



University Challenge 2013

The *Trailblazers'* Higher Education report

Report 13 of the *Inclusion Now* Series, October 2013

Muscular
Dystrophy
Campaign



Trailblazers
Young Campaigners' Network

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This report has been researched and compiled by *Trailblazers* ambassadors:

Hannah-Lou Blackall – East of England
Paul Peterson – East of England

Jon Hollowell – East Midlands
Nirav Shah – East Midlands
Mathy Selvakumaran – East Midlands

Luke Baily – London
Nicky Baker – London
Krishna Talsania – London
Matilda Ibini – London
Elora Kadir – London
Sulaiman Khan – London
Kushal Pandya – London
Rupert Prokofiev – London
Maddy Rees – London
Rikin Shah – London
Mindi Virdee – London
Tanvi Vyas – London

Carolyn Bean – North East
Jennifer Gallacher – North East
Cath McNicol – North East
Sam Smith – North East

Catherine Alexander – North West
Miro Griffiths – North West
Rupy Kaur – North West
Carrie-Ann Lightley – North West

Valerie Klin-Barefoot – South East
Joshua Langley – South East
Laura Merry – South East
Mike Moorwood – South East
Matthew Naismith – South East
Dean Yorke – South East

Sarah Croft – South West
Samuel Dunlop – South West
Zoe Hallam – South West
Steve Ledbrook – South West
Fleur Perry – South West

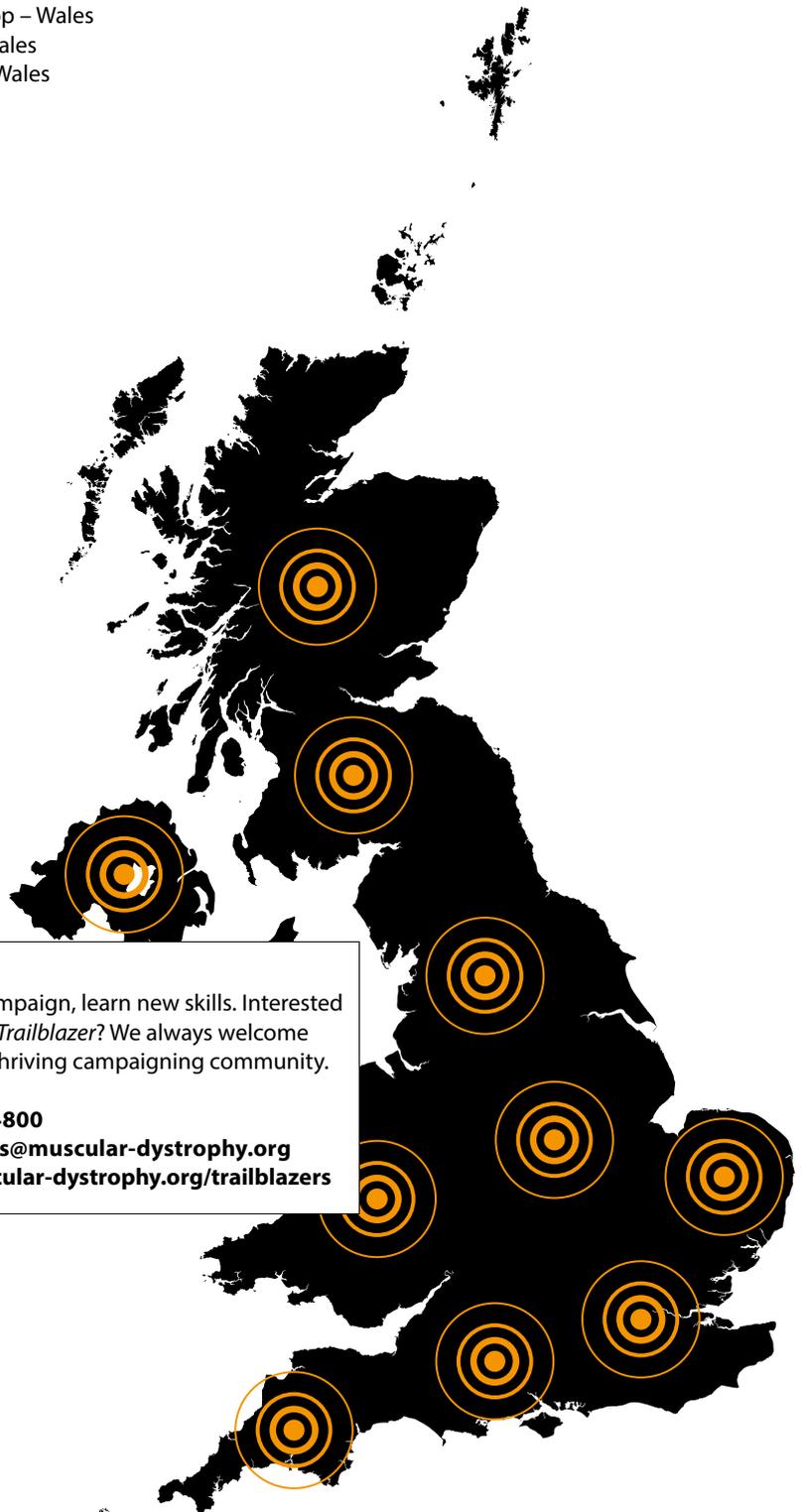
Harriet Butler – West Midlands
Jagdeep Sehmbi – West Midlands

Gavin Dobson – Yorkshire and Humber
Tmara Senior – Yorkshire and Humber
Rebecca Unsworth – Yorkshire and Humber

Suzanne Glover – Northern Ireland
Michaela Hollywood – Northern Ireland

Hayleigh Barclay – Scotland
Catherine Gillies – Scotland
Niall Gillies – Scotland
Lauramechelle Stewart – Scotland

Jonathan Bishop – Wales
Ross Taylor – Wales
Lauren West – Wales



Get involved

Take action, campaign, learn new skills. Interested in becoming a *Trailblazer*? We always welcome people to our thriving campaigning community.

t: 020 7803 4800

e: trailblazers@muscular-dystrophy.org

w: www.muscular-dystrophy.org/trailblazers

About Trailblazers

Trailblazers is a group of disabled campaigners from across the UK who tackle the social issues affecting young disabled people, such as access to higher education, employment, and social and leisure opportunities. We aim to fight these social injustices experienced by young disabled people and to ensure they can gain access to the services they require. We are part of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.

About the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign is the leading UK charity fighting muscle-wasting conditions. We are dedicated to beating muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions by finding treatments and cures and to improving the lives of everyone affected by them.

Our work has five main focuses:

- we fund world-class research to find effective treatments and cures
- we provide practical information, advice and emotional support for individuals with muscle-wasting conditions, their carers and families
- we campaign to bring about change and raise awareness of muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions
- we award grants towards the cost of specialist equipment, such as powered wheelchairs
- we provide specialist education and development for health professionals.

Thank you for your support

“My local council had never sent a disabled person away to university before. They were quite insistent that I should stay and study at my local university (ranked 119th as opposed to Oxford, ranked first) and do a course that I had absolutely no interest in. My decision to move away was treated with complete bewilderment; there was no understanding of how my care package would be accommodated, and the idea that agency care was more expensive in the new local authority caused real problems when negotiating my Direct Payments.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University



Introduction

Since the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act in 2005, it has been illegal for education providers to treat disabled students less favourably because of their disability.

In August 2009 *Trailblazers* published *University Challenge*, a report highlighting challenges related to accessing higher education. Now, four years on, we wanted to investigate how access has improved or changed and consider how disabled students tackle new and existing challenges.

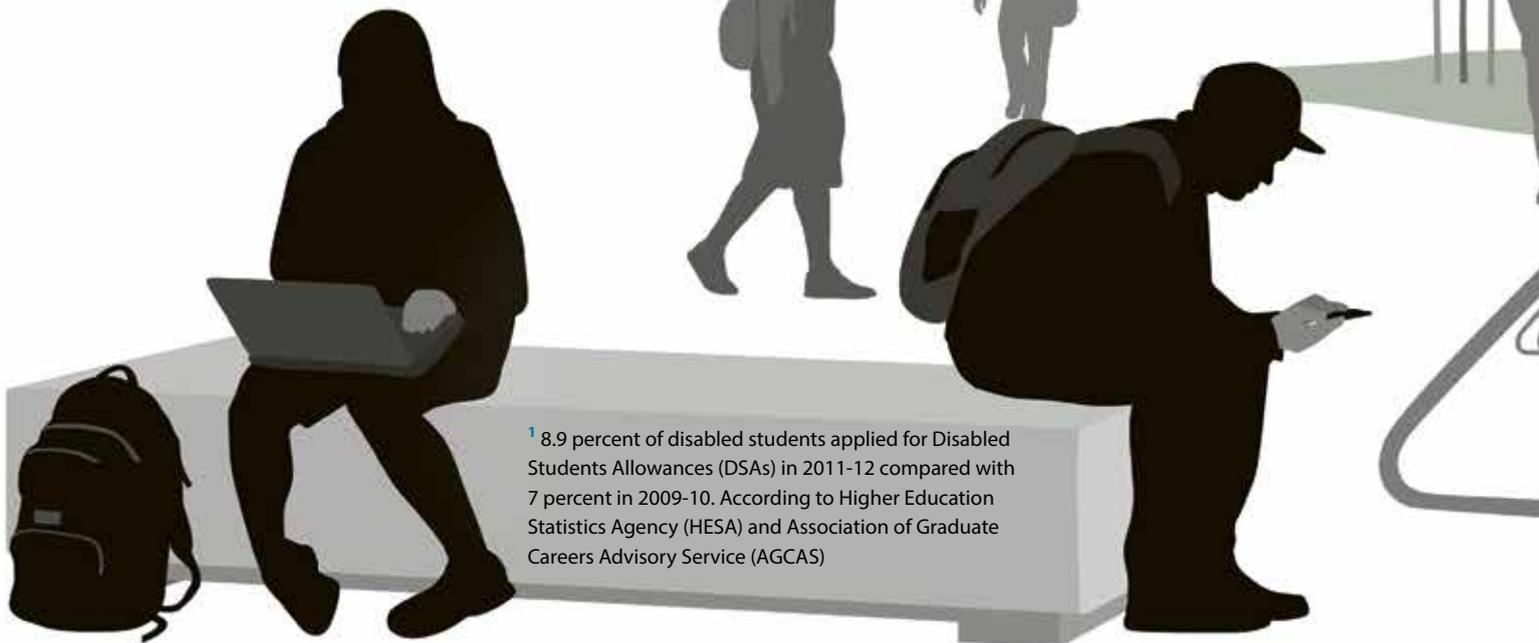
Although there has been a recent increase in the number of disabled students entering higher education¹, *Trailblazers* have continued to hear about challenges that still remain unaddressed when planning to study and remain in higher education.

Trailblazers interviewed university representatives and surveyed university websites for this report. Recent graduates completed our surveys, shared their own experiences and provided advice and tips to help future students and young disabled people considering going to university in the future.

Key findings from our survey and the university matrix:

- sixty percent said there was not enough information for disabled students on university websites regarding accommodation
- thirty percent felt limited in where they could choose to study owing to concerns over their care packages
- three out of four said organising care from their local authority was NOT straightforward to organise
- ninety percent said their disability advisors were helpful
- ninety percent said their university made adjustments to improve access to lectures
- thirty percent said their student unions were not in an accessible and inclusive environment
- eighty percent said their university careers service did not offer support specifically for disabled students
- seventy percent could not access a disabled students society on campus
- thirty percent said their graduation ceremony was in an inaccessible or non-inclusive setting
- over half said they would feel disadvantaged going through clearing
- just over half have full access to all university teaching rooms, study rooms and libraries
- only one third are not affected by listed building status that would delay installation of adaptations
- only 20 percent have suitably adapted toilets with hoists in university buildings
- just one quarter have a freshers' induction for disabled students
- one-third have a society representing disabled students in the student union.

¹ 8.9 percent of disabled students applied for Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) in 2011-12 compared with 7 percent in 2009-10. According to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service (AGCAS)



Action needed

We are calling on the Government, local authorities and universities and colleges to:

- recognise the additional care and support disabled students will need when living independently and make the process clear, consistent and straightforward
- ensure graduation ceremonies are completely inclusive and accessible for all students
- provide additional support and information for disabled students going on work placements and internships
- guarantee that appropriate adjustments will be made so that disabled students can access accommodation, lectures and seminars
- consider access to student union facilities so the experience is as inclusive and accessible as for non-disabled students
- ensure that accessibility is at the heart of the design process for future buildings, and to consult with disabled students and organisations like *Trailblazers* to ensure it is so
- guarantee appropriate accommodation for disabled students and their personal assistants and address inequalities in paying for carers' rooms
- improve content, quality and accessibility of information for disabled students on university websites.

“Disabled rooms were ‘available’ to view by appointment, but didn’t necessarily mean that they were available to rent - I was not provided with an accessible room, despite giving access needs as written by an occupational therapist, I was provided with a room on the third floor of the building with no lift.”

Mathy Selvakumaran studies at the University of Sheffield





Choosing a course and university

Trailblazers recommend choosing a university based on what you think is the best course for you. Don't be put off by people saying you can't do a course because of disability. Most subjects can be studied by anyone if you have the qualifications, skills and dedication. Therefore, extensive research into potential courses is key to a happy university experience. Get yourself well acquainted with UCAS (the University and Colleges Admissions Service)², the university websites and prospectuses.

As well as enjoying the course you're going to study, you'll want to be at a university that makes you feel at home. We recommend visiting as many of the universities that you have short-listed as possible.

When choosing a university it's best to start your research as early as you can. Some *Trailblazers* have started their hunt for the right university up to two years before starting their course. The sooner you know what you want to do, the more time you have to get a proper understanding of the facilities at your top choices.

Some universities are built on one campus with accommodation, lecture theatres and leisure facilities all in one place while others have buildings scattered around a town or city. It is worth deciding sooner rather than later what suits you best as this will help you to narrow down the choice available.

If you don't have time to visit all the universities you are seriously considering, you can always visit the universities' websites. Each site should have information on the support services available, including disability services. Some websites may also provide campus and buildings access maps, as well as giving you a good idea of the location of the university in relation to the nearest town or city.

“I visited three universities after narrowing down my choices by looking at the course info online and seeing how far away from home it was - I didn't want to be more than two hours away from home in case I had any problems. At each university visit, I met with the disability advisor, viewed accommodation and teaching spaces and met with lecturers of my chosen course. My main criteria for choosing my university were course content and quality, suitability of the accommodation for my needs and the general accessibility of university spaces, campus and surrounding area.”

Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University

Trailblazers' top tips on choosing a university:

- select the right course for you
- start looking one to two years in advance
- visit as many of your choices as you can
- call the university's disability support team and ask questions.

“I read online reviews, student reviews and looked through the university websites to see how well the course and the structure of the university matched my academic and physical needs.”

Krishna Talsania studied at the University of West London

“I started researching universities about a year before most of my peers. There weren't many that offered the course I wanted to do so I started with a fairly small pool and made arrangements to visit five of them over the summer of Year 12. I liaised with disability officers from each university to draw up an itinerary for my visit – I would have gone to open days but I didn't feel confident that I would have full access to the facilities I particularly wanted to check out, or the one-on-one consultation which would give me peace of mind. I made several trips to Oxford to visit a dozen or so colleges as those were particularly difficult in terms of access due to the age of the university. It was only after I'd made all these trips up and down the country that I was satisfied that the university I selected would be able to cater for my needs.”

Zoë Hallam studied Oxford University

“I wanted something local. I finished my masters in Norwich in 2009. I had looked at the same university for my undergraduate course in 2006 however at the time access was bad, so I went elsewhere. It had improved by the time I studied my masters.”

Gemma Orton studied at The Norwich University of Arts

“I went to a small campus in another town not the main town; there was very little information about accommodation for this campus.”

Sarah Croft studied at the University of Plymouth

“It would be good to have a cross-university standardised checklist of different services available to disabled students and what is and isn't accessible on campus and nearby so that prospective students can quickly and easily check that the university will meet their needs, and compare different universities.”

Fleur Perry is studying at the Open University

“There was no information to suggest that it would be necessary to go over a footbridge in order to get to where my evening meal was being served (I was part-catered). There was also no information to suggest that the actual residences' office and place for collecting post was inaccessible.”

Elora Kadir studied at Cardiff University

“A lot of research was carried out by my sister who was in the UK at the time. I did my A levels in Kenya and only had access to information on the websites and prospectuses of the universities. I decided to apply to campus based universities.”

Nirav Shah studied at Loughborough University

“If I had known about the support available in renting accommodation and the possibilities in care support, I would have lived away from home.”

Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University

“While a lot of universities had specific details about the room itself, the building and common facilities (kitchen etc.) were often not discussed in detail. For me this is just as important as a wheelchair accessible bedroom.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

“I first identified what course I wanted to study at university. Thereafter I compiled a list of universities that offered the course. From here I thought about which cities I would be happy to live in. That left me with around eight universities to choose from. Thereafter it is important to look at each university's ranking as an institution itself and also how your chosen subject ranks (although generally I find the ranking system full of flaws). Thereafter it is important to visit the universities you have shortlisted to see if they offer appropriate facilities for you to study. In general most universities have modernised considerably so hopefully there are a number of appropriate resources available no matter which one is chosen.”

Kushal Pandaya studied at the University of Manchester



² www.ucas.com

Access at university

Under the Equality Act, universities and colleges must make reasonable changes to their premises to make them more user-friendly for disabled students. Campuses have to ensure that lecture halls, student unions, libraries, ICT suites and halls of residence are more accessible. This includes altering steps, providing lifts, dropping kerbs, and making sure better lighting and clear signage are provided where reasonable. A failure to do so could result in disabled students taking legal action.

To make sure you can access all your lecture theatres or seminar rooms, see if you can get hold of your timetable at the earliest possible opportunity. You should also make sure your subject faculty knows you are a student in their department so they can put a face to a name and ensure your classes are scheduled to take place in an accessible room.

If this sounds like a lot of responsibility and trouble, don't panic, you're not alone and every university should have a disability advisor or support unit to help liaise with the academic and accommodation departments whenever accessibility is an issue. Seek them out, and it might be worth writing a list of all the things that concern or interest you regarding accessibility, when you visit the university on an open day. This way you'll remember all the points you want to discuss when you meet an advisor.

The access and information organisation *Disabled Go* has carried out access audits at one in three of all universities in the United Kingdom. Their detailed surveys should provide all the information you need to know about the facilities and support for disabled students at a university. Reading this report, visiting the university, meeting the disability support services team and reviewing the Disabled Go access survey online should give you a good feel for the university.

Trailblazers' top tips on physical access at university:

- have a good look around your chosen university and make a list of concerns
- get hold of your study timetable as soon as you can
- work with the disability advice team to iron out problems
- visit DisabledGo.com and read through the results of their audits and surveys.

“The university is setting an area up in the classroom for me and they have offered to video lectures for me if I can't make it to them.”

[Kate will be studying at the University of Winchester in 2013](#)

“Most of my lecture rooms were OK. One was a complete nightmare, where it was cinema style seating and I had nowhere to sit but right at the front, level with the lecturer's podium and without a desk. Luckily, this particular lecturer was very proactive (and disabled herself) and got it changed.”

[Lauren West graduated from Manchester University and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University](#)

“I asked if my lectures could be located close to one another. They also made sure all staff I came into contact with were aware of my situation and encouraged my tutor to meet with me regularly.”

[Jilly Green studied at the University of Southampton](#)

“The lecture theatres were not always accessible but the teachers were more than willing to let me swap around classes so that I could get from one place to another on time, and gave me extra support outside of lectures/classes, etc.”

[Mathy Selvakumaran studies at the University of Sheffield](#)

“The university refused to update fire doors so that I could make my way through the buildings. I would have still gone to Surrey as I was very privileged to gain a place there; I also feel that by having a disabled student on campus it may have paved the way for subsequent disabled students. My experience would have been improved by Social Services agreeing the care I was entitled to by law, at the start. My experience would have also been improved if the term 'reasonable adjustment' had been defined with regard to university adjustments.”

[Valerie Kiln-Barfoot studied at the University of Surrey](#)

“I had some classes in inaccessible rooms, as in the only route to get there was by climbing stairs. However, those lectures were later changed as soon as I or my lecturers made them aware that I couldn't get there. Also, lectures that required me to move from campus to campus were later changed so that all my lectures were on the same campus.”

[Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University](#)

“Nothing was changed and I wasn't asked if I needed anything to be changed so I didn't know that adjustments were an option.”

[Elora Kadir studied at Cardiff University](#)

“All the lectures are held in accessible locations. However, trying to find this information could be quite difficult. As I attend evening and weekend lectures, this sometimes means that the accessible toilets have been locked.”

[Nicky Baker is studying at the Open University](#)



Accommodation

If you intend to stay in university accommodation, you will want to look into the range and size of the rooms available.

The majority of universities already have plenty of accessible accommodation and will help you design a room that caters to all your needs. If you need a desk fitted, a hoist installed or an application that opens the door for you, the university will be able to provide it and the disability advice teams and university staff will do all they can to make sure it works properly.

Other things you might want to consider include the availability of additional rooms for personal assistants, the adaptation of kitchen and communal rooms and whether the halls are used by both disabled and non-disabled students. These are all things you should ask a member of a disability advice team about early on so the university can make sure the facilities are all available for you from day one.

Once you have your new room, you may want to stay there throughout your time at the university, so it's important to find out if this is an option for you. Most non-disabled students will move into private rented accommodation after their first academic year and if you intend to stay in university accommodation you have other plans, you will need to inform the university as soon as you can.

Many people decide that there is no need to move halfway across the country to study at university when they would be just as happy at their local college or university. The convenience of being able to stay at home, together with the increased cost of studying and living away from home, has meant that more people have chosen to study near home.

For those who seek a new adventure and see independent living as a major part of the university experience, living on campus and with your friends can be very attractive. Lots of *Trailblazers* have moved away from home to live and study at the universities that they want to and have had fantastic experiences.

Trailblazers' top tips on accommodation:

- **decide if you would rather stay at home, on campus or off-campus**
- **make a list of all the equipment you will need in your room, kitchen and communal areas and make sure you let the accommodation and disability teams know**
- **see as many rooms as you can before selecting the one that best suits you and your needs.**

“While on my travels around the universities I got to see the accommodation at Manchester University and it suited my requirements. I also made contact with the Disability Accommodation Officer there and made it perfectly clear which room I wanted, providing details of specific bedrooms and kitchens that met my needs. This made it a lot easier when applying for accommodation. My PA was allowed the room opposite me, however it was not free and my Social Services paid for this. When I did my Masters at Leeds, the room was also not free, however I had to pay for this myself.”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

“I recommend having a list of all the equipment you may need for accommodation that you can give to the occupational therapists, who will provide the equipment from your university's local social services.”

Judith Merry studied at Keele University

“I went through an agency for my PAs. The girl next door to me had a live-in PA whom she had staying in her own accommodation; she just had one less flatmate and one carer living in their place instead, so it was more of a make-do situation.”

Rupert Prokofiev studied at Canterbury Christchurch University

“There were no specific provisions in place at my college (e.g. no adjoining rooms) but as soon as I made it clear that I required accommodation for my carer, she was allocated a nearby room free of charge for my entire time at university.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University



“The rooms nearby were allocated to my volunteers, and were funded as part of my care package.”

Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University

“It was really hard to find any information about accommodation. And even some disability support services didn't seem to know what was available. If I were to go to university again, I would push to be put in a house with other students who are able-bodied, or who have similar courses, rather than be put with people just because we all have access needs.”

Hannah-Lou Blackall studied at the University of Hull

“If it was required, a personal assistant could have a room next door in halls.”

Harriet Butler studied at the University of Worcester

Disability support teams

Every university should have a disability support advisor – or team – who provides proactive advice, support and links to other departments and services at the university.

The disability support team should offer to meet with prospective students and take them on a guided tour of the campus lecture theatres, leisure facilities and accommodation so you can get an early feel for the accessibility around the university.

The sooner you make yourself known to a disability support team, the sooner they will be able to help you get what you need from the university. They can help with anything from enabling note-taking in lectures and organising accessible accommodation, to arranging personal care and providing advice on the Disabled Students' Allowance and other funding streams.

Trailblazers' top tips on disability support teams:

- make contact with the disability support advisors at the first opportunity
- make the most of opportunities to take guided tours of the facilities
- don't be afraid to ask questions
- ask what services are available for you, e.g. note-taking in lectures.

“When I first contacted the university, I was sent slightly on the wrong track by the disability advisors as they had misunderstood my needs a little, so suggested colleges which wouldn't have been feasible for me to live in. However, once they had got to know me I found them very knowledgeable about the support available for me to access and proactive in terms of recommending routes to take to make my transition to university as smooth as possible. I maintained a good relationship with them throughout my time at university and for a while afterwards, as they sometimes requested my assistance to advise other disabled students or potential students – a system which I thoroughly support and think more universities should adopt.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

“They were very helpful in ensuring the flat that was provided to us was adapted to my needs, although this took three months to arrange. However, during this period they did make alternative arrangements. They were also very helpful when it came to arranging for extra time during the exam period.”

Nirav Shah studied at Loughborough University

“My disability advisor was great; very supportive and helpful. However she had a huge caseload of all disabled students on campus, so it was often up to me to seek out her help/chase things up as her time was spread so thinly. Extra funding for an extra advisor would improve the service so much.”

Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University

“I honestly have no regrets about my time at university. It was a fantastic experience and I would do it again in a heartbeat. However, the lead-up to my starting university could have been vastly improved (and made much less stressful) by a more knowledgeable and co-operative team behind my care and support package. That was the real sticking point and the real cause of distress during those three years.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

“They were relatively helpful but not helpful enough. I didn't find that they gave any advice when it came to help with things like domestic tasks, such as cleaning my room, having bed sheets changed, help with laundry etc.”

Elora Kadir studied at Cardiff University

“The university was very helpful in finding new programmes that can aid learning. Depending on one's disability, there is a multitude of resources and they are more than happy to prescribe them if it would aid one's learning. Moreover, at the University of Manchester, a company called Employability regularly attends to encourage disabled students to pursue graduate applications. I believe their presence is at a range of universities and the staff are extremely motivational and committed to helping you find a job.”

Kushal Pandya studied at the University of Manchester





Disabled Students' Allowances

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are paid on top of your other student finance and don't have to be repaid. How much you get depends on your individual needs, not your household income.

Type of student	Specialist equipment allowance	Non-medical helper allowance	General allowance
Full-time	Up to £5,161 for the whole course	Up to £20,520 a year	Up to £1,724 a year
Part-time	Up to £5,161 for the whole course	Up to £15,390 a year	Up to £1,293 a year

Postgraduate students can get a single allowance of up to £10,260

These figures are the maximum amounts payable – in practice, most students get less.

What DSAs can cover

You can get help with the costs of:

- specialist equipment, like computer software
- non-medical helpers, like a note-taker or reader
- extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability
- other costs, like photocopying.

DSAs don't cover the disability-related costs you'd have if you weren't attending a course, or costs that any student might have. For example costs relating to additional personal care while at university.

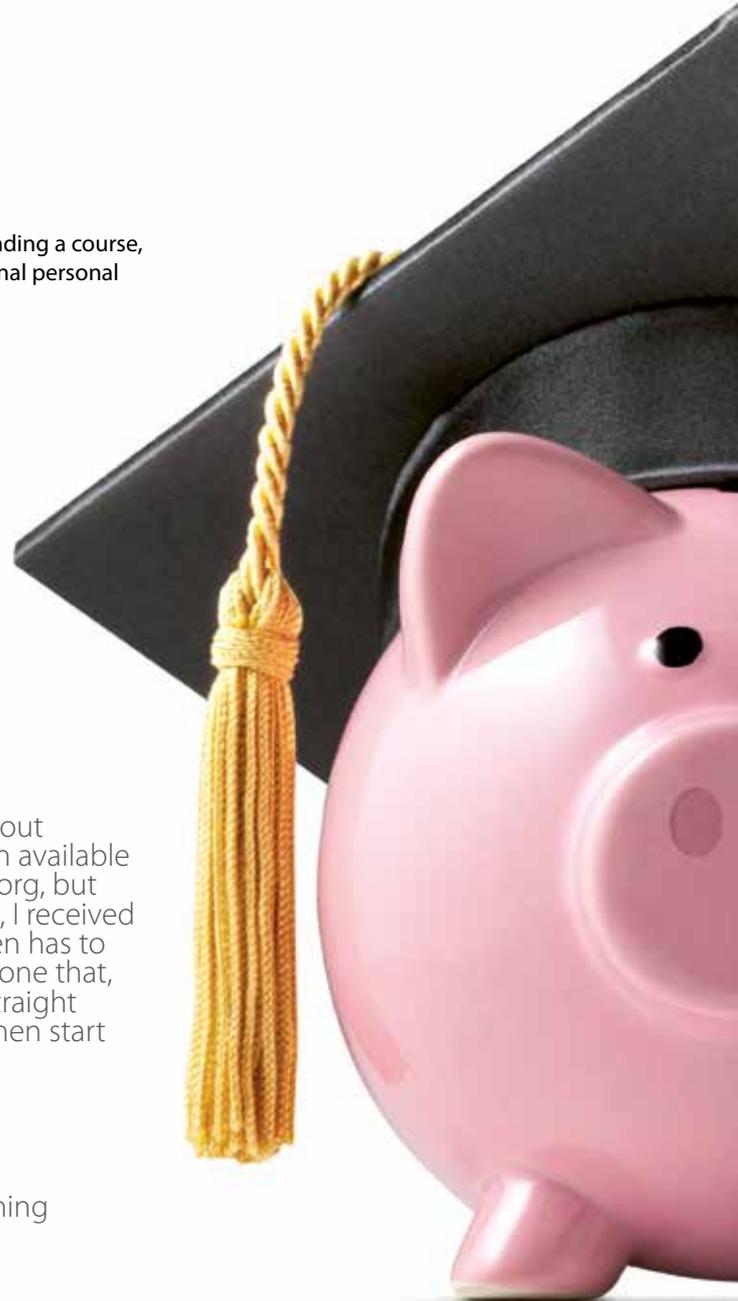
Eligibility

You can apply for DSAs if you have a:

- disability or long-term health condition
- mental health condition
- specific learning difficulty like dyslexia or dyspraxia.

You must also:

- be an undergraduate or postgraduate student (including Open University or distance learning)
- have a condition that affects your ability to study
- qualify for student finance from Student Finance England
- be studying on a course that lasts at least a year.



“I was given information about the DSAs and how to go about applying for it by my transition worker. There is information available on the LEA [Local Education Authorities] website and gov.org, but you have to trawl through a lot of information. Once done, I received a letter saying how much my DSA grant would be; this then has to be approved by the student support and once they had done that, then I could start the student loan process. The DSAs go straight to the university; and as soon as they receive it, they can then start ordering the equipment for me.”

Judith Merry studied at the University of Keele

“They are going to provide me with equipment and a teaching assistant or note-taking support during my course.”

Kate will be studying at the University of Winchester in 2013

“The DSAs provided ergonomic equipment for home and on campus. It included two ergonomic chairs, one for use at home, and one for use on campus; an ergonomic desk in my bedroom; a laptop, printer and scanner; printing and secondary material allowance for each year of study; taxis to and from university at a subsidised rate; support from a helper during university to assist with moving the ergonomic chair around campus.”

Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University

How to apply

You can apply for DSAs at the same time you apply to UCAS and fill in your main student finance application. Tick the Disabled Students' Allowances box and you should then receive a DSA1 application form. You can also download a PDF DSA1 form from www.gov.uk

You will need to provide information about your disability on this form, how it affects your study and the support you think you need. The sooner you do this the better as your local awarding authority will be dealing with many people and it can be a long and protracted process.

Your 'needs assessment'

Once your eligibility for DSAs is confirmed, Student Finance England will ask you to contact an assessment centre to work out what help you will need. This is known as a 'needs assessment'. Don't book this until Student Finance England asks you to.

After the assessment, you'll get a report listing the equipment and other support you can get for your course.

How DSAs are paid

Money is paid either into your bank account or directly to the organisation providing the service or equipment for you.

“The DSAs were extremely helpful. They offer a range of support such as laptops, printers, credit for printing, reimbursement of book fees etc. I attended a meeting to assess my needs and thereafter recommendations were given as to what resources would aid my learning. The whole process was very smooth. One thing to note however is I never received any of the support they said they would provide. Even though it was all arranged, I never received anything and the suppliers never followed it up. It didn't affect me personally as I had a laptop/printer etc but of course if that is not the case for someone else, then they would need to be persistent in getting their arrangements.”

Kushal Pandya studied at the University of Manchester

“The DSAs provided me with a laptop and dictaphone for lectures, as well as a fund for taxis to get to and from more far-flung libraries if necessary.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

Personal care packages

As a disabled student the time between A-level results and starting university will be busy. There are phone calls to be made and support to be put in place related to accommodation, support and personal care packages.

Some of the *Trailblazers'* experiences showed that many social services departments have little experience of implementing feasible care packages for disabled students who need support in daily tasks and are going away to university.

Personal care assistance is funded and arranged by the local authority of your 'permanent residence'. So, if your family live in Manchester but you want to study at Plymouth University, the local authority in Manchester will pay for your living needs.

You may have the option of managing your care through **direct payments** (see www.direct.gov.uk)

You will need a care assessment, and ideally you should be assessed prior to going to university. The assessment is your right and needs to be carried out by social services. Circumstances may change while you live away from home, so do not struggle, contact your disability advisor for more information.

There are a number of options available to you if you require personal assistance and are using direct payments.

One option is to work with local care agencies and find out about their costs, working hours and practices. It's important to know how flexible they are regarding working hours.

Another option is to employ people privately- this could include fellow students at the university who may be looking for a bit of extra cash. Be careful though as you will become an employer and may have to pay tax and national insurance contributions, as well as being responsible for the assistant as an employee.

You could also investigate the **Community Service Volunteers** who provide young care workers and personal assistants from overseas.

Trailblazers' top tips on personal care and direct payments:

- if you already receive direct payments, book a re-assessment before you start university to make sure you receive enough to pay for personal assistants. If you don't receive direct payments, contact your local social services to see if they offer the scheme or an alternative one
- look at local care agencies – particularly their price range and if they are flexible. Arrange to meet the people who may be helping you
- when hiring carers, try advertising at the university job support centre. Hiring students can be a good choice if you need only basic care – it means you can choose the people you want to work with you and ensure they have a similar lifestyle to yours
- make sure you speak to your direct payments team to find out about your responsibilities as an employer
- be organised – document your research and any meetings you attend at different universities as it may help you to make your final choice. Make sure you receive Disability Living Allowance or the Personal Independence Payment and you are receiving the right amount.

“Because I went to school in a different region to where I lived, sorting out anything was always a nightmare, which put me off moving further away. I eventually got Direct Payments sorted (2008) but the process took way too long and I moved back home after one semester.”

Mathy Selvakumaran studies at the University of Sheffield

“Originally my social services said that I could not go to a university outside of the county as they don't fund care out of the county. It took a two-year court battle to get them to change their mind.”

Valerie Kiln-Barfoot studied at the University of Surrey

“There isn't a university where I live, so if I had gone to a conventional university, I would have had to move elsewhere and set up a 24-hour care package. I decided it would be easier to stay at home and study with the OU.”

Fleur Perry studies at the Open University

“My local authority would not give me the required hours straight off. We had to appeal. Luckily we started the process a year before so had enough time to do this.”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

“After an argument my home county agreed to pay for my personal care but I nearly didn't qualify for funding as their criteria for supporting people was for those whose needs were 'substantial or severe'”

Katy studies at the University of Bedford

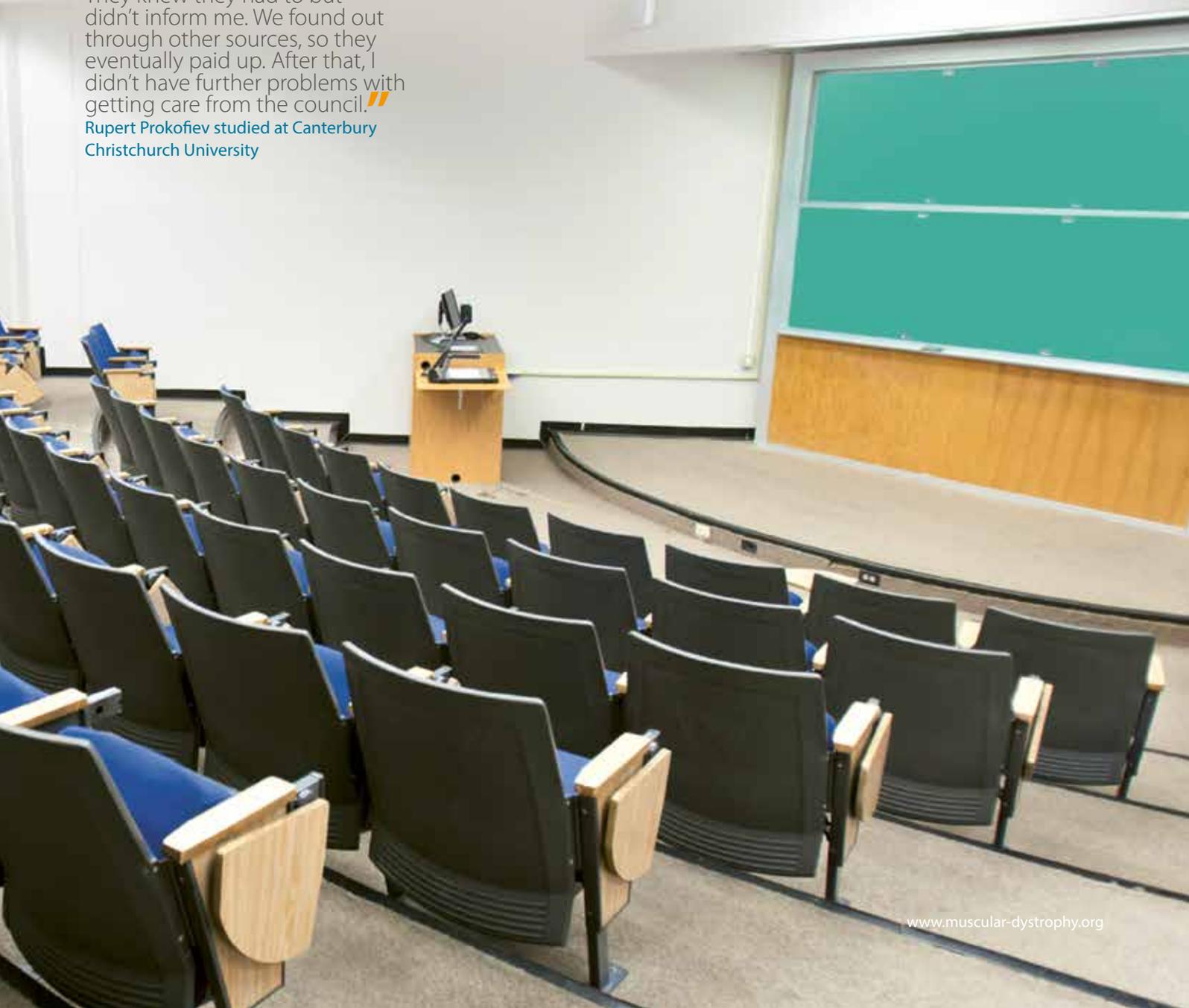
“First of all, I was living in Lewisham and Lewisham Council didn't want to tell us that they were responsible for providing and funding the care themselves. They knew they had to but didn't inform me. We found out through other sources, so they eventually paid up. After that, I didn't have further problems with getting care from the council.”

Rupert Prokofiev studied at Canterbury Christchurch University

“As I was using volunteers for my care needs, securing funding was relatively straightforward as we emphasised how much cheaper it was to have 24-hour volunteer support (they get accommodation paid for, a food allowance and 'pocket money') than 24-hour PA support (at full pay)!”

However, if I studied again I would want to have full-time PA support rather than volunteers, as everything seemed to go wrong with my volunteers, e.g. they had poor English, they did not realise the level of responsibility the role had or were not the right fit for my personality. These issues were more difficult as the volunteer agency did not allow me to interview potential volunteers, and were not very sympathetic to my concerns. At times they were quite obstructive and I had to be very persistent in ensuring my needs were met, and that I felt happy and safe with my volunteers. Of course, these problems could've happened with PAs, but at least I would've had more control compared to dealing with the volunteer agency. However, when it worked with the volunteers it was great; I am still in touch and good friends with two of my former volunteers. I also would have benefited from increased disability advisor support and getting involved with a disabled students' society.”

Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University



Social life

A big part of university for many people is the chance to get involved in student life through clubs, pubs and other activities. Here, some *Trailblazers* who have graduated give you an insight into their experiences of university social life and the under-graduates share their expectations.

“The student union was theoretically accessible. However, the lift was absolutely tiny, I could barely fit so it made getting to the upstairs area very difficult. The bar was OK but very busy which made moving around hard.”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

Trailblazers' top tips for the perfect social life:

- be as confident as you can
- remember everyone is in the same boat and university life is as new to them as it is to you
- check out the accessibility of venues and bars before you arrive.

“In my first two years, there was no lift so I could only access the ground floor. However the SU was re-built and a lift was installed. This lift was highly helpful when it worked.”

Harriet Butler studied at the University of Worcester

“The student union was great! They ensured I participated in most events. Access around the students' union was good. If there was an event that required coach/bus travel, an adapted taxi would be arranged.”

Nirav Shah studied at Loughborough University

“To get to the building where the bar was located was accessible but there were a few stairs to descend to get into the bar, so I never went.”

Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University

“I chose my college primarily on the accessibility of the bar! I felt it was very important to be able to access the social centre of college, and the bar was it. The staff got to know me and my needs and so were quite happy to bring drinks and food over to my table, move furniture out the way where it was obstructive, and generally help me feel included. They didn't have to pick up the slack very often, though, as my friends were pretty good at that sort of thing!”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

“There was a disabled students' society but it wasn't very active. It would have been nice to have someone to speak to about similar difficulties or how to cope with certain problems.”

Nirav Shah studied at Loughborough University

“Some friends and I decided to set up a disabled students' society as there wasn't one when I arrived at Manchester. I also wish that I had spent less time working and more time enjoying the social side (particularly in the first year). The step up from A levels is so big that it is easy to become totally engrossed in studying, when in fact it is possible to find a good balance and make sure you learn lots and have fun!”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

“There was a disabled students' society at the time but it was very much focused on learning disabilities (as opposed to physical), and eventually it fizzled out. I'm now involved with a much more inclusive, new version of Disabled Students' Committee.”

Mathy Selvakumaran studies at the University of Sheffield



“There were no disabled students’ societies on campus, though I think it should be implemented to provide an opportunity to meet and socialise with other disabled students. I think it would be especially helpful for Freshers to get support and advice as moving away from home support, getting used to new carers, being more independent etc, is very daunting!”

Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University

“There is currently not a disabled students’ society. However, as the new campus Vice President in the students union, and also as the disabled students officer, I hope to either set up a network at my university or help others throughout other Higher education and Further Education institutions in Northern Ireland do the same.”

Chris Murray is studying at the University of Ulster

“If I could change one thing about my time at university, it would be to have tried to set up a disability society. I would have wanted care in place earlier so I could have enjoyed my first year. My experience would have been improved by a disability support service that actually knew what they were doing.”

Harriet Butler studied at the University of Worcester

“I would have liked to access the SU bar. I went to other bars locally with some students. However it’s not quite the same.”

Gemma Orton studied at the Norwich University of Arts

“The disabled students’ society at Oxford was pretty disappointing. For a while I was the only wheelchair user at the university and I found the society focused mostly on issues such as dyslexia and autism rather than the more practical difficulties that I was facing.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University



Careers advice and work placements

Depending on your course, you may have the option to complete a work placement. In some situations, the placement is a core part of the course and must be completed in order to progress or graduate e.g. teaching.

A placement is essentially a period of time spent in industry, and provides a taste of working life. Placements can be for a number of months, or even a year. They may be in high demand, and you usually apply with support from your university's placement and careers service. Some disabled students may not have previously disclosed their disability to the university, but are encouraged to let relevant people know how to support them when looking for a work placement.

Your university is responsible to enable and support you to get a work placement, but the placement provider is responsible to facilitate access and make reasonable adjustments to the workplace. Although DSAs will provide support, services and equipment related to studying, which includes studying abroad, work and placement related adaptations and equipment are not covered. You may, however, be eligible for Access to Work.

“I did not access ‘special’ careers advice as I was keen to be as independent as possible, but it was offered to me should I have needed it.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

“I met with a careers advisor and it was good to talk about my future. My work placement went so smoothly too. The Disability Advisors spoke with my Faculty and arranged everything.”

Jilly Green studied at the University of Southampton

“The careers advice office seemed to ignore my disability. This on one hand is good, but this method is not helpful when you have a visible disability.”

Harriet Butler studied at the University of Worcester

Access to Work

Access to Work is a government scheme for people in paid employment. Depending on your individual circumstances, you may be able to get assistance with equipment, transport and support workers. Your employer may have to share the cost of:

- adaptations to the equipment you use
- special equipment
- a support worker or job coach to help you in your workplace
- fares to work if you're unable to use public transport
- disability awareness training for your colleagues
- a communicator at a job interview.

You are encouraged to apply as early as possible for Access to Work through the Job Centre Plus, as the process can be time consuming. Unfortunately, the scheme does not currently apply to voluntary placements.

Trailblazers' top tips for work placements:

- let your tutor and the placement and careers service know about any support you may require
- find out as soon as possible about Access to Work through your job centre plus
- speak to other disabled students who have been on placements
- explore all the options – including voluntary placements or placements within your university.

Nirav Shah studied his Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at Nottingham University. He shares his experience:



“Despite being a wheelchair user, becoming a teacher is something I always wanted to do and therefore I enrolled on to a Secondary Level Mathematics PGCE course in September 2010. The course is designed to give you an insight into what it takes to be a teacher and equips you with the set of skills to do so. It included two placements at two different schools.

“My experience was very different at both schools. The design and layout of the first school catered better for my needs, with wide corridors and large classrooms, resulting in more room for me to move around on my powered wheelchair. In the latter school, despite the fairly large classroom size, I found moving around the room was difficult as some of the space was taken up by spare tables and portable shelving units. Ensuring you have enough space to move around is vital, especially when working one-on-one with a pupil. Having ample space will also mean you can park yourself in a way that will mean you have a lot of the class in view when working with the pupil, making it easier to control behaviour of the class.

“Having a personal assistant (PA) – and I stress not a teaching assistant – is very important. A PA in the room acts as an extra pair of hands and eyes to assist you not only with simple physical tasks such as distributing material but also to notify you of changes that you may not have noticed especially if you are sat on a wheelchair at the same height as the rest of the pupils. This was something I did not have, as I was not aware I was eligible for this kind of support. This lack of support amongst other factors meant I was not able to qualify as a teacher.”

“Due to the fact that I did a social work degree, it was a requirement for me to do two 100-day placements and the university was really helpful in organising this.”

Hannah-Lou Blackall studied at the University of Hull

“Part of the degree I was doing included a year abroad and even though I didn’t get to stay until the third year, I was told that support would be available. But after finding it difficult to arrange simple tasks while I was actually going to university, I got the impression that support for a year abroad would be very stressful to set up.”

Elora Kadir studied at the University of Cardiff

“There may have been support offered if I’d needed it, but to be honest I never investigated it as I didn’t feel it was necessary, and I was also told that Disabled Students’ Allowance would not be available while I was on placement.”

Chris Murray studied at the University of Ulster

“I received support from International Exchanges Unit when I went on my year abroad - support for claiming back travel/accommodation costs, etc.”

Mathy Selvakumaran studies at the University of Sheffield

Graduations

Discovering that you have completed a degree and receiving your grades can be one of the most important days of your life and for parents, family members and friends a graduation day is one of their proudest.

To be able to enjoy a full university experience, everybody should be able to receive their degree certificate together. It is therefore essential that graduation halls are made as accessible as they can possibly be.

Trailblazers top tips on a successful graduation ceremony:

- speak to the disability support team as soon as possible and explain that you want to attend the ceremony and be with your friends throughout the graduation
- explain to advisors and university staff the access needs you will have
- get in touch with other students who may have similar requirements and work together to explain why it is important that you are treated the same as any other student.

“It was mixed; I was able to attend my graduation, but I had to be up on stage for the whole ceremony instead of just going up to get my degree. This meant that I was unable to sit with my friends. Also the ramp to get up to the stage was a very steep makeshift port-a-ramp, which felt unsafe and added to the stress.”

Hannah-Lou Blackall studied at the University of Hull

“The university was good at accommodating me. I was able to go on stage like everyone else via a side lift. I was called to the lift a few minutes before my name was called so I had time to get up. Someone was also on standby to pop my cap on for the leaving procession. My only quibble was they sat me at the front with PhD students, not my classmates.”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

“I’m not sure if my graduation would have been accessible because I did not attend as I was worried I would stand out, or be pitied as the disabled person.”

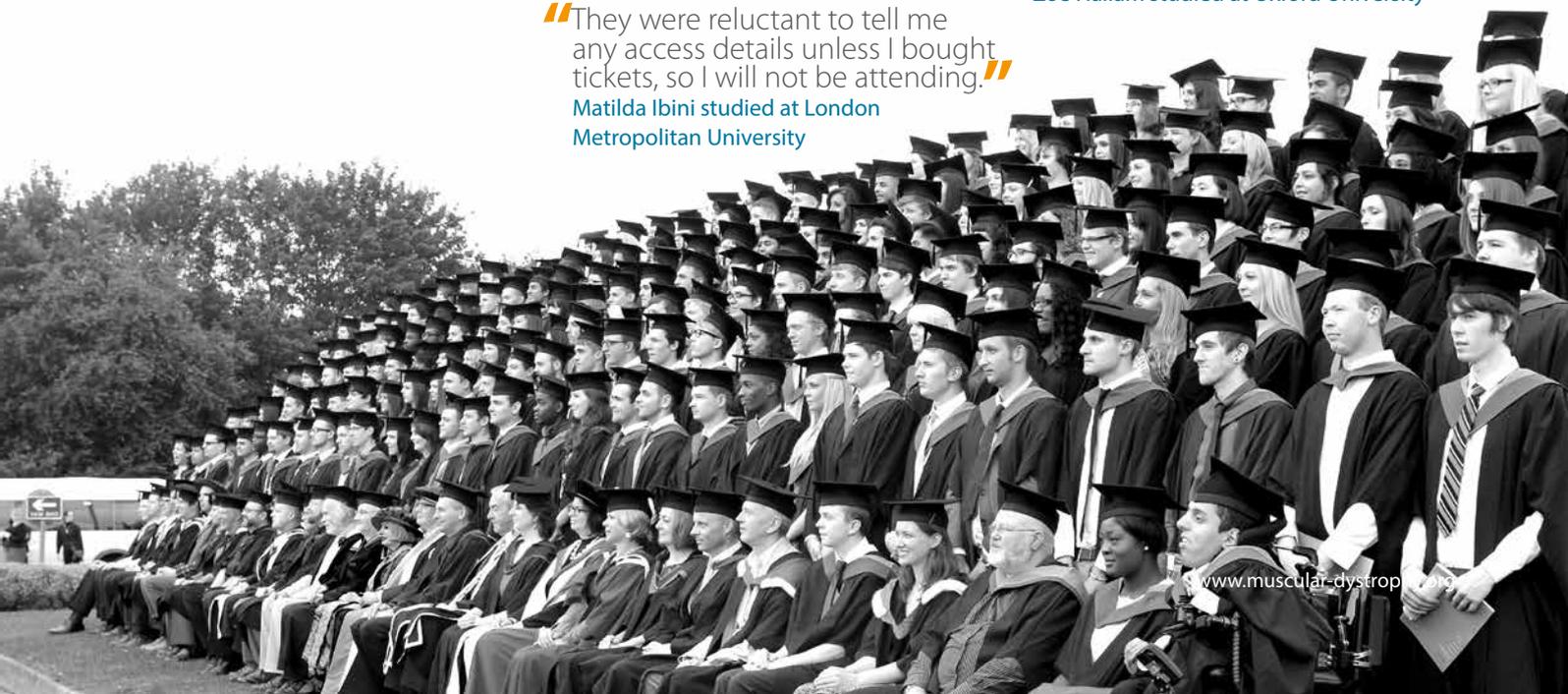
Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University

“My graduation was as inclusive as it could possibly have been. The ceremony was conducted on one level from start to finish, which meant that I was able to graduate alongside my peers, simply having to use a different entrance and exit at the very beginning and end. Staff were on site to help me with my gown and hood and hold doors for me where needed. The garden party afterwards was also fully accessible and the college went out of their way to ensure that I had everything I needed, even providing me with a room in college to stay overnight. I felt completely included.”

Zoë Hallam studied at Oxford University

“They were reluctant to tell me any access details unless I bought tickets, so I will not be attending.”

Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University



Clearing

If you didn't get the results you expected, there are still plenty of options. You could retake, take a year out or go through clearing. From July to September, higher education institutes advertise their course vacancies, and on results day, you can call up and find out if there are any places.

Like other students, disabled students can go through clearing but it is best to do plenty of research beforehand. Find out about the support and facilities the university offers. If you have complex needs, it could be a challenge to get the support you require or adaptations you need to be set up in time and there could be a delay. In some circumstances if the university already has adapted accommodation available the process might be easier. If you require personal support funded through your local authority this process can be slow and complicated. The authority needs to be made aware of the difficulties and time constraints of clearing. However, going through clearing is not an impossible task.

“I didn't feel disadvantaged on the day of clearing and in terms of finding a place but I did feel disadvantaged in that I didn't have time to visit the universities. It took some time to set up support too because I was starting late so it was a couple of weeks or a month perhaps until support was ready.”

Elora Kadir studied at Cardiff University

“You won't be able to get support sorted out fast enough before you start. Otherwise if you do start you'll get thrown in at the deep end. All students with disabilities need time before they can start and clearing puts them at a great disadvantage because the lack of it. A potential way of easing the stress for students with disabilities could be by releasing grades early.”

Michaela Hollywood studies at Ulster University

Trailblazers' top tips for clearing:

- **plan ahead; make contact with the universities that have potential and speak to the disability support team**
- **find out about the support the university could offer immediately and in the longer term**
- **be realistic; if you need adaptations made before you start, gauge whether it would be possible that they be put in place at short notice**
- **be prepared; have information about your DSAs and needs assessment ready.**

“I don't think there is any way you could go through clearing if you are planning on moving away from home. It takes so long to find the room and get any changes made that it would not be ready in time. Plus, there is the issue of the care package and finding the right PAs”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

“With the amount of planning, research etc that it took to choose a university, I feel clearing would be much too rushed to find a suitable university that both met my needs as a disabled person as well as my course preference.”

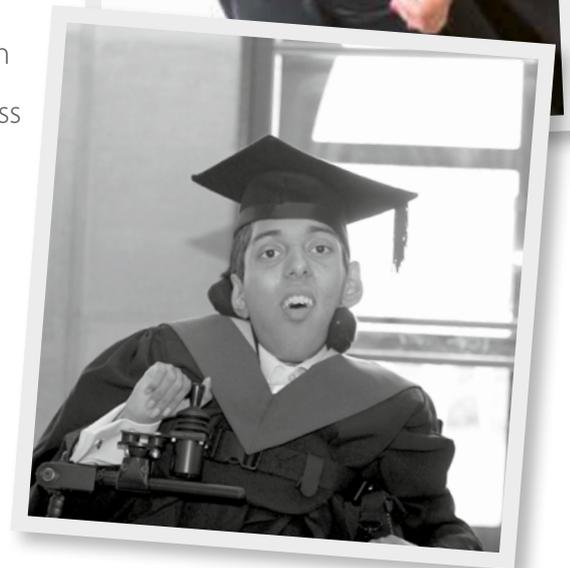
Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University

“I went to my university through clearing. I just feel it leaves you with less time to get your access needs met, as you will need to meet with the uni many times before your course starts.”

Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University

“Make sure you plan at least nine months to a year in advance, do your research, visits etc to find a uni which meets both your access needs and your course preferences and be prepared to fight for care funding and be persistent if your care isn't working out the way you need it to. Get involved with all aspects of uni life; socialising, student union etc; it's not all about academia! Most of all go for it! The challenges of going to university are definitely worth overcoming. As well as getting a degree, I've definitely grown as a person by going away to uni; I've learned to be independent and became more assertive and confident in myself and my abilities.”

Catherine Alexander studied at Lancaster University



Trailblazers graduates messages to future students:

“Don’t be afraid to say what you need, as no-one else is going to do it for you, and it could help others who come after you.”

Hannah-Lou Blackall studied at the University of Hull

“Start well in advance and make sure you know what you want.”

Kate will be studying at Winchester University in 2013

“Go! Go! Go! It has been the best three years of my life and has given me a chance at independence.”

Harriet Butler studied at the University of Worcester

“Just do it! Yes there may be more groundwork that you need to do before getting there, which seems unfair, but in the end it’s more than worth it. Never be afraid to ask for something. I learnt the hard way but if you don’t ask, you don’t get! Don’t be afraid to make a nuisance of yourself if you need something doing.”

Nirav Shah studied at Loughborough University

“Try not to tire yourself out with too much studying. Attend and join as many social activities/societies at the beginning so you find your niche of friends. If you are moving away from home for the first time and also using PAs for the first time, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Whilst the people around you may not be going through such a massive change, it is likely most people are feeling the same, so don’t be afraid to discuss this with your peers.”

Lauren West graduated from Manchester University in 2012 and is now doing a Masters degree at Leeds University

“Give it time to get everything right. Be strong on getting your views heard and on how you want university to work for you.”

Sarah Croft studied at the University of Plymouth

“If you are having problems, difficulties, not feeling included in the university experience – reach out! There should be some support available, within university departments or in Students’ Union.”

Mathy Selvakumaran studies at the University of Sheffield

“Go to the university that offers you the best academic chances. The university needs to fit around you and not the other way around. If disabled people always go to the same universities, the poorly-equipped universities will never get better. Stick to your guns and know your rights.”

Valerie Klin-Barfoot studied at the University of Surrey

“I would start contacting universities a lot earlier than I did, at least six months before. If you can, I would advise meeting a few disability advisors at your chosen university so you can have in-depth conversations about what’s possible and what may take some time to put in place because as soon as you get your grades, there’s isn’t much time left before you’ll be starting your course.”

Matilda Ibini studied at London Metropolitan University

“1. Declare as much information as possible on your application. 2. Apply for student finance and Disabled Students Allowances as soon as possible. 3. Don’t wait for the university to contact you, contact them! The sooner you make contact with disability services and get your needs assessment kicked off, the sooner you’ll have your support. 4 Get involved in as many societies/sports clubs as possible. There should be something for everyone, and if not, contact your students’ union, they can help you set up a new club or society!”

Chris Murray studies at the University of Ulster

“I’d say: do it, but think very carefully before doing it. I enjoyed mostly the living aspect of it. Just make sure you’re on the right course.”

Rupert Prokofiev studied at Canterbury Christchurch and graduated in 2010

“Read this report by Trailblazers and speak to disability advisors, apply for DSA as soon as possible and visit the university.”

Elora Kadir studied at Cardiff University

“It’s hard but the achievement is worth it and you’ll learn so much about yourself along the way.”

Katy studies at the University of Bedford

“Be organised, apply early, ensure you have support and cover arranged for if your regular support system fails.”

Nicky Baker studies at the Open University

“It is worth going, but check the university will make the reasonable adjustments you need before applying. They are legally required to provide them, but have more power to defend any legal action should you bring a case against them.”

Jonathan Bishop studied at Cardiff Metropolitan University

“With the amount of support available at the University of Southampton, the only thing that would be stopping you is you!”

Jilly Green studied at the University of Southampton



Appendices

Background to the investigation

Many *Trailblazers* have firsthand experiences of accessing higher education as disabled students. With this in mind, the network compiled a list of 19 questions that they would have found useful for understanding the standard of accessibility and support available.

A set of standard questions were put to the 'Top 100' universities in the UK. Disability advice services or student unions were given the opportunity to answer questions from *Trailblazers*.

Methodology

Trailblazers ambassadors contacted the student services by telephone or email and asked about the facilities on offer to disabled students. The matrix offers a snapshot of information provided at the time, and students intending to study at a particular university are advised to contact the Disability and Dyslexia team for up-to-date information on support and access.

Table key

- ✓ Yes
- ✗ No
- ? Didn't know the answer
- Not applicable

The following questions were thought to be most useful when applying to university:

- 1 Are all university teaching rooms, study rooms and libraries fully accessible for all students with mobility difficulties?
- 2 In all university halls is there
 - a) accessible accommodation and
 - b) rooms available for personal assistants?
- 3 Does the university provide support in lectures and seminars for all students with a mobility difficulty?
- 4 Are all university bars, cafés and leisure facilities accessible to all students with mobility difficulties?
- 5 Does the university have good links with local care agencies and support services?
- 6 Are all university buildings unaffected by listed status restrictions, which would delay the installation of lifts and other adaptations?
- 7 Does the university have
 - a) specialist disability advisors,
 - b) health staff and
 - c) people responsible for adaptations
 - d) study support?
- 8 Does every university building have at least one accessible toilet with a hoist?
- 9 Is the accessible accommodation, and the cooking and dining facilities fully integrated into mainstream university life?
- 10 Is there a disabled student union group or society?
- 11 Does the university provide a freshers' guide to the university for disabled students?
- 12 Is all inter-campus transport accessible?
- 13 Would you describe the surrounding city or town as having good accessibility for people with mobility difficulties?
- 14 Does the university provide bespoke career guidance for disabled students?
- 15 Does the university hold graduation ceremonies in accessible venues and make it possible for wheelchair users to enjoy the same experience as their non-disabled peers?
- 16 Does the university offer support to disabled students on work placements that are part of their course?
- 17 Does the university carry out a regular campus access audit and make this available to disabled students?
- 18 Does the university offer counselling and emotional support for disabled students?
- 19 Are there automatic doors to all buildings?

Answers below:

	1	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7a	7b	7c	7d	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Score	
East of England																									
Hertfordshire	No response																								
Lincoln	No response																								
Essex	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	83%
Bedfordshire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	78%
East Anglia	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	70%
London																									
Brunel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	91%
Royal Holloway	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	61%
University College London	No response																								
City	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	87%
Queen Mary	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	83%
Westminster	No response																								
King's College London	✗	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	?	?	?	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	?	61%	
SOAS	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	70%
Goldsmiths College	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Roehampton	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
London School of Economics	No response																								
Imperial College London	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	74%
Arts London	No response																								

	1	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7a	7b	7c	7d	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Score
Middlesex	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	?	✓	✓	?	-	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	56%
Greenwich	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	65%
Midlands																								
Leicester	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	87%
De Montfort	No response																							
Loughborough	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	91%
Northampton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	70%
Nottingham	No response																							
Nottingham Trent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	87%
Buckingham	No response																							
Derby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	91%
Coventry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	-	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Aston	No response																							
Warwick	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	87%
Birmingham	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	87%
Birmingham City	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	78%
Staffordshire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	91%
Worcester	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	78%
Keele	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	78%
North East																								
Teeside	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Durham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	83%
Newcastle	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	74%
Northumbria	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	74%
Sunderland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
North West																								
Lancaster	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	91%
Manchester	No response																							
Salford	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	74%
Edge Hill	No response																							
Liverpool	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	74%
Cumbria	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	?	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	57%
Central Lancashire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	87%
Liverpool John Moores	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	?	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	61%
Chester	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	65%
South East																								
Chichester	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	91%
Southampton	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	78%
Brighton	No response																							
Winchester	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	78%
Oxford Brookes	No response																							
Kent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	91%
Surrey	No response																							
Canterbury Christ Church	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	74%
Sussex	No response																							
Portsmouth	No response																							
South West																								
University of West England	No response																							
Bournemouth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	65%
Exeter	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	70%
Gloucestershire	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	70%
Bristol	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	57%
Bath	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	X	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	78%

	1	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7a	7b	7c	7d	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Score
Bath Spa	No response																							
Yorkshire and Humber																								
Sheffield Hallam	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	74%
Hull	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	70%
Bradford	No response																							
Huddersfield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	78%
Sheffield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	83%
York	No response																							
York St John	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	70%
Leeds	No response																							
Bradford	No response																							
Northern Ireland																								
Queen's Belfast	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	91%
Ulster	No response																							
Scotland																								
Aberdeen	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Napier	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	70%
Glasgow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	78%
Stirling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	-	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	74%
Edinburgh	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	70%
St Andrews	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	65%
Dundee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	78%
Heriot-Watt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	87%
Robert Gordon	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	70%
Strathclyde	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	65%
Glasgow Caledonian	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	?	✓	✗	✗	-	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	65%
Queen Margaret	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	78%
Wales																								
Swansea	No response																							
Cardiff	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	65%
Aberystwyth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	78%
Bangor	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	78%
Glamorgan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	74%
Glyndwr	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	74%
Cardiff Metropolitan	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Total	53	64	63	75	69	51	31	72	54	70	72	21	68	35	23	42	63	63	58	70	60	73	42	

Oxford and Cambridge

Oxford University and Cambridge University are not included in the matrix as they are collegiate institutions. *Trailblazers* recommend that students intending to apply to these universities contact the colleges individually. However, the universities have provided some information for the report.

Oxford University

Unfortunately there is no central resource that provides details on the accessibility of all the Oxford colleges, and even accommodation is made up of in-college. Often we hear that they didn't think there were any disabled students here, but this isn't the case.

Adjustments are made on an individual basis for each student who comes to

Oxford with accessibility needs. This can involve making physical adjustments to change the accessibility of a building, the provision of ramps, adapting accommodation etc, or can be dealt with by moving teaching to an accessible room, having books brought from the library to an accessible study room or using personal assistance to retrieve resources from inaccessible locations. While this addresses many issues, there will still be areas that are not accessible.

The Disability Advisory Service has links with local care agencies and can work with students to help set up this provision. We have specialist disability advisors within the Disability Advisory Service working with a network of 'Disability Contacts' who work in the colleges, departments and libraries. Each college has a GP and many

provide a nurse on-site. The university estates department oversees adaptations for departmental and central university buildings, while each college has its own member of staff with this responsibility. Specialist study support is arranged through the Disability Advisory Service.

The careers service has excellent provisions for disabled students, holding workshops covering disclosure issues and running events with employers and organisations targeting disabled graduates.

Graduation ceremonies are held in the Sheldonian Theatre, which has ramped access, ground floor toilet and blue badge parking spaces nearby.

Tim Jones, Oxford University Disability Advisor

Cambridge

Cambridge University is a collegiate college and many questions would need to be addressed by each college individually, as provisions vary.

The majority of our teaching rooms are accessible but in some ancient buildings, locations for teaching/study can be relocated to an accessible location.

There is an access guide to each College: the *University Access Guide* can be found online at our disability resource centre. There is a comprehensive *Disability Access Guide* which can be found at www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability

Many of the buildings have listed status but it is best to see the access guide for each College. The university does offer bespoke careers advice for disabled students.

Websites

Research is often more specific and complicated for a young disabled student. A good website and as much clear, concise and relevant online information as possible are crucial when finding out more about a particular university or a specific course.

Trailblazers surveyed the Times 100 University websites to find out how straightforward it was to access information online.

The following questions were considered:

1. is there easily accessible information for disabled students?
2. is there a direct point of contact for disabled students?
3. does the website have information about disabled-access accommodation?
4. does the website have easily available information about adaptations to university buildings?
5. does the website have easily available information about how accessible leisure facilities are?

The websites were scored out of five, with a point awarded for meeting each criterion.

Universities in top 100 (top 50)	Is there a tab with easily accessible information for disabled students on the home page?	Is there a direct point of contact for disabled students?	Does the website have information on accommodation?	Does the website have easily available info on adaptations to university buildings?	Does the website have easily available information on accessibility to leisure facilities?	Score
Coventry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Bournemouth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Huddersfield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Bangor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Portsmouth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Salford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Glasgow Caledonian	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Bradford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Liverpool John Moores	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
University of the Creative Arts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Westminster	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Queen Margaret	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Central Lancashire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Middlesex	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Edinburgh Napier	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
York St John	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
York	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Surrey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	4
Leeds	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
SOAS	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Heriot-Watt	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Brighton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	4
Canterbury Christ Church	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Bath	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	3
Edinburgh	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	3
Leicester	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	3
Newcastle	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	3

Universities in top 100 (top 50)	Is there a tab with easily accessible information for disabled students on the home page?	Is there a direct point of contact for disabled students?	Does the website have information on accommodation?	Does the website have easily available info on adaptations to university buildings?	Does the website have easily available information on accessibility to leisure facilities?	Score
Aston	X	✓	✓	✓	X	3
Brunel University	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Hertfordshire	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Nottingham Trent	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Northumbria	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Birmingham City	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Aberystwyth	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Ulster	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Roehampton	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Glamorgan (now part of University of South Wales)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Greenwich	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Cardiff Metropolitan	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Teesside	✓	✓	✓	X	X	3
Oxford	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
London School of Economics	X	✓	X	✓	X	2
Imperial College	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Durham	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
University College London	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Exeter	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Bristol	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Lancaster	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Reading	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
East Anglia	X	X	✓	✓	X	2
Cardiff	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Manchester	X	✓	✓	X	X	2
Hull	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Robert Gordon	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
West of England, Bristol	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Northampton	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
University of the Arts, London	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Chester	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Chichester	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Bath Spa	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Edge Hill	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Gloucestershire	✓	✓	X	X	X	2
Cambridge	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Glasgow	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Loughborough	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Kings College	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Birmingham	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Royal holloway	X	X	✓	X	X	1
Liverpool	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Kent	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Queen's Belfast	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Strathclyde	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Aberdeen	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Buckingham	X	✓	X	X	X	1

Universities in top 100 (top 50)	Is there a tab with easily accessible information for disabled students on the home page?	Is there a direct point of contact for disabled students?	Does the website have information on accommodation?	Does the website have easily available info on adaptations to university buildings?	Does the website have easily available information on accessibility to leisure facilities?	Score
Dundee	X	✓	X	X	X	1
City	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Aberystwyth	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Stirling	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Lincoln	✓	X	X	X	X	1
Buckingham	X	✓	X	X	X	1
Sheffield Hallam	X	✓	X	X	X	1
St Andrews	X	X	X	X	X	0
Warwick	X	X	X	X	X	0
Sussex	X	X	X	X	X	0
Southampton	X	X	X	X	X	0
Nottingham	X	X	X	X	X	0
Sheffield	X	X	X	X	X	0
Queen Mary's	X	X	X	X	X	0
Essex	X	X	X	X	X	0
Keele	X	X	X	X	X	0
Goldsmiths College	X	X	X	X	X	0
Winchester	X	X	X	X	X	0
De Montfort	X	X	X	X	X	0

“For anybody applying to university, I would advise making sure they pick a course they will enjoy studying for three years. If you are pursuing a career in medicine, dentistry or pharmacy you have no leeway but otherwise for graduate jobs generally the degree subject does not matter. That statement should be taken lightly however as of course for an engineering graduate job an engineering degree would be needed. My experiences only relate to the finance industry where the degree subject is not entirely relevant, rather employers, in my opinion, want to see that a student has the ability to achieve in a subject they feel passionately about. Thereafter I would advise imagining yourself in the city. The city can have a huge impact on one's happiness and in turn one's success in their degree. In general however I have only known people to change universities due to their degree choice rather than being unhappy in a particular city. Whichever university you go to there will be people with similar interests and you will always make friends if you endeavour to socialise.”

Kushal Pandya studied at the University of Manchester

Useful Links

Equalities and Human Rights Commission

The home of campaigning for equality in the United Kingdom

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Universities and Colleges Admissions Guide (UCAS)

The organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education courses in the UK

www.ucas.ac.uk

Gov.uk

Provides information on Government services regarding universities and higher education

www.gov.uk/browse/education

DisabledGo

On a university-by-university, you can check physical access to places such as halls of residence, refectories, lecture halls, student unions and the nearest train station

www.disabledgo.com

Community Service Volunteers

Provides young care workers from overseas

www.csv.org.uk

National Union of Students (NUS)

A national union of students with its own disability officer

www.nus.org.uk

The Snowdon Trust

Supporting students with physical disabilities

www.snowdontrust.org

Disability Rights UK

Helpline service for disabled students
Freephone helpline 0800 328 5050 or email students@disabilityrightsuk.org



Trailblazers

Young Campaigners' Network

Get involved

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t: 020 7803 4800

e: trailblazers@muscular-dystrophy.org

w: www.muscular-dystrophy.org/trailblazers

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