Which lessons do you hope that your university learns from the pandemic to become

more accessible moving forward?

So, so we will look at each of those lessons. Lesson one was to take anticipatory approach. Be proactive

there was good news in the report that 41% of students felt the accessibility of their course improved during the

pandemic. However, 26% felt it had worsened. The rest felt it remained static. When you delved into the data

on this, where progress was made was typically strongly linked to institution-wide policies that made a

big difference. On the flip side, where adjustments were ad hoc, it became even more difficult to organise

these at that arm's length situation during the pandemic. Then, lesson two, was about resourcing staff

adequately. To be able to provide accessible experiences. You know most staff within institutions want to

support students and where the failings were arising this often related to the resources and the skill sets of staff.

So, providing things like time, training, and resources is going to be key in addressing these shortcomings.

Most people who are provided with the training and the time to execute really do want to make their practice

more accessible and inclusive. But there was a study I think shared at the NADP conference last year, a

study by Ivan Newman showing only 15% of institutions gave their lecturers advice on how to make their teaching

accessible to disabled students during the pandemic, which really does set people up to fail in this area.

Lesson three, that related to attitudes. How attitudes may have evolved and changed during the

pandemic. There's definitely been various studies that have reported arise in empathy, as a consequence of

what we've all been through. I recall a study done by Acensure a workplace study saying 55% of people reported

being nicer to their colleagues during the pandemic. And I think that probably has extended into education,

as well. But it is important that this empathy feeds into policy decisions. There was a quote from one of the

respondents that said, "introducing flexibility helps everyone and strict pedagogical arrangements are not

always the best way forward and the positions of academic learning can bend a lot before they break." I

think we can see the way it was tackled during the pandemic. Lesson four S about reducing the administrative

burden. It is not new. Disabled students have always experienced a higher administrative burden.

Actually, this got more difficult in some cases. There was another quote someone said, "I had to contact the

disability team about five times, despite me taking to them and sending them my medical evidence. It only got

in place because my course leader E-mailed the disability team itself" it is not a reflection of the

disability team it might be around the adjustments of getting in place and workloads of the disability teams.

Thinking of policies less evidence-based and so on, can really help with that. The next one is about

responsibility three leadership. Having a senior sponsor focused in this area is going to make a massive

difference. So, 8.4% of study participants felt that they're institution had prioritised making

their courses accessible for disabled students during the pandemic. So, there might have been individuals, but

as an institution this wasn't bean owned and talked about, in a wide-spread way. And the then the

last one is so important. It probably should have been lesson one, to listen to students. There's a lot of

pandering that can go on about how challenging it is to address accessibility barriers. You know, I

totally recognise that

But so often be students and disabled staff will have creative ask easily implemented solutions, if you take the

time to draw them in to co--design solutions and remove those administrative barriers to accessing

support. I think what was interesting with the lessons none of them are new or things we haven't thought about

before. The pandemic shown a light on the importance of these, and also did remove some of the myths that were

stopping us from making positive changes, in some of these areas. So, moving on to the next slide. Just to

focus in a positive way, really on the things that people said they want to keep post-pandemic or keep after the

pandemic. Some making a massive difference to the experience is of individual students. The message

was: please don't take these away again. They really helped us. Actually, when you go through them, they're mostly

linked with choice and flexibility. Rather than being disability-specific, things like where, how, and when

students can choose to engage with their course. Of course, that has implications for all students.

Particularly people from under-represented groups, who might be juggling caring responsibilities,

jobs, financial worries, and many more considerations. So there were things like be recorded lectures, which was

happening as standard. We're hearing it is starting to fall away again now. People are going back to in-person

sessions. Things like anonymous interactive options, which were allowing people, who might have

confidence issues or difficulties around anxiety being able to interact without necessarily raising their

hand. Being age to join sessions remotely, which helps with the whole host of things like focus, fatigue,

and all of those, sorts of considerations. And being able to access your tutors on-line. Again, I

think this is going up to someone's door and knocking and all those kinds of things that sometimes can prevent

people from coming forward with questions, because they don't want to be a nuisance. Having that easy

access to tutors on-line was significant. Assessment types which is a big one. We could do a whole

webinar on. It is really, really important. And things like, on-line open houses and drop-in sessions,

which allow people to have those touch points with things that people would really want to retain going forward.

There was one quote from a respondent that highlights how critical this flexibilities was for her, regardless

of what was going on in the wider world. It said, “I've been able to attend more lectures. I even set my

exams in hospital. If university hasn't been on-line, I believe I would have had to drop out by now due to the

time I would have missed. Being unable to attend lectures." So, it goes without saying all of these options do

need to be checked and designed in an accessible way, but the more we focus on delivering choice, the better we

get at getting it right for everyone. I think everyone can think of probably some ready examples of that. So, we

want to keep practicing these things. So, I would like to give a big thanks to the team at Disabled Students UK

for conducting this important report and discussing to help inform this webinar. I would encourage everyone

to read the report.

And engage with Disabled Student UK excellent work. I think we have another poll.

ANNIE: Just flag there will be an opportunity to pose questions. Please put those in the Q&A box.

Here's a quick, second poll for you. Have staff members expectations changed post COVID?

The options are. Yes, and the institute and organisation have responded. Yes, and our institution

and organisation is struggling to adapt. No, expectation seem as they were. I am not working or studying

currently. Just to remind you again. You can put your responses into the Q&A box if you can't access the poll.

We.

AMY: We thought it was important to draw experience of staff. Staff can often be forgotten and be often have a

more challenging time than students in accessing adjustments and flexibility. That was definitely

highlighted during the pandemic. It will be interesting to see what the responses are on this one.

ANNIE: I think most people have answered now. I will give you a couple more moments. I'll end the

poll and share the results. They're not too dissimilar to the previous poll. I'll read out the results.

Yes, our institution -organisation has responded has 51%. "Yes, and our institution is struggling to adapt"

that's 33%. "No expectations seem as they were" 8%. "I'm not working or studying currently" 8%.

AMY: Interesting. Again, I think we can say again with a few exceptions most staff have a new set of

expectations. We--

It is brilliant to see how many people have reacted and got progress underway, but definitely worth

considering to be able to have a happy, supported teams.

ANNIE: Now we're over to Amy to introduce our guests in the fireside chat today.

AMY: When we put the slides together. The fireside chat next to the fire on the beach sounded like a good ideas.

I wouldn't want to be sat next to a campfire now though. The air temperature is definitely warm enough

already. Yes, for anyone who will be can't see the image on the slide. It is a campfire on a beach. So, let's

go over to our wonderful guests and start with some introductions on the next slide. We'll mix it up a bit and

go gentlemen first. Charlie tell us a bit about yourself.

CHARLIE: Hi, I'm Charlie. I just graduated from institute in the History of Art. I started to access

the support from AbilityNet in my second year. When so in my first year, that's when the pandemic hit.

It hit halfway through. Everything got cancelled. Then, all of my second year was on-line. I was undiagnosed

with ADHD before then. I just randomly got an E-mail from my university. Saying "if you want to apply for DSA

support do it now." It is summer and you have loads of time. I was like, yeah, maybe I should do that. My

sister had just been diagnosed with ADHD. I kind of knew there was something going on. After I went

through all of the motions of being assessed like multiple times and doing the aptitude stuff, I finally got

support. I guess that's why I'm here today. I found it super helpful.

AMY: Brilliant. Thank you for joining us today, Charlie. Then ladies, Melanie tell us about yourself. I'm

sure, we have friends on the webinar that have met you before. And friends that you are yet to meet.

MELANIE: Thank you, Amy. Lovely to be here. I do like our working together on these webinars. I'm

Melanie Thorley, I manage a keep called STAART at the University of Greenwich. We support disabled students from all

throughout their journey. We will or can work with them from outreach, transition, retention, and then into

employment and or post-graduate studies. Part of my job is STAART also recruits and employs disabled

university students to be specialists STAART ambassador doors, and they do various bits and pieces. Also, I am

Executive Officer in my University's disabled Staff Community and also an Executive Officer for the National

Association of disabled Staff Network. So, I know the perspective of students and I know the perspectives

of staff, but today Charlie will be doing the student focus and I will focus on the staff focus and pretty

much everything Amy has said is relevant to disabled staff, as well as disabled students.

AMY: Definitely. Welcome, Melanie, and Charlie. Looking forward to this chat. So, we'll go on to my first

question. It would be great to get reflections from both of you from the student and staff perspective. We'll

look at the glass half empty first. What was challenging during COVID as a student and why?

CHARLIE: So, I think just the shock of it all was the most challenging part. Not only was I going to university and

dealing with being in London, in comparison to where I grew up. Also, in that same year I had to deal with

the entire world going into lock down. There was that. That was probably more mentally challenging than

anything. Because, as I say, all of my exams and things got cancelled. I think that was a case for a lot of

people in my academic year. So, it was less of an academic struggle and more of a mental struggle. No one was

really sure what was going to happen.

AMY: Yeah. Yeah that whole planning thing. Human beings typically if something goes wrong, you want to plan

and fix it don't you?

I think we're all in that situation, where you know the book was being written, as the pages were being

turned. actually I think that with that very important time in your life, as well, Charlie, where you had a lot

of change. No one was expecting that. It must have been particularly challenging to deal with. How about

you, Melanie?

How did it feel from a staff perspective?

Because the rug went out from under you, and your supporting students, as well as managing your own scenario?

MELANIE: From my, own perspective, I wasn't hampered in any way. I'm very fortunate, because I've been a

perpetual student I've had to study for the last 25 years. Because I completed a doctorate, I have two

screens.

All sorts of things. The technology that people started to use during the lock downs and everything, I was

already using it. So, for me I was absolutely fine. The majority of my colleagues did not have that

experience. Some of the challenges, thankfully the positives do outweigh the challenges from, my perspective.

The similar to what Charlie had said, this anxiety. Not knowing was really, really--

People, who had never experienced anxiety before it was the first time, they had experienced this. And

depression, and other mental health came to the forefront. People who never experienced it before, but this

is a societal thing. It impacted everybody. I'm support unsupportive managers. I won't go on, but people

will read what they like. Digital exclusion, which sadly most people refer to as digital poverty. I'm

quite hot on people terminology. So digital exclusion, not having the equipment and the software. Not

having the internet. Not having the internet that was required. Also, I did not see, certainly we, my

institution did thankfully. A lot of my colleagues throughout the UK were given all of the software and told to

use it. No training. Like literally. Here it is. Get on with it. Some technology is lovely. Some of it is a

nightmare. I think some of us are still struggling with it. A lot of people, inappropriate, insufficient

spaces to work in. Again, I'm super lucky. I have a study at home. I didn't even have to share it with my

husband so, that was fine. But lots of my colleagues have children, or elderly parents. cats, dogs, all

sorts. They don't have that space. The kitchen table for a lot of people was not the kitchen table for two

years. One of my colleagues here--

So, she works part-time. Her husband worked full time. Their daughter was doing their A Levels. Around their

chicken table were three laptops and PCs on the go, all at the same time. Trying to do Teams calls, when you

have all of this stuff going on was really, really difficult. I think there are possibly not known the--

There's a high incidents of domestic violence in the disabled community. So, sadly for some of our colleagues

that would have increased, when you add into the fact that the perpetrator was angry, frustrate, anxiety-ridden and

stuff like that. These bits, it is all relevant for students, as well. But I'm very much of this entire theme we

have introduced these layers. We need to keep the good bits. Certainly from my institution, we are continuing

with a hybrid model, to work from home some days. Go on to campus on other days F that suits you there.

Are some people, who don't want to be at home. Can't be at home. They can actually come in five days. This is

having that presents benefits not change.

AMY: That's all right. I think, you have really unpacked the vast layers of difficulty that were uncovered by

the pandemic. And actually, maybe that fed into that piece around empathy. People were experiencing barriers,

that they hasn't even thought about that other people may have been experiencing for years. And trudging

on and not getting support. Like you say, although it was incredibly horrendous for some people, then at

least that understanding and you know institutions like yours have acknowledged some of the past

difficulties. And yeah, so shall we go through to the positives, then?

It is almost a bit weird, isn't it?

Thinking about what are the positives?

When it came to that new way of working and studying, were there some positives for you, Charlie to having

that change in the way of studying on line?

Or perhaps friends and relatives of yours have shared some positives.

CHARLIE: So, similar to Melanie, when mostly went mostly hybrid. To my knowledge, still is. All of the

lectures were recorded and could access all of them. Actually, I was able to access lectures and recordings, that I

probably shouldn't have. So, I got to look at extra stuff from different courses. That was kind of a positive.

Maybe not necessarily intentional.

AMY: Luck.

CHARLIE: Yeah, but I think, in terms of the way that my courses are assessed, there were definitely a will

the of positives. For my year group, they recognised that we hasn't done any in-person exams since our A

Levels. So, they continued to have on-line exams. And the mental--

The Disability Support Officer at my university really tried to make sure that we continued to get extra time,

even though the exams were all I think they were 60 hours--

No, four days four days long some the extra time they gave us five to the disabled students. It was really nice

to have her on our side, I guess. That was definitely a relationship that was amplified, because of the

pandemic. Because she reached out to everyone. Like I said, I received an E-mail from her. I had this relation

ship with her.

And lots of disabled students had this relationship with her with different disabilities in terms of my family

members, my sister is still a student at Westminster University and has Medicine so, it is completely

different from me. On top of writing essays, like scientific essays, she has to like go into uni and practice

in a polyclinic that does acupuncture and herb tinctures being on-line was detrimental to have a

patient-practice-type relationship. Kind of forming how she would process when she become an herbalist. It

definitely depends on what you're studying. Because mine is so small, it can easily go on-line and record

everything. Where as hers, it is huge. They have to kind of put a blanket features for every course that are

more detrimental to some than others, I think.

AMY: I know what you're saying. It is that balance, isn't it?

Sometimes the larger institutions have resources to do some fantastic policy-led things and the range of

courses and the different outcomes you're looking for is on-going challenge definitely. How about you,

Melanie?

What was good for yourself and perhaps for other disabled colleagues?

MELANIE: I didn't, personally the thing I missed most, which maybe I should have put in the challenges.

The thing I missed the most was not physically seeing the overwhelming majority of my--

There's always a few, but the overwhelming majorities. I count many of my colleagues here, and externally

as my friends, not just my colleagues some they're friendly colleagues. It is like a different zone. And not

seeing them, and not seeing my ambassador doors was just--

I didn't like that at all. I do remember I did meet--

It wasn't like it was after the lock down. You were allowed out, sort.

I remember meeting one of my lovely student ambassador doors in a car park. It felt a bit seedy. She was

sobbing, because it was just all--

Be I couldn't--

I couldn't give her a hug. I think apart from the time when one of my closest friends was in the hospital on

ventilator. She's okay. She's back at work. That was one of my most horrible things not being able--

I would hug her anyway whether she is crying or not. That was horrible, but positives not from my perspective, but

from the perspective of my colleagues. It is not just disabled staff at my university. It is elsewhere.

Obviously, I have colleagues all over the place. The first thing, I obviously have to mention is about

spoon theory. Everybody that knows it is sitting there, now just like nodding. For those of you that don't

know about "spoon theory." It is about how much energy a lot of disabled folk have to use, just for day-to-day

steps. Quite often we run out of spoons at the end of the day, however, one of my lovely ambassador doors,

Becca has written a little Article by "spoon theory." It is the link is on the last slide. So--

Shame on you if you don't know about it. But if you want to know more about it we have put the link on the

last slide. There's also further links to look into it. But for a lot of my colleagues, the "spoon theory" is

underpinning all of this. No commuting. Many people, not just ordinary people hate commuting for a

variety of reasons. But for a lot of disabled folks, getting up, getting dressed, getting washed and then

getting dressed. Breakfast, getting to work, all of that can be absolutely exhausting. If people, I mostly drive.

I go on a train, if I have to go into London or somewhere else. Stuck in traffic, because sadly I have to go on

the near the M25 to get to my campuses. It is exhausting. Often, and if you're late because there's a traffic

accident, you get to work, you're grumpy. You're grumpy at the beginnings of the day. So, working

from home, you can get up half hand hour. Some maybe leave it a bit later than that to get up and actually do

work. I'm not saying a lot of people did this, but myself and my husband bought work pyjamas. We had pyjamas

for work

A lot of people know from talking to colleagues it.

Was really difficult getting this, when you're at work and when you're at home. When you're a staff member, and

when like you're a parent or wife or person, because there's no demarcation. There wasn't any of

that. So, what a lot of my colleagues did, I have a set my set closes for work. If I'm wearing them. I know in

my head, I'm at work. And what a lot of my colleagues did. They, even if they were at home, they work their

work land yards. They knew they were at work. So, work pyjamas were brilliant, because sadly, I don't

think there's many of us in our sector do it. A lot of people there is an expectation to wear smart clothes.

And smart clothes whether it is suits or blouses or whatever. They have zips. They've got buttons and other

stuff, which a lot of people, if they don't have that it can be exhausting. Not wearing a uniform is fantastic. A

lot of our neurodivergent colleagues somewhere on the autistic spectrum and the dyslexia have something called

hypersensitivity, which means things like light can be offensive. Noise can be offensive. Carpets--

People smelly people. Hopefully there's not too many, but things like that can be arduous for a lot of our

Neurodivergent colleagues. If you're at home wherever, you can control the lighting. Hopefully

control over the carpets and things like that. So your home situation it is a lot easier. I know a lot of

people--

A lot of people had naps because they could. I know people, not many people, because my lot are really work

focused. Who had mythical meetings in their calendars. Saying they were unavailable so, they could have a nap.

But what they did do is they started work earlier or they finished work late some they still did their hours,

but they took themselves off for a nap. Even if it wasn't just to sleep, decompress. Fantastic. I know that--

So, we have a disabled staff community. We're not a network, we're a community, because we're self-selected

it is very colleague at. We have Chairs and all that stuff, but everybody has a voice. Our member

ship has I think probably doubled, since the beginnings of the first lock down, because people have realised

that this is a supportive community. You know you don't put staff there and then get a phone call from your

Manager saying, what's this about?

It is not that sort of an environment. I don't know other institutions, but certainly here far, more of my

colleagues shared their disability with HR and their managers. Now, other people say declare or disclose

about disability. We in STAART we don't use that term. We say "share" it is autonomous decision to share

that. Obviously, it was on my HR records anyway. My line Manager know I live with depression. I live with fibromyalgia

and take lots of medication and work part-time. I cannot maintain and people know me know this. I cannot

maintain this excitable, noisy, passionate advocate five days a week so, I work three days a week. I think

where people do, I said earlier they have autonomy to be hybrid. I know overwhelming majority of my colleagues

who come under that disability umbrella that work in this sector, whether academics or professional services,

such as myself. This ability to continue doing the hybrid has been really, really good.

AMY: Definitely. I would absolutely agree with all that you said there. And so many interesting nuances to

think about. We've all learn so much about ourselves and each other, hasn't we, as well?

And that sharing and openness, and honesty around that, I think is amazing really. For what's ahead, I

just want to very, I'm looking at the clock. I can't believe where the time is going. I just want to ask quickly

ask Charlie about DSAs. You mention you access those in your second year. And how helpful was that, in

supporting your studies?

CHARLIE: So, I had--

I got the laptop given to me. I had a load of software downloaded on it like text to speech, speech-to-text

stuff. Then I had school mentor, and a regular mentor I'm not sure how you describe them. I think they were

definitely instrumental. Without a doubt the meeting I have in my study schoolteacher and mentor were amazing.

It was like something that was scheduled every week. Where I knew I would able to just have a conversation

with someone for an hour. Because it was one-on-one, even though it was over the laptop and still had barrier

of being on-line, it was just really nice to actually be able to just talk. Because even in my lectures and

seminars, we would just talked at. There's such a fear of contribution now. Because everything is on-line it

is almost everyone is just incentivised to stay on mute and listen, and not really contribute anything. It is

nice to be able to talk and feel like you're being listened to by someone one-on-one. That was definitely the

best part, I think.

AMY: Amazing. I think I'm going to move us on actually. Access to Work. This is another fund that is very

little known of that can really support people transitioning into the workplace or already in the workplace

and require a disable or health condition. It is available.

We have a fact sheet, which we'll share with the recording. It is a huge benefit that people should make the

most of. If we could just skip on to my last question. The one after this, not--

Sorry, we're going to go into aspirational thinking here. Where anything is possible. Magic wants at

the ready. Charlie, if you had a magic wand, what would you implement to make learning and working inclusive

accessible. You can focus on learning if you like, but talk about working as well, if you would like to.

CHARLIE: I would say just increasing authority of the disabled representatives at institutions. I've

talked loads about my disabled student officer. Her name is Janet. She's great. If she had a larger platform,

and she was given the opportunity to give lectures to all of students in a Welcome Week or something. To give

more visibility and more acknowledgement of the issues. I think that would be something that I

would want. It is easy and implementable.

AMY: That's huge, actually. It is often that the Disability Team don't have sufficient "teeth" to be able to

say, this shall not be done. This there is a lot of influencing and on. That's a case. I'm waiving a long

with you with my magic wand there, definitely. Now about you Melanie?

MELANIE: Following on from what Charlie said, I can testify that his disability coordinator is lovely,

because they stole her from the category University of Greenwich.

CHARLIE: No way.

MELANIE: Yeah, a particularly divine creature. I think it is about listening to your staff. Sadly, we are

working in this sector people love processes and procedures. A lot of our folk don't fit into it. So, I

think it is quite interesting. There's been quite a long text on National Network for Disabled Staff both

myself and Amy are on the list. It is about so much time and stuff is given to Chair, Sect, Executive Officers in

those networks. It does vary. I'm not going to name the institution, because I can't remember, but one of

the Chair for Disabled Staff Network has 18 days per academic year to concentrate on that.

AMY: Brilliant.

MELANIE: I think we need to give more, not just disability as well. If we could do this for our LGBTQ+, Black

and ethnic network, whatever the network, but I think with this--

Asking and Connecticut assaulting your disabled staff about disabled staff is the number one. Having a senior

champion. I think we have four or five networks here. Asking and consulting. All are directors or Professional

Services or ProVice Chancellor. That senior level as your champion and advocate should really, really help.

But always my thing that is go to. You need to look after yourself and look after your colleagues because that

with what Amy said before. There is more empathy. I've certainly seen it. As I said earlier, we've had so many

more members and staff share in the situations. I've been in a meeting or whatever. And the amount of people

that have said, I had no ideas. Some of them I have to be honest were a little put out that that I only just

been working with someone five or 10 years. They've been battling depression or living with fibromyalgia

and stuff like this. Continue to be kind and listening to your disabled staff.

AMY: One hundred%. And Annie has popped up like magic because the Q&A box is quite busy. And we have a few

minutes for some questions. Now, everyone, we will wrap-up what we isn't answered in a follow-up blog.

Annie, what have you selected for us?

ANNIE: Yeah, there's tons. I'm sure we won't get to answer all of them. I'll just kick off with there's a

question.

AMY: It is so brilliant guys. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed that chat.

ANNIE: So, there's a question from Melanie.

Q. How would you know if a colleague needed your help, if they didn't ask for it?

How would you approach them without offense?

MELANIE: I'm not really the right person to ask, because I'm really nosey and noisy. Apart from my many

hats, I'm also a mental health peer champion. I'm open about my own mental health struggles. And

colleagues can come to me unofficially, just for a chat. My office, this is my office. It is not a made up

screen. I've got bis scuts and wet wipes and things like that in my office. It is a safe space that my

colleagues know is a safe space. I think we've got these things, we introduced Buddy Ventures earlier

this year. They're like friendship benches but for grownup. A lot of primary schools have the benches they

have a bench and someone noisy might come up and say, do you want a biscuit?

We have these on all three of our campuses. They're specifically coloured. They have QR codes on them.

We encourage our students and staff to utilize this. You can basically, if you're having a bad day, go to the

bench, hopefully someone will come along having a better day. You can have a little bit of a chat. I would

say my emotional intelligence is higher. Than average because of the nature of my job. I hope I would be

able to pick up on that

I think if people feel that their colleagues would be in a better place if they understood what was going on

with you. My thing is always share it. There are instances lots of universities are going through

restructures and getting rid of staff willy-nilly. The chance of that happening because you have a shared

disability very, very small, compared to the benefits of telling your colleagues.

ANNIE: That's a fantastic idea about the benches. I will just try to squeeze in a couple of questions.

Just to mention, there's a question from Danny. Can we get the data and findings from the presentation?

Yeah, we will be sharing the presentation and all of the useful links on our webinar page that you'll

be sent after today on Thursday. So, a comment from Barry. Some students are asking to remain remote. But our

university is resistant to these requests. I just thought Charlie, maybe you have thoughts about what you

could empathise to this staff and the university people in charge about adjusting policy.

CHARLIE: Yeah, again because I was at quite an install institution it did feel quite easy to do those types of

things. Like make it accessible no matter where they are. I do empathise with the bigger university experience.

At the end of the day, I think it is convincing academics and just people who generally don't really know about

disabilities and how they affect people that there's some very easy interventions that can be done to make

people feel more comfortable, such as just making a class accessible on-line or even as a recording. I have

experienced some quite disruptive classes where the seminar leader didn't really know how to use how to

have a hybrid class. And someone from IT had to come and educate her on the spot about how to have Zoom, and have

a presentation given by someone else. It is just a time waste for everyone, as well. It is a time waste for the

students and the professors if they don't already have this knowledge. It is just simple as one training

session, you know.

ANNIE: Very good point. Final question, and we'll try to cover all of the remaining questions on our

webinar recording page, that you'll be sent on Thursday. Just a question from Henrietta. She said she would be

really interested in making assessment more accessible and flexible. I don't know if Amy, that might be something

you have some key points to mention about?

AMY: Well, assessment, it is again going back to that flexibility and choice thing really. And a lot of the

time looking backwards, disabled students have shared a disability and they've got approval for certain sorts

of adjustments. Actually, what that can sometimes do is stop people from taking risks and doing something.

That they're not always comfortable with doing. So having a range of assessment options available is

standard for everyone to be able to choose from. You might be able to say I'll write an essay or give a

presentation live or I'll provide a recorded presentation. It means that if someone has anxiety and is nervous

presenting live, they might take a risk and do that for one assignment, because they won't be scared about

having that sign off to not present live taken away in the future. I don't know Melanie, you're no ideaing.

Is that along the lines that you would think?

MELANIE: Yes, actually myself and some of my students. We did a little piece of research on this in 2019 on

alternative assessments. But hopefully what myself, and Amy can do is provide another webinar, such as this on

alternative assessments because there's so many out there. Which doesn't include, increase the workload

of my colleagues. But yeah, I'm happy to share that with AbilityNet on another webinar.

AMY: Sounds good.

ANNIE: Fantastic.

ANNIE: To wrap-up now so, thanks again, Melanie, Charlie, and Amy. Some excellent discussion points and

really great questions to ponder. Just to share some of upcoming accessibility and training inclusion

courses. First up we have can't inclusive on boarding and inducts. Then a very popular course PD F

accessibility on 27th of July then later on this summer. It is Inclusive Collaboration and teamwork on 3rd of

August. Then a focus session for HE F E professionals how to deliver and sustain accessible digital learning.

Good news you can say 10% on all of the training courses auction the discount code. You can book the courses at

AbilityNet.org.UK/training. Just to wrap-up, please do sign up for our newsletter, if you haven't already to

get the latest accessibility news. You can find out more about our work-place specific services including

training and gap analysis at workplace, and then we have a dedicated hire and further education services, which you

can reach. AbilityNet.org.UK webinars. So, thank you again. Melanie, Charlie, and Amy and everyone

who has joined us on this boiling day. We'll be in touch soon. Please do fill out the feedback form that will

appear. Bye everybody.

Thanks everyone. Bye. Bye.