

Disability & Neurodiversity at Work

Leigh R. Abbott

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Scottish Environment LINK



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment



Q1. What is Disability?



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment

What is disability?

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as...

A person has a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. 'Substantial' is defined by the Act as 'more than minor or trivial'.

An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if:

- it has lasted for at least 12 months,
- it is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
- it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person.



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment

Categories of disability (HESA)

- 14.1 million people in the UK are disabled
- 19% of working age adults are disabled
- 1 in 3 disabled people feel there's a lot of disability prejudice

[SCOPE- equality for disabled people](#)

00	No known disability
08	Two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions
51	A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D
53	A social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum condition
54	A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
55	A mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder
56	A physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches
57	Deaf or a serious hearing impairment
58	Blind or a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
96	A disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above
98	Information refused
99	Not available

Categories of disability (HESA)

- Circled are **some** of the conditions that fall under neurodivergence, there are many more!
- 1 in 5 people are neurodivergent

[ADHD Foundation- the Neurodiversity Charity](#)

00	No known disability
08	Two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions
51	A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D
53	A social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum condition
54	A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
55	A mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder
56	A physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches
57	Deaf or a serious hearing impairment
58	Blind or a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
96	A disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above
98	Information refused
99	Not available

What is Neurodiversity, Neurodivergent and Neurotypical?

Neurodiversity

- Is a recognition that not all brains think or feel in the same way, and that these differences are natural developmental variations.

Neurotypical

- Refers to individuals of more typical development and cognitive functioning.

Neurodivergent

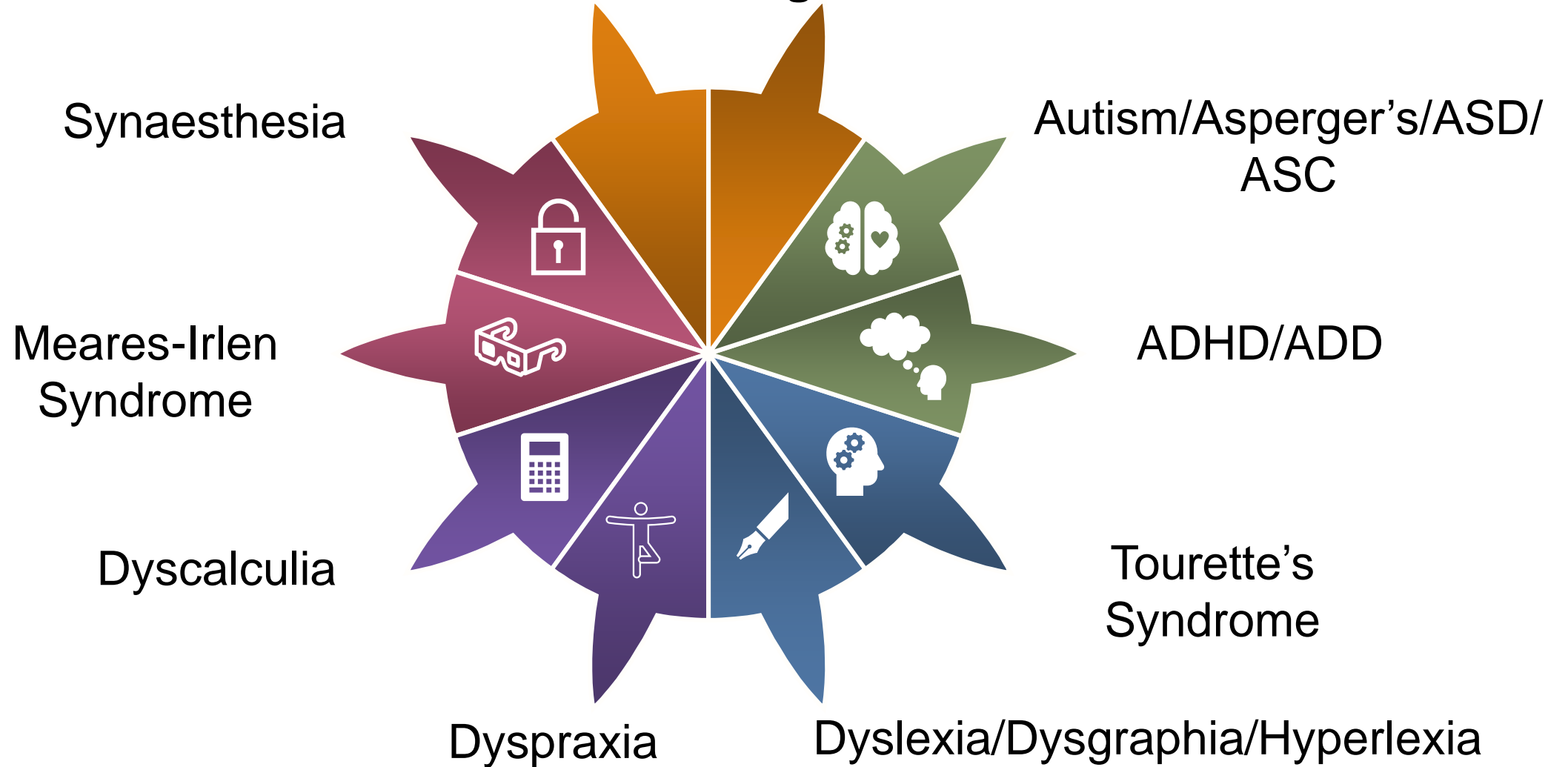
- Refers to an individual who has a less typical cognitive variation such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia etc.



Where does the term Neurodivergent derive from?

- The **self-identifying label** of “Neurodivergent” originally focused on those who are autistic. However, in more recent years it has been used to describe those who think, behave, learn, understand, or socialise differently to what is typical in society, and that being neurodivergent should not be considered an inherent deficit but simply a variation in cognition.
- Examples include...

Examples of labels/conditions that come under the term Neurodivergent



Please note that individuals can have two or more neurodivergent labels/conditions (e.g., autism and ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia etc.). This is called multiply neurodivergent.

Important Note to Add

- It is important to add that the HESA categories use the Medical Model of Disability, however, the most inclusive practice is to use the **Social Model of Disability**.
- The Social Model of Disability says that people are disabled by their **environment and from negative attitudes of others**, as opposed to being disabled by their condition. For example, a flight of stairs disables a person who is in a wheelchair, not the wheelchair or disability. Therefore, many people don't see their condition as an inherent disability/impairment, so **sensitivity with this terminology is vital**.

Important Note to Add

- In addition, some people do not consider themselves as disabled or neurodivergent, just different.
- Moreover, some may specify their condition rather than saying they are disabled e.g., “I am a deaf/hearing impaired person”, “I am an autistic person” etc.

Important Note to Add

- Please bear in mind that disabled and neurodivergent people exhibit their conditions in different ways based upon their upbringing, class, gender, race, and culture.
- Also, **some disabilities are hidden**. Although they are not visible, they are valid and should be taken into consideration in every aspect of working conditions.
- Therefore, it is good to keep an open mind for both awareness and inclusion purposes.



Q2. How do you think disability effects the disabled person from what has been mentioned?

Equity vs Equality



Equity

- **Reactive approach**
- **Equity** would be making tailored personalised adjustments for certain people in different environments.

Equality

- **Proactive approach**
- For example, accessible materials to read for all in advance, which would be referred to as providing **equality**.
- Both equality and equity methods are advised to use in a working environment to better accessibility, inclusion and acceptance of diversity.



Q3. What is Accessibility?





Accessibility is “the quality or characteristic of something that makes it **possible** to approach, enter, or use it”.

If we are taking this into a work context, this means making sure that all staff experiences are as equitable as possible- **this does not mean giving another person an advantage.**

It is important that we not only consider how work materials (including learning materials), emails, meetings, recordings are accessible to all, **but also how to make interactions accessible to all i.e., inclusive of diversity and neurodiversity.**



Many people will not have a diagnosis (or even know they are disabled or neurodivergent).

This is why making things as accessible as possible enhances equity and inclusivity.



Q4. What have you done to make things accessible at work?



Aims & Ambitions

- Base line accessibility for most people, so those who are disabled do not feel uncomfortable when needing to request something from you. This will make the disabled employee more comfortable and accepted.

How to?

- If someone needs a carer/assistive person/dog/equipment, allow it (e.g., a blind person possibly needing an assistive dog, a deaf person needing for you to not wear a mask so that they can lip-read or having an interpreter sign for them during in person meeting etc).
- Be clear in your aims and structure for people to follow- this will benefit everyone!



Aims & Ambitions

- Base line accessibility for most people, so those who are disabled do not feel uncomfortable when needing to request something from you. This will make the disabled employee more comfortable and accepted.

How to?

- Quickly put...
- Structure the meeting and put in breaks for questions;
- Allow an automatic transcript of your meeting;
- Allow cameras to be switched off;
- And ensure links to the meetings are easy to find in the emails.



Aims & Ambitions

- For staff (and members) to access your content with ease, including your Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policies.

How to?

- Quickly put...
- Is your EDI policy easy to find on your website?
- Think about your colour and contrast, is it easy to read?
- The readability of your content, is it in simple English and short sentences so that it is easy to read?
- Is it easy to navigate?
- Do your images have alt text?
- Do you have accessibility functions (font enhancer, font written in sans-serif)?



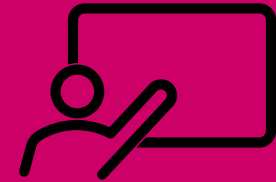
**Accessible
website**

Aims & Ambitions

- For your current and future employees to know that all staff are protected under a disability confident scheme and for disabled staff to know that the employer understand disability.

How to?

- You can ask to be a Disability Confident employer. If this is not possible for you, you can gain similar training, or online training from several charities (e.g., [Do-IT Profiler](#) etc.)



Disability Training

Aims & Ambitions

- To gain information on how to be more inclusive and accessible to disabled people.

How to?

- Create an accessible survey (Microsoft forms is the best), send it out to your previous and current staff and reflect on their feedback.
- Create an Equality Impact Assessment and Diversity Action Plan.



Aims & Ambitions

- Aim to have a clear structure of where to get support for staff within the charity and clearly signpost this support.

How to?

- During induction, provide staff with guidance on where to find support.
- Place your EDI strategy and policies clearly on your ShareDrive / website for staff to access.
- Consider creating EDI steering groups and committees, if possible.
- In terms of recruitment and interviewing, review your procedures and see if you are being inclusive. If you would like guidance on this, please follow [Accessible Interviewing](#).



Remember to self-care!

- Pace yourself with the above information, and do not overwhelm yourself with it- it is a lot to take in!
- Harness strength within yourself to gain clarity, courage, and care to help not only yourself but others too.

How to?

- Use your own tools on what you like to do for self-care.
- You can also...
- Build positive self-talk;
- Remind yourself of what you've achieved;
- And implement positive change in your future.





**Any
Questions?**

The voice for Scotland's environment



Further Information

- Leigh Abbott's Contact Details: leigh@scotlink.org
- LinkedIn Profile: [Leigh R. Abbott](#)

The voice for Scotland's environment

Please complete Q5. onwards

- **Please continue to Q5 onwards to complete an evaluation on today's workshop.**



Thank You!



Scottish
Environment
LINK

Disability & Neurodiversity at Work

Leigh R. Abbott

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Scottish Environment LINK



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment

Things to think about

Enhancing inclusivity by supporting and working with disabled and neurodivergent staff



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment

Some disabled and neurodivergent people...

- Focus better with a background task to calm their mind.
- Find working in groups actively detrimental to their learning.
- Might understand things differently to what you intended.
- May not comply with expected social conventions.
- Engage with learning very obviously (or not obviously at all).

Some disabled and neurodivergent people...

- Can have bursts of energy and then go quiet.
- May need downtime after spending a lot of energy on zoom/in meetings.
- Are better at/request written communication than spoken communication.
- Can multi-task and some can only concentrate on one task at a time.
- Find it hard to process large chunks of text and/or mathematical information.
- Will need assistive technology to undertake their job.

Harnessing strengths in others

Observe

Observe your own reactions to others and reflect on your impact.

Impact

Ask yourself "What else could be happening here? Is there another way of seeing this? What can I do to understand this way of behaving/communicating?".

Harness

Harness the ambition that exists in others: this will activate positive change. Moreover, try to make things accessible.

Allowing different mannerisms and communication styles

- Allow people to conserve energy.
- Allow fidget spinners and/or people to multitask in and out of meetings.
- Allow incomplete thoughts.
- Allow cameras to be switched off for comfort.
- Asking the person or group of people's communication preference.
- Hand out slides/meeting notes/agendas in advance of the meeting- [SCULPT](#)
- Announce your adjustments.

BUT, MOST IMPORTANTLY...



If a person requires reasonable adjustments...

Actively listen.

Empathise.

Accept.

Apply.



Keep in mind that it is a **learning process.**

As long as you are **actively trying to be inclusive, you're on the right track to promoting neurodiversity and disability inclusive practices!**



Scottish
Environment
LINK

The voice for Scotland's environment



Further Information

- Leigh Abbott's Contact Details: leigh@scotlink.org
- LinkedIn Profile: [Leigh R. Abbott](#)

The voice for Scotland's environment

Thank You!



Scottish
Environment
LINK

Transcript of the talk

Hello, my name's Leigh Abbott and I'm the equality, diversity and inclusion officer at Scottish Environment Link, and today I'll be providing a workshop on disability and neurodiversity at work.

So, I just want to begin by asking, what do you think disability is? So, I've put a QR code that I would like you to scan from your mobile device. If you're unable to do so, there's also the Microsoft Forms questionnaire link. Please click on that. Put in what you think disability is, any key terms or phrases you associate to disability, and then I'll go through what those are. Please also pause this video and then once you've finished the question, unpause, and we can work through it together.

Attached you can see the international symbol of disability, which is a wheelchair sign. This is most commonly recognised symbol for disability and is mostly associated to a disability.

But what actually is disability? Disability from the Equality Act 2010 defines it as a person who has a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long term effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. And substantial is defined by the act as more than minor or trivial. An impairment is considered to have a long term effect if it's lasted for at least 12 months, is likely to last for 12 months, or is likely to last for the rest of the person's life.

So, the international sign of disability i.e. the wheelchair user, is considered a disability, but also there are many more.

There's a wide spectrum of disabilities. Outlined in this slide is the international sign of disability i.e., the wheelchair user. We have a picture of a brain to symbolise neurological differences. There's also a hand symbol to symbolise deaf people, and there's also a person with a mobility aid to assign people who might have mobility issues. However, these signs still don't encompass the broad spectrum of disability.

Here are some of the categories of disability. This is outlined by the Higher Education Statistical Agency, and it just gives a bit more of depth to what disability could encompass. So, to the side, sorry, my face is blocking some of it! But to the side we have a social communication impairments such as autism; specific in difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, or ADHD; long standing illnesses such as HIV, cancer, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy; mental health conditions actually come under disability and a lot of people sometimes don't realise that. So, depression, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder, etcetera. A physical impairment or mobility issues such as difficulty using your arms or having to use a wheelchair or crutches. Deaf or serious hearing impairment; blind or serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses; and there are multiple and multiple more disabilities. And I think it's important to note that 14.1 million people in the UK are disabled,

19% of those are working age adults, and one in three people who are disabled feel that there is a disability prejudice.

Here I have outlined and circled a couple of categories of disabilities that that would come under neurodivergent. So, first one is specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD. And then the second one is a social communication impairment, such as autism. However, there are multiple ones. Just to give context, these are a couple that are on the HESA categories of disability. And it's important to note that one in five people are neurodivergent, including myself.

So, you've heard me say different terminologies around neurodiversity, so I thought I'd just give a bit of time to explain these. So, neurodiversity is the recognition that not all brains, think or feel in the same way, and that these differences are just a natural development in variations. But, I think more simply than this, it just means that people's brains are different. That's fine, and that's to be celebrated. And then neurotypical refers to someone or group of people who have more typical development and cognitive functioning, and neurodivergent refers to individual or individuals who have less typical variation, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, etcetera.

So, where does the term neurodivergent come from? Apologies that my face has taken up the corner away the script is, but I'll describe it to you. So, the self-identifying label of Neurodivergent originally came from people autistic and it was coined by Judy Singer in the early 90s. However, in more recent terms it's been used to describe people who think, behave, learn, understand, or socialise different to what is typical in our society. And that being neurodivergence isn't a deficit, but it's just a variation in cognition. And examples of these include.

So, examples that come under the Neurodivergent umbrella are autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Meares-Irlen Syndrome, synaesthesia. And there are many more because it's a self-identifying label, anyone who considers their brain to operate in a different way to what is typical in society can come under that, including mental health conditions, which have been discussed and incorporated more recently. I think it's important to note that individuals may have two or more neurodivergent conditions, such as autism and ADHD, dyspraxia and dyslexia, ADHD and dyslexia, etcetera. And this is called multiply neurodivergent.

A couple more important notes to add is that the HESA categories of disability use the medical model of disability. But, to have more of an inclusive practise in your workplace is to use the social model of disability. And simply put, the social model of disability says that people are disabled by their environment and negative attitudes from others as opposed to being disabled by their condition. For example, it's the flight of stairs that disables a person who is in a wheelchair, not the wheelchair or the disability, because there hasn't been another method put in place for that person to be included. So, some people might not see their condition as an inherent disability or impairment, so being sensitive around terminology is quite important and vital.

In addition to this, some people might not consider themselves disabled or neurodivergent, just that they are they different or they might have different barriers they need to overcome, and some people might specify their condition as opposed to saying “I’m disabled” or “I’m neurodivergent”. For example, someone might say I’m a deaf or hearing impaired person, I’m an autistic person, etcetera.

In terms of intersectionality of disability, it's important to bear in mind that disabled people and neurodivergent people will exhibit their conditions in different ways based on their upbringing, their social class, their gender, their race, and also their current or previous culture. And I think it's important to also know there's some disabilities are hidden, and even though they're not visible, they are still valid and should be taken into consideration in every working condition. So, it's important to keep these in mind for awareness and inclusion purposes.

So, now back to you. I've talked about different terminologies and differences of disability. Now, I want to ask you, how do you think disability affects the disabled person from what has been mentioned? So, I'd like you to fill in this questionnaire, Question 2, reflect upon it, and next we will talk about equity and equality.

Equity. Equity is a reactive approach and equity in terms of disability would be making tailored, personalised adjustments for certain people in different environments. Whereas...

Equality is a proactive approach, so for example making materials accessible to read for everyone in advance, which would be referred to as providing equality. So, both equality and equity methods are advised to use in a working environment to better accessibility, inclusion, and acceptance of diversity.

So, now I want to put it back to you again in answering Question 3 on what do you think accessibility is? So, this could be providing examples or just define what the terminology is and we will go through accessibility in the next slides.

Accessibility is the quality or characteristic of something that makes it possible to approach, enter, or use it. And if we're taking this into a work context, this means making sure that all staff experiences are as equitable as possible. This doesn't mean given another person an advantage, it just means that we're making their equitable so that the person can undertake their job. So, it's important that we not only consider how work materials, emails, meetings, recordings are accessible to all, but also how we make interactions accessible, so being inclusive of diversity and neurodiversity.

Many people will not have a diagnosis or even know that they are disabled or neurodivergent just that they keep on facing these barriers continuously, having to go through hoops and just always feeling like they're on an upward gradient. And that's why it's important to make these things accessible in the first instance, so that is inclusive of everyone and provides not only equity but equality.

So now back to you. What have you done to make things accessible at work? This could be having accessible toilets, or have an accessibility for wheelchair users to come into your office, such as providing ramps, or providing work materials in advance, et cetera, et cetera. So, reflect on what you think you've done at work and put into question four. And then in the next upcoming slides, I'm going to provide different hints and tips that you can do inside your own office with your employees, but also to different volunteers and beneficiaries that might be engaging with your website and your charity sector.

Here are some hints and tips that you can implement in your own workplace. So, we'll start off with in-person communication and how to make that more accessible. So, that aims and ambitions surrounding this is to have baseline accessibility for most people so that those who are disabled do not feel uncomfortable when needing to request something from you. And this would also make the disabled employee more comfortable and accepted. So how to do that? It is by allowing different reasonable adjustments. So, for example, if someone needs a carer, assistive person, dog, equipment, to allow that. For example, this could be a blind person possibly needing an assistive dog, deaf person possibly needing for you to remove your masks so there they can lip read, or have an interpreter signed for them for any in-person communication. And I think it's also important to have clear aims and structure for people to follow, and this would benefit everyone involved.

We've spoken about in-person communication how to make that accessible. Now we're gonna talk about online communication and how to make that accessible too. So, the aims and ambitions are the exact same as the in-person communication, so, I'll just jump ahead to the 'how to' section. So, quickly put, it would be to structure your meetings and put breaks in for questions and pause for thought; allow automatic transcript of your meetings; to allow cameras to be switched off for comfort; and to ensure that links to meetings are easy to find in your emails.

And now we can think about accessibility of your main domain page or website of your charity. So, the aims and ambitions for this is for staff and members, volunteers, beneficiaries, to access your content with ease, including your equality, diversity and inclusion policies. And quickly put how to do this, is to ask yourself, is your EDI policy easy to find on your website, or do you have to go through loads and loads of links to try and find it? Have you thought about your colour and contrast? Is it easy to read? The readability of your content: is there in simple English and short sentences so that it's easy to read? Is your website easy to navigate? Do your images have alt text on them? And do you have accessibility functions, such as a font enhancer or font written in sans serif? So, these are all things that you can think about in terms of your website and content creation.

Another thing to think about is disability training for yourself and also your staff members. So, the aims and ambitions would be for your current and future employees to know that all staff are protected under a disability confidence scheme, and for disabled staff to know that their employer understands disability. So how to do this, is you can ask to be a disability confident employer. If this isn't possible for you for any funding reasons or time constraints,

you can also do similar training, such as you are taking part today in, or online training from certain charities such as Do it Profiler, Enable Scotland. There are several charities that you can go to and undertake training from them.

Another thing to think about is feedback from your staff or volunteers and the aims and ambitions of this is to gain information on how to be more inclusive and accessible to and for disabled people. So, how you can do this is using an accessible questionnaire such as Microsoft forms. If you have Office 365 or 360 this will be inbuilt into that. So very easy to navigate and to use, and you can send this to your previous and your current staff or volunteers and then reflect on what it is that they have said in terms of inclusivity and disability inclusivity. You can also create an equality impact assessment and a diversity action plan. If you need any help with this, this is what my role is, and I can provide assistance and would be happy to provide assistance on both of those.

A really important one to log and make note of is support, and the aims and ambitions for this is to have a clear structure of where to get support for staff within the charity and to clearly signpost this support. So, how you can do that is do an induction, provide staff with guidance and where to find support, and as mentioned previously, place your EDI strategy and policies clearly on your ShareDrive or on your website for staff to access. Think about considering creating an EDI steering group or committee if that is possible for you, or just to have a meeting every so often to discuss different EDI issues or successes that you've had in your charity. And then in terms of recruitment and interviewing, review your procedures and see if it is inclusive and if you'd like guidance on this, I did create an accessible interviewing document that's been used by the University of Glasgow and Jumar Solutions, so please feel free to use that within your own recruitment policies and procedures.

I do realise that's a lot of information to take in all at once, so please pace yourself with the above information and try not to get overwhelmed by it. And you can do it through practising different self-care. I'd also recommend harnessing strengths within yourself because this will help you gain clarity, courage, and care to not only help yourself, but to help other people too. And the way you can do this just by practising whatever you usually use for self-care. And also you can build positive self-talk, remind yourself of what you have achieved, and implement positive change in your future by doing some of the hints and tips as provided in the workshop today.

Here are my contact details. So, it is leigh@scotlink.org. If you ever need to contact me in reference to anything I've mentioned today. You can also contact me on LinkedIn and my profile is Leigh R. Abbott.

Please complete from question 5 onwards on the Microsoft Forms. So, this is the exact same Microsoft Forms questionnaire that you were filling in, if you could complete from Question 5 onwards. Anything you thought that was missing from this workshop; anything you particularly enjoyed; anything that you think you're going to implement within your own workplace. It would be great to have your feedback.

Thank you for attending this workshop and I hope it was still interactive for you even though it wasn't an online zoom meeting or that it wasn't in person. But, I hope you still found it interactive and that the contents were engaging for you. If you want to have a chat to me at anytime about what I've discussed in this workshop or anything in terms of disability inclusion within your own charity or at Scottish Environment LINK, please get in touch. Thank you very much.