



A workshop by the LUNA Project

Learning to Understand Needs and Abilities

Disability Awareness 101

In partnership with DMaNSoc and BSL Soc

Bea (she/they)

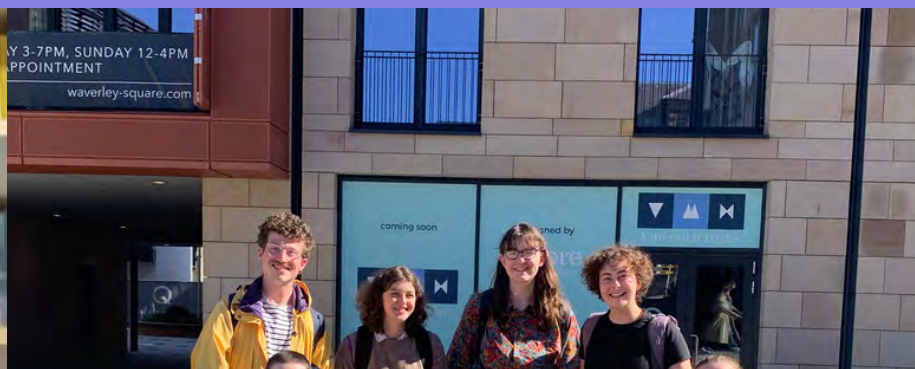
I'm a trustee and co-lead of the Education Team at the LUNA Project. I also study Speech and Language Therapy at Newcastle University and am the treasurer for DMaNSoc



Leo (they/he)

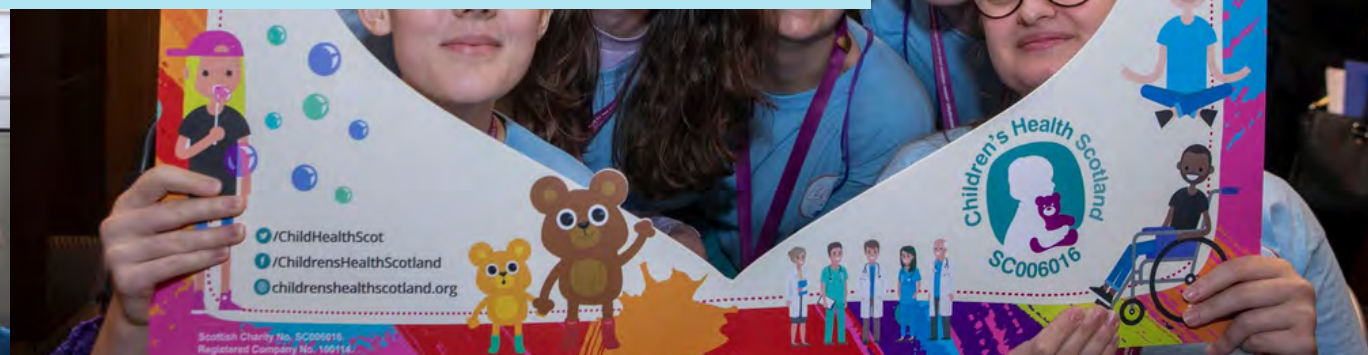
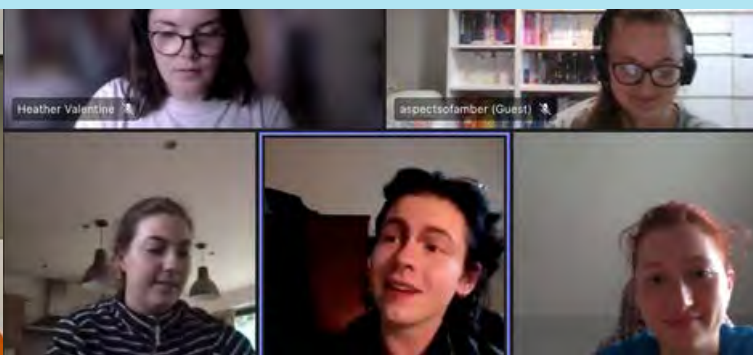
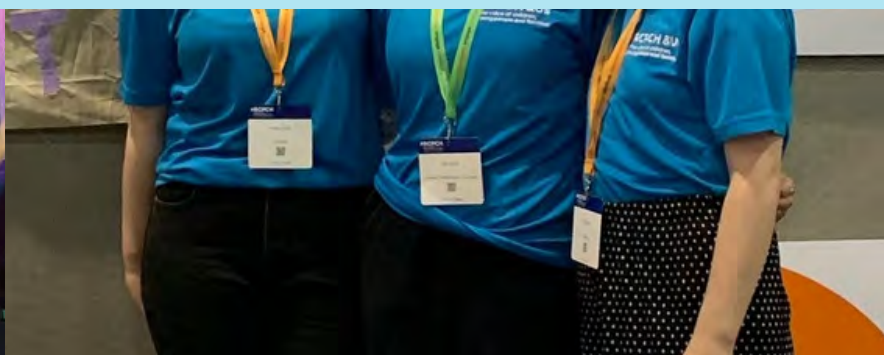
I'm Disability Officer at NUSU and president of DMaNSoc. I'm a third year zoology student at Newcastle University. I'm also involved in a wide variety of other NUSU projects!





LUNA is ...

- A charity set up to raise awareness of, and support, young people with long term health conditions, chronic illnesses, and disabilities!
- Run by young people who all have lived experience of disability
- We try to do this in lots of ways - through workshops (like this one!), social media and blog posts, and resources



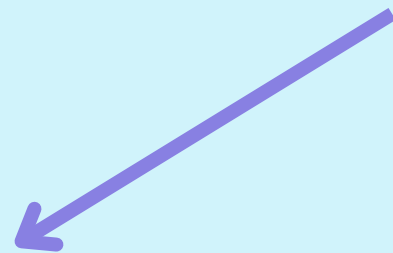
The next hour (ish)

- What disabilities are
- The language used around disability
- What accessibility means for different disabilities
- What it means to be disabled and to have disability pride!
- How to work with disabled students

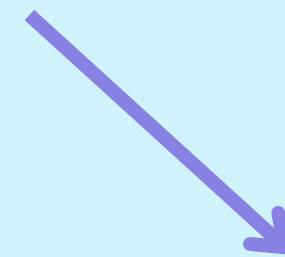
Part 1: Disability Basics

So, what actually is a disability?

If we use the definition from the **Equality Act (2010)**:
a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.



substantial = more than minor or trivial



long term = more than 12 months

What we'd class as a disability

Physical disabilities
and mobility issues

Neurodivergent
conditions

Learning
disabilities

Any condition or difference that makes it more difficult for someone to do their daily activities or have equitable access to society

Chronic illnesses and
long term health
conditions

Mental health
conditions

Sensory impairments
like blindness and
deafness

Disability & Language

This might sound trivial, but it's really important to us - it's our identities!

Above all else, remember **identity first language** as it is overwhelmingly preferred. For example, disabled person rather than person with a disability

We're going to discuss a few examples here, but if you're not sure, always ask the person you're referring to what their preferences are

Disability & Language



Disabled person

Cripple, person with a disability

Wheelchair user

Wheelchair bound

Disabled

Differently abled, special needs,
handicapped

Autistic

Person with autism

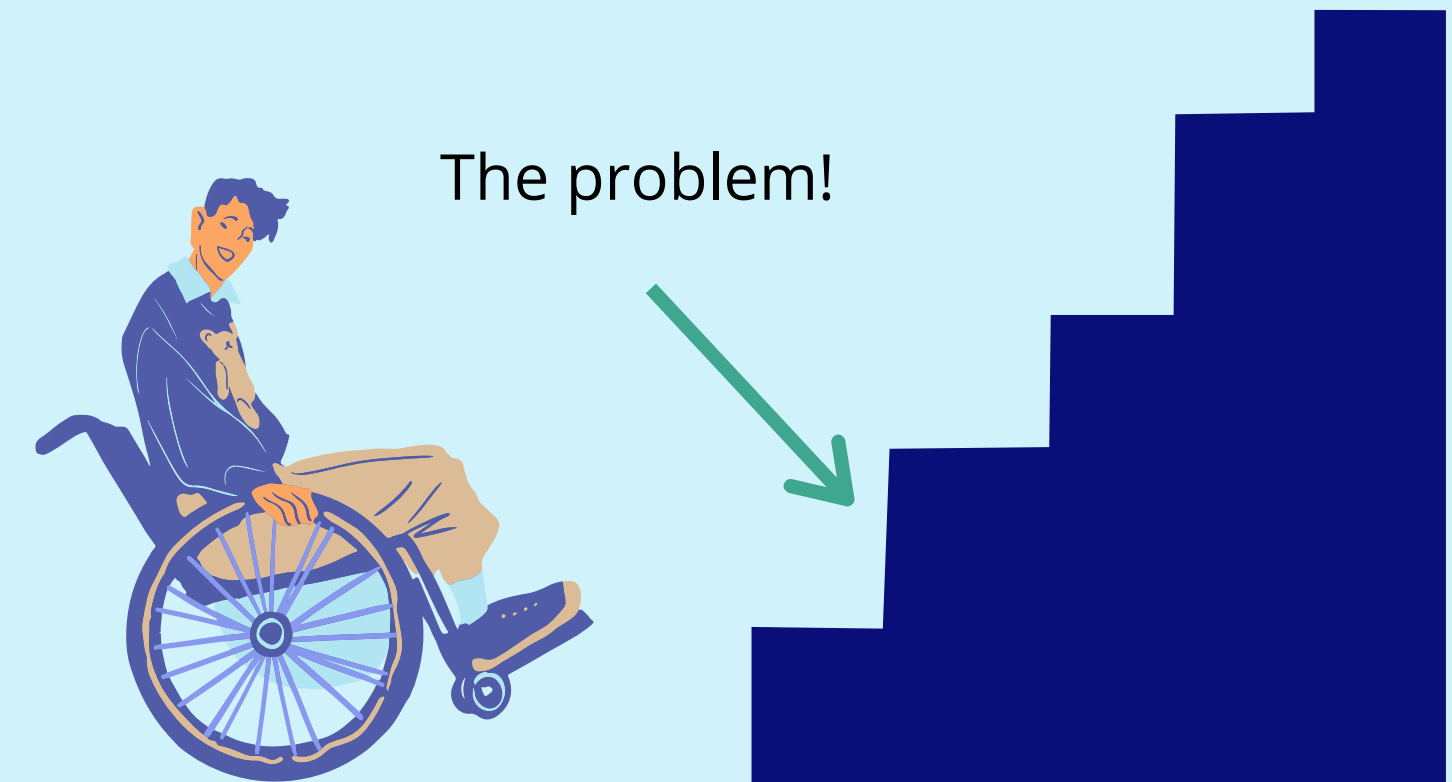
Little person

Dwarf, midget

... if in doubt, have a Google or ask!

Social & Medical Models

The Medical Model: A person is disabled by their **condition or impairment**, which prevents them from **functioning 'normally'**.



The Social Model: A person is disabled by **societal attitudes** and **infrastructure** that **fail to respect their autonomy** or **access requirements**, not their condition or impairment.

Here's an analogy

Imagine you woke up this morning and everyone had the ability to fly except you. All your friends started to fly to school but that's okay because you can still walk/drive/cycle. Your peers can reach the books on the top shelves of the library much easier than you but again, that's okay because you can simply use a ladder. Now imagine that your local council decided to build a new school, but the only way it can be accessed is by flying. There are no stairs, no lifts, just an entryway that you have to fly into, so you have no way to access the building. This means that your school attendance drops significantly and you start failing your subjects. Your inability to fly didn't disable you until societal attitudes and infrastructure failed to consider your access requirements.



Part 2: Accessibility

"The quality of being easy to obtain or use for a disabled person"

What is accessibility?

Take a few minutes to think about accessibility. What are some examples of accessibility needs you know of? What might you have to take account of when planning events/making posts?

There's no wrong answer or bad thing to say - we just want to see what you already know!

Go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and enter the code 2326 5330



Key points about access needs

1. It's best to make everything you do as accessible as you can - even if you don't think a disabled person will be interacting/attending
2. Everyone will have unique access needs so, if appropriate, it's best to ask the person
3. Clearly provide all access information before an event
4. Disabilities are often medically categorised by severity but that does not mean someone with "moderate" disability needs less support

**Disclaimer:
These are
non-
exhaustive
lists and not
all
disabilities
are covered**

Automatic/push-button
doors

Plenty of disabled parking
spaces

An accessible toilet
(that isn't used as a
storage cupboard!)
including a red cord
touching the ground -
preferably a changing
places toilet



Doors and
walkways/corridors that
are wide enough to fit any
wheelchair

Accessible transport options
if necessary

Complete step-free access - ramps, lifts and level
surfaces

Plenty of seating



Provide all print materials digitally in advance

Image descriptions

Use accessible colour schemes and do not convey information purely through colour

A description of the surroundings if in a new place

Place text on an opaque/semi-opaque background (including captions)

Large print text in an accessible font

Braille

Contrasting colours between text and background

Good lighting

Save seats near the front of the room

Remember: only 30% of native BSL users are fluent in English - BSL is a whole language!

Learn basic sign language

Positioning

BSL interpreter

Written info (with short, uncluttered sentences)

Closed captions and transcript (when possible, live captions)



Speak clearly and allow lip reading

Well-lit environments

Do not:

Hearing loop

Visual information

Shout

Minimised background noise

Exaggerate your words

"It's not important/I'll tell you later"

No bright lights, strobe and flashing lights and no loud noises - or a clear warning beforehand

Quiet environment or a quiet room available



Lots of notice (at least 5 days) for events and a reminder 1/2 days before and the day of the event

Allow (or even better, provide) sensory toys

Closed captions

Give lots of information about the event and give time to ask questions beforehand

Be mindful of stigmatising language (e.g. “she’s such a psycho” “I’m so OCD” “narcissistic abuse”)

Avoid promoting content that stigmatises/makes fun of mental illnesses (e.g. Split)

Lots of notice (at least 5 days) for events

Quiet environment or a quiet room available



**Access needs
for mental
health**

Allow (or even better, provide) sensory toys

Provide information about content warnings in advance

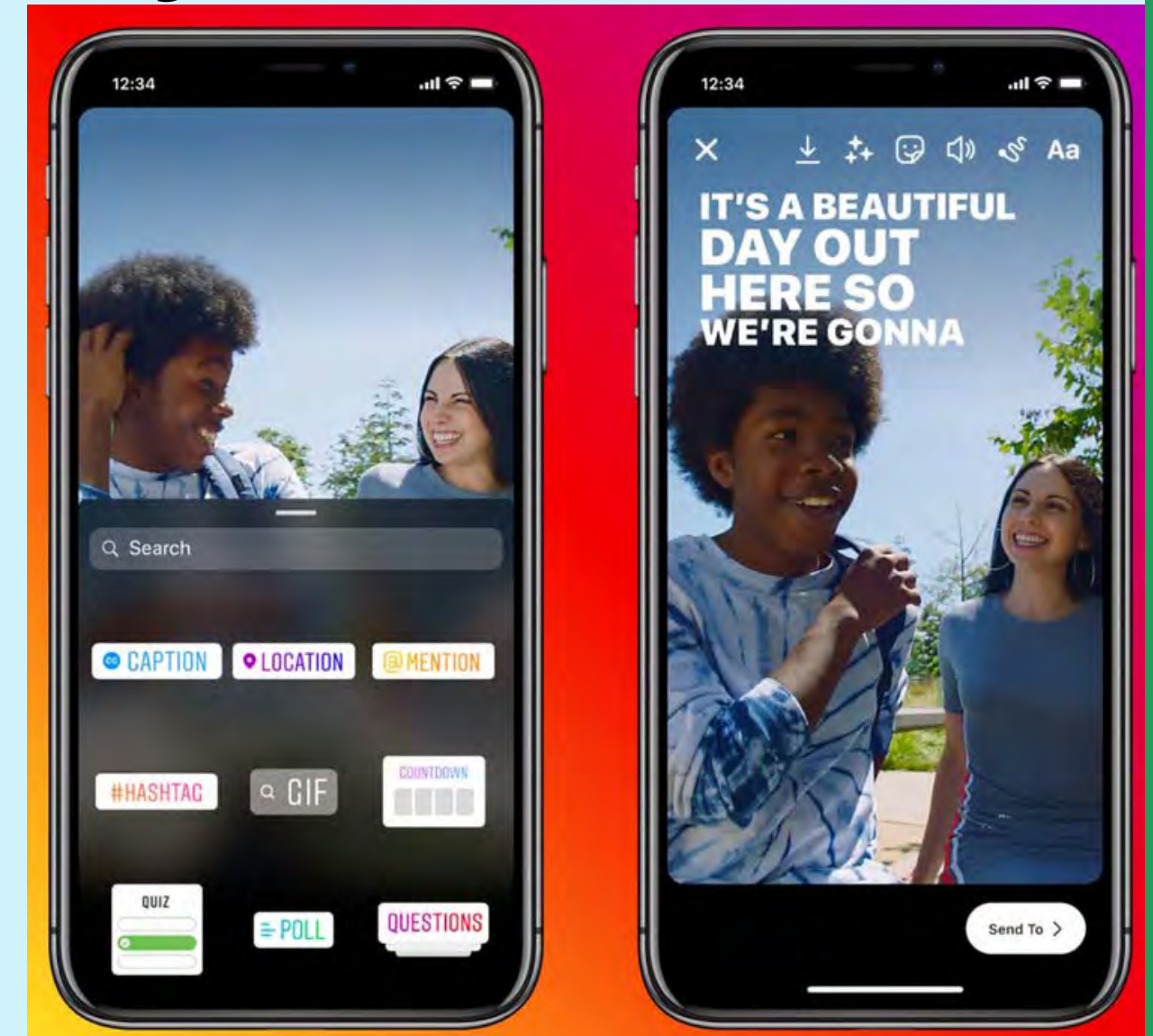
Avoid displaying information on caloric contents - when dining out offer menus with calories scribbled out if needed

Digital accessibility

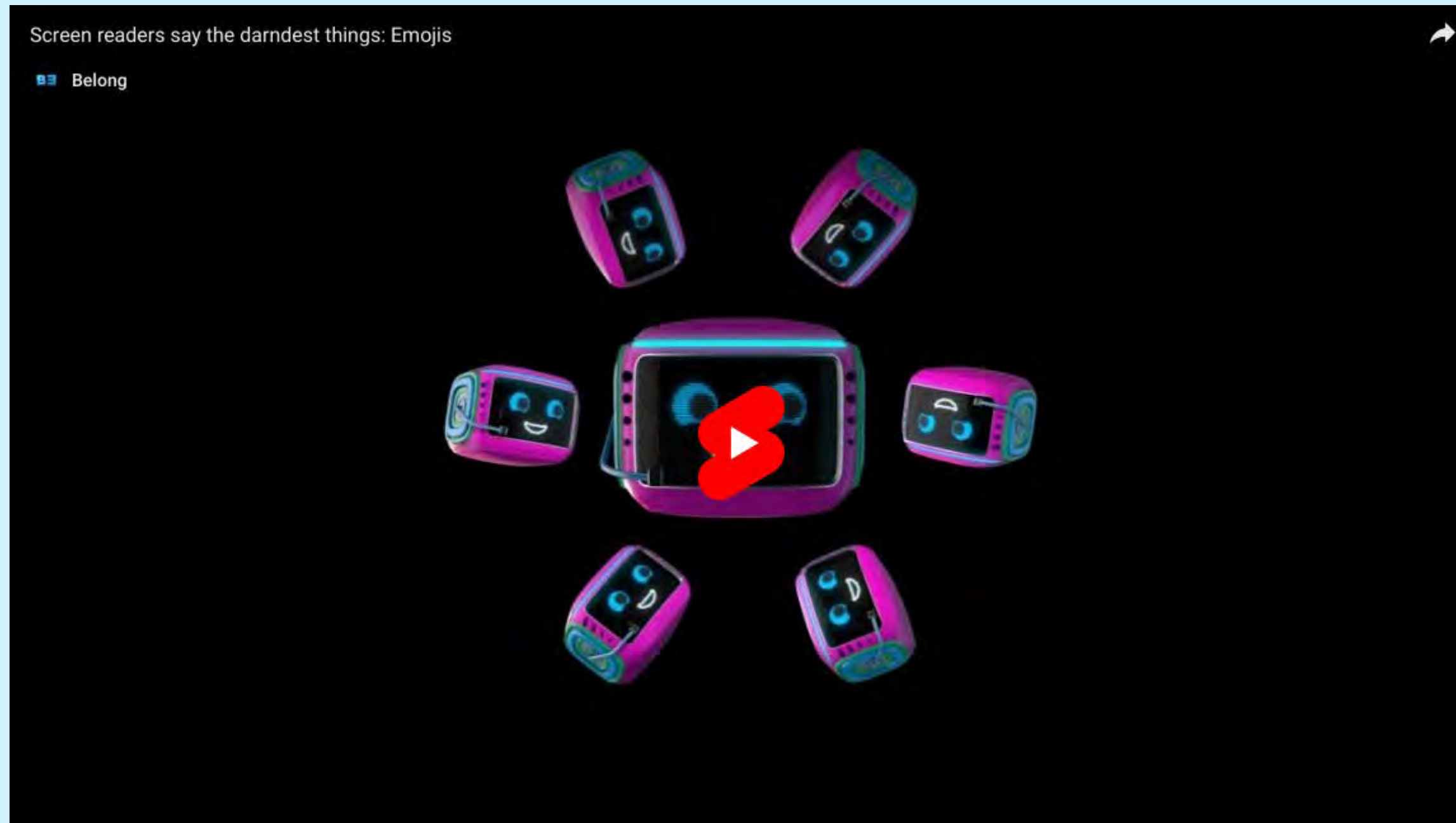
1. **Use closed captions** - you need to add closed captions for any sound in your video, whether that's speech, music or sound effects. Most social media platforms have an automatic caption feature now but double check them to make sure they're accurate

2. **Write accessible text.** This means:

- Write in plain language
- No alternating caps or all caps - iT's hArDeR TO READ
- No fancy fonts - these are harder to read for some people and illegible to screen readers
- Write hastags in Pascal Case - this means capitalising the first letter of every word
- Use limited emojis - screen readers read these out wrong



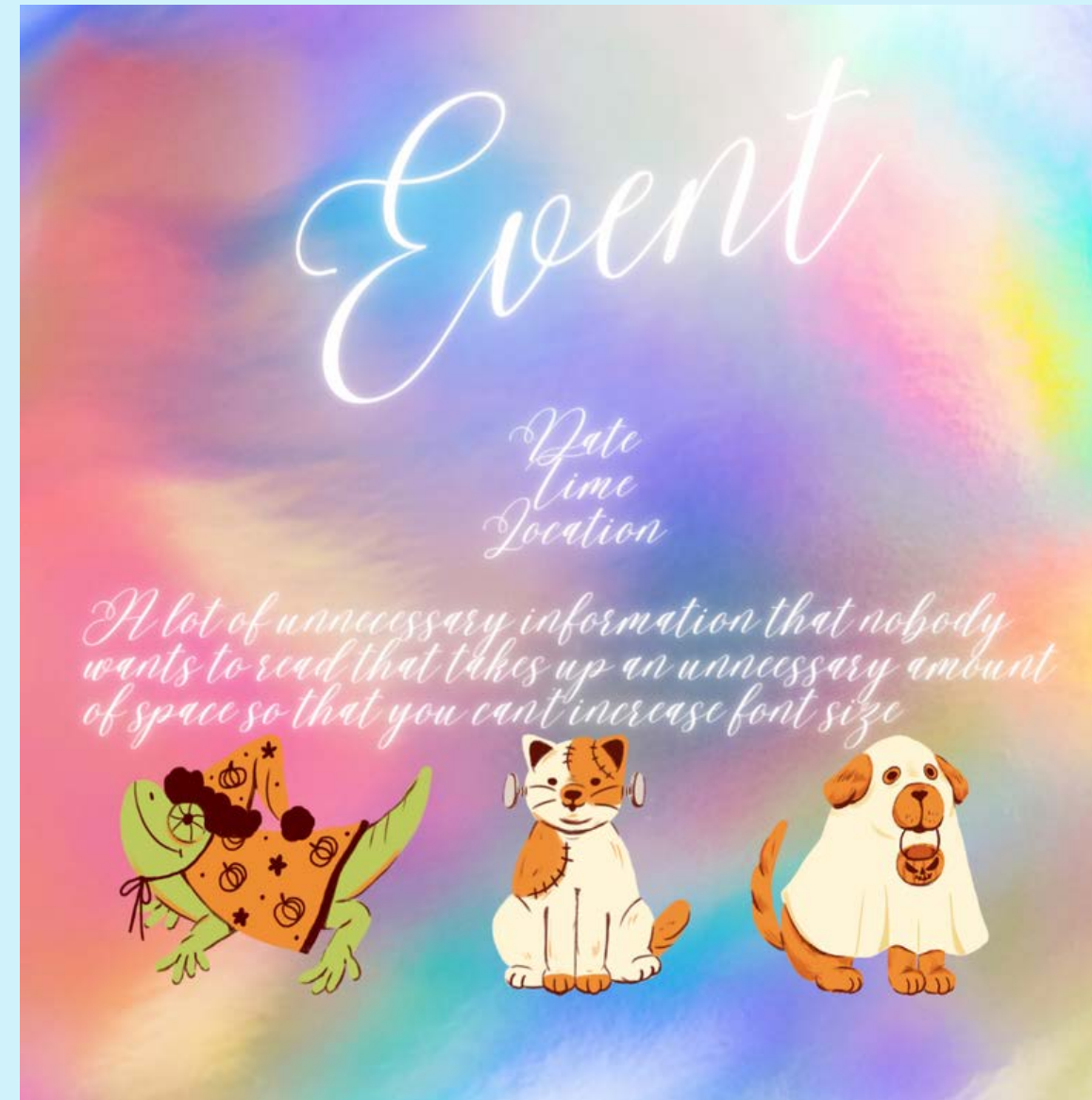
Digital accessibility



Digital accessibility

3. Create accessible visuals. This means:

- Colour contrast between text and background
- Don't add excessive text or use really small text
- Use an accessible font



Inaccessible

Accessible



Digital accessibility

4. Write image descriptions/alt text.

There are features to embed alt text into your post on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Here are some basic guidelines:

- Describe any image, icon or text on the content that aids understanding
- Start with outlining the most important aspect(s) of the image
- Then describe details such as facial expressions, colours and placement of objects
- Conclude with finer details such as the surroundings and background

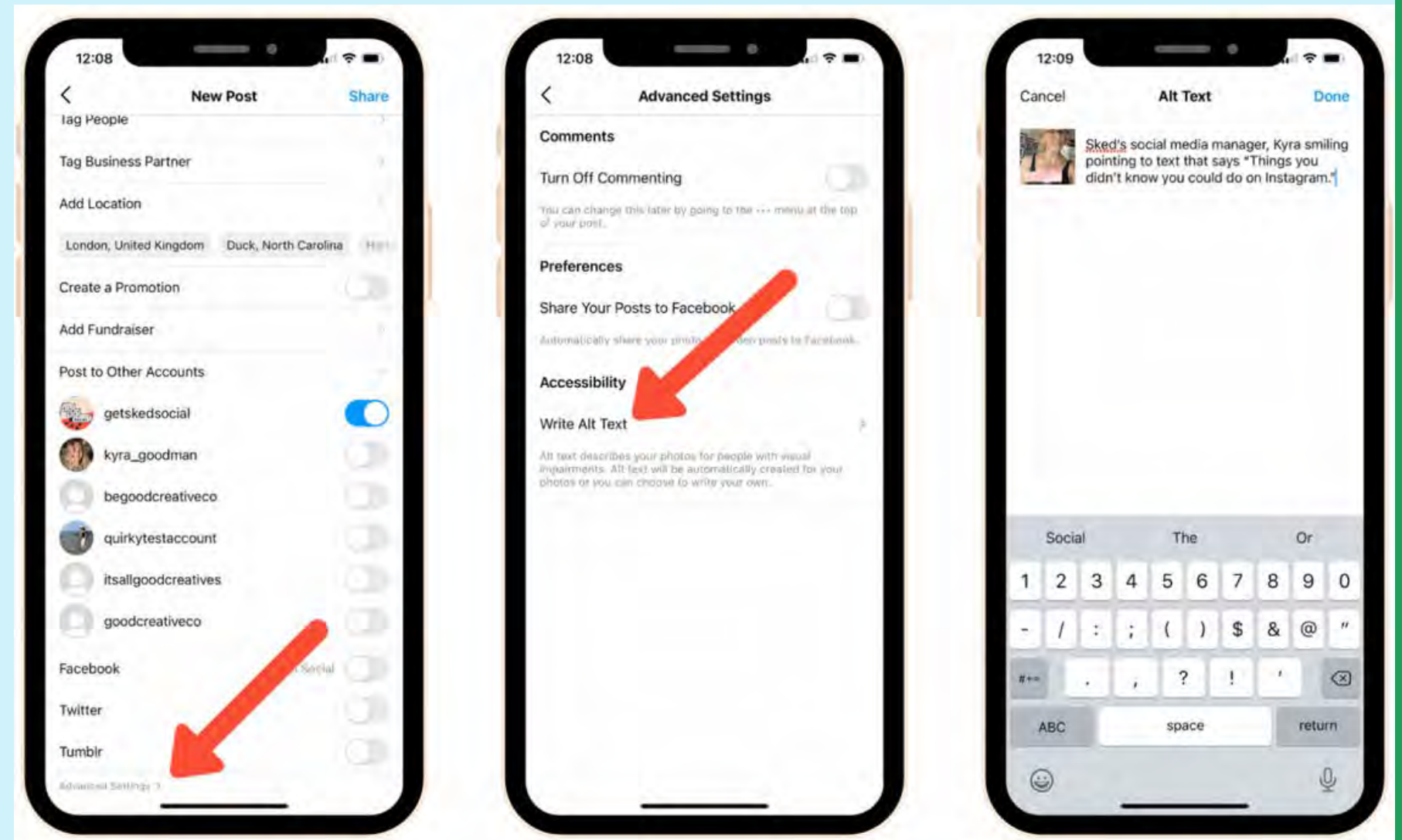
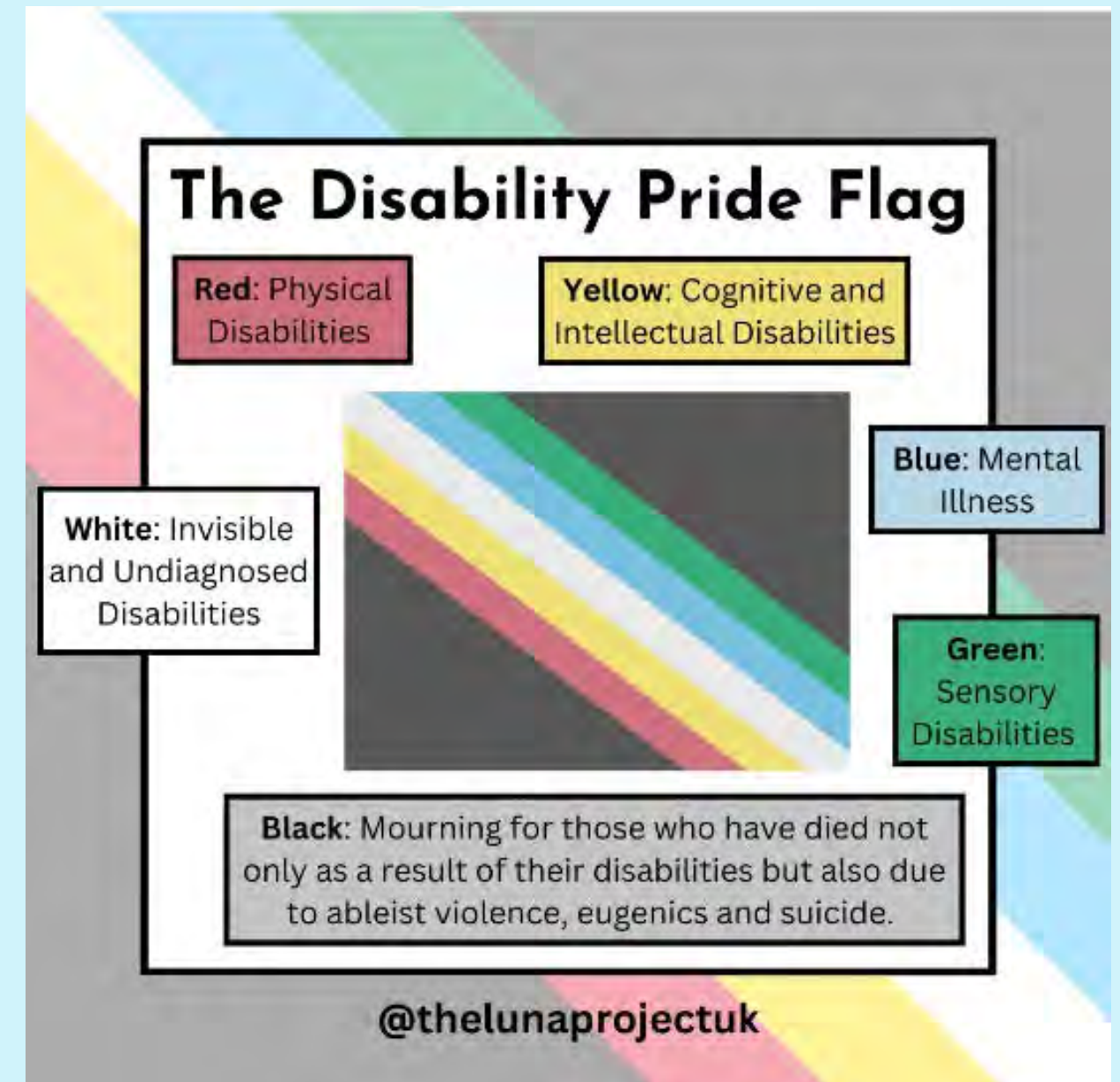


Image description example

The slide's border is the disability pride flag. This is a pale black background with horizontal stripes of pale green, blue, white, yellow and red running from the top left hand corner to the bottom right hand corner. A white text box contains the title "The Disability Pride Flag." An image of the flag, previously described, is in the centre of the text box. Around the edge are 6 corresponding smaller text boxes explaining what each colour means. "Red: Physical Disabilities" "Yellow: Cognitive and Intellectual Disabilities" "White: Invisible and Undiagnosed Disabilities" "Green: Sensory Disabilities" and "Black: Mourning for those who have died not only as a result of their disabilities but also due to ableist violence, eugenics and suicide." At the bottom of the slide is our Instagram handle @thelunaprojectuk.



Equality vs equity

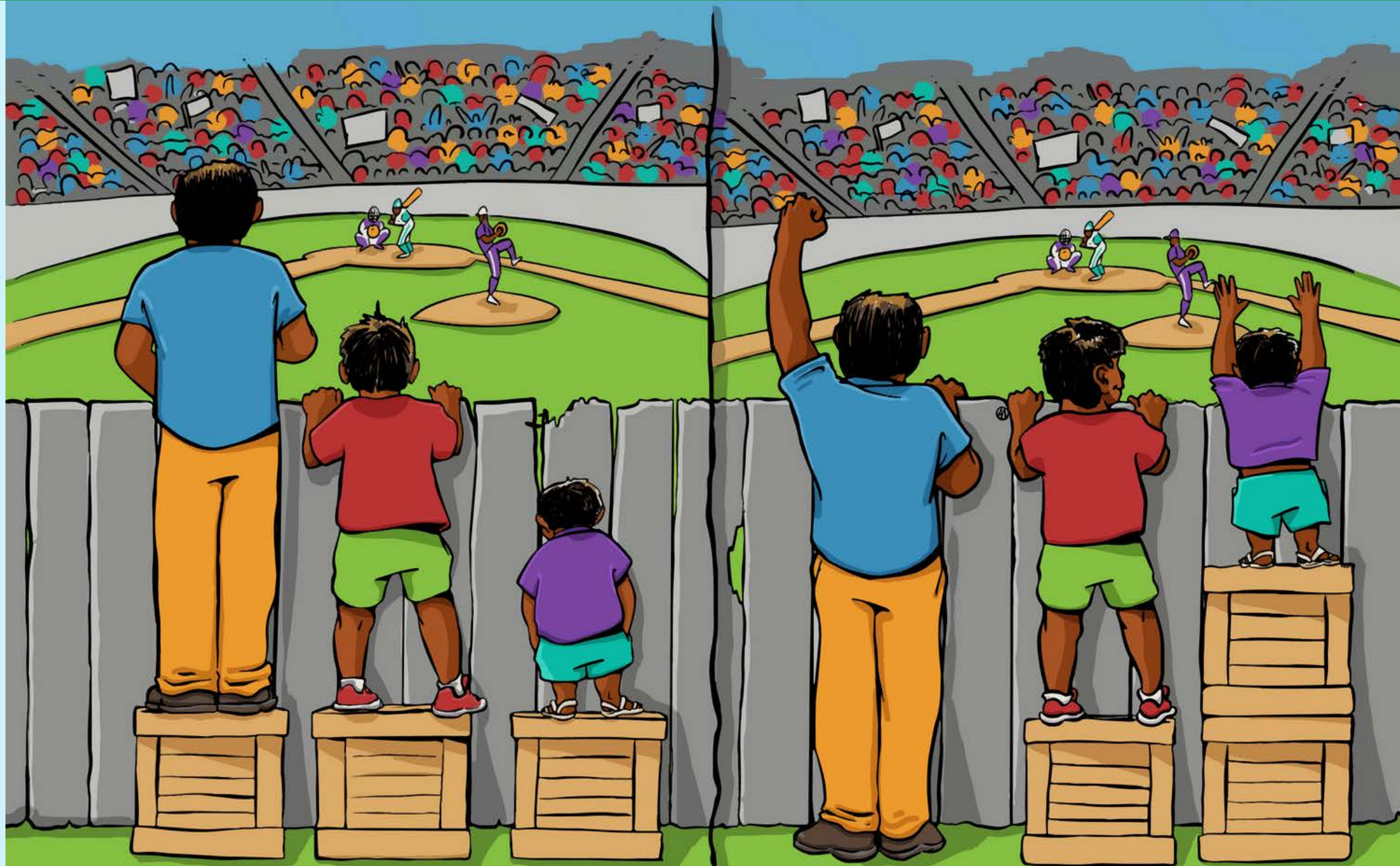
Some people say that fulfilling access needs is unfair because it's unequal...

Equality

The state of being equal. Equality is to do with fairness of opportunity and observing the rights of people so that they are not discriminated against based on differences.

Equity

The quality of being fair and impartial. Treating people justly doesn't mean treating everyone identically, if it disregards features of diversity that can place people at an unfair advantage in society.



EQUALITY

EQUITY

Part 3: Disability Pride!

When you think about disability, what comes to mind?

We want to take a few minutes to think about disability as a group, to see what you already know about it

Remember that we're just interested in seeing what you already know - there's not wrong answer or bad thing to say!

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Society might think that disability is...



Loneliness and exclusion

Benefit scrounging



A tragedy



Unemployment



Hospitals

No independence



Being "undateable"

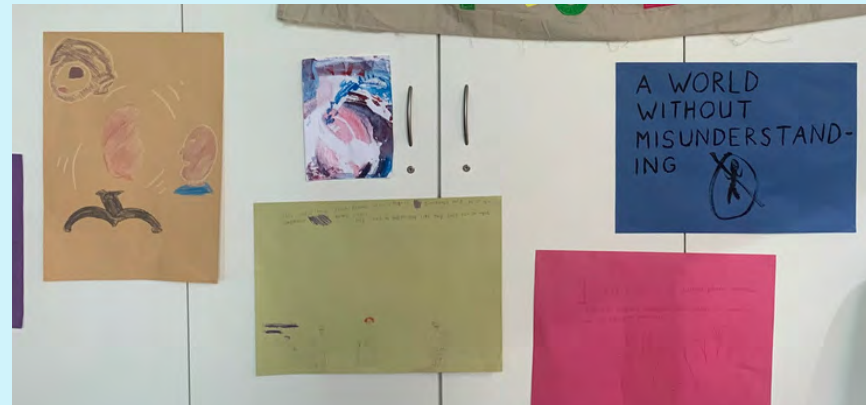


We think that disability is...

Joyful
experiences
Community

Pride

Change



Creativity



Embracing aids



Difference



Solidarity



Care

To us, disability pride means...

Not being ashamed of any part of ourselves

A new lens to see the world through

Finding solace in the disabled community

Talking about disability, even the parts society thinks are taboo

Never apologising for having needs

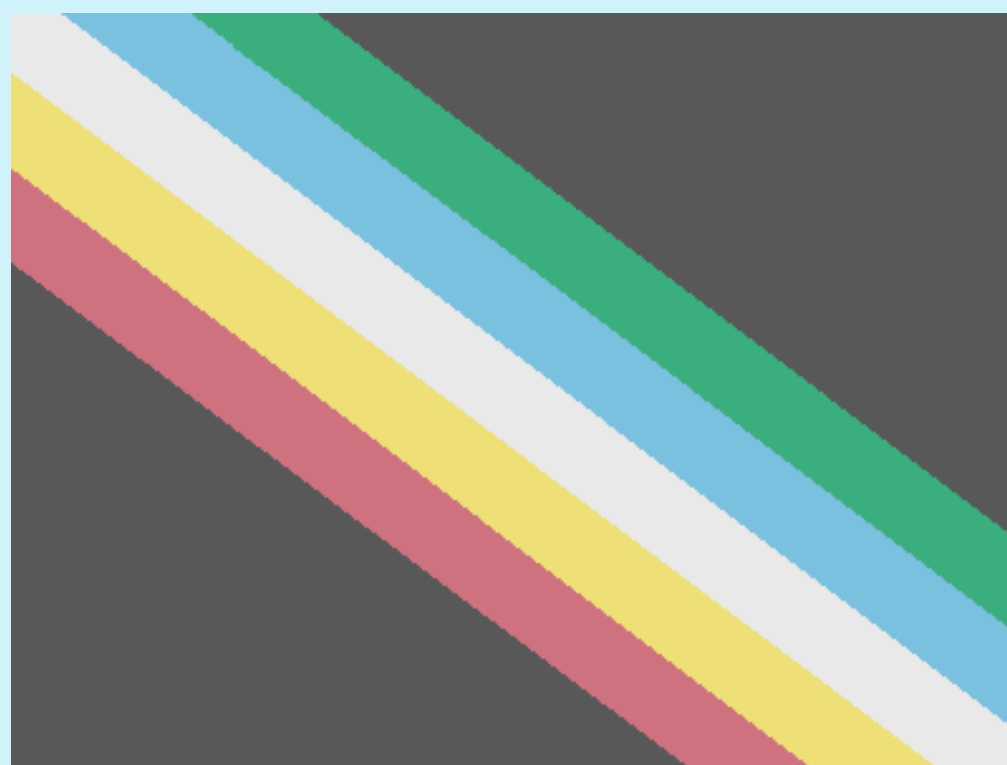
Advocating for ourselves

Being creative and finding solutions to accessibility issues

Learning about disability history and fighting for a better future!

Unlearning hustle culture and listening to what our bodies need

Uplifting disabled people's voices and stories



The bottom line is: being disabled can be tough, but it is often still a positive identity

Part 4: How to work with disabled students

How to work with disabled students

- Speak to us like you would any other person. Be polite, patient, and don't patronise us
- Presume competence unless you're told otherwise - being infantilised is really unpleasant
- See things through a lens of accessibility: take 20 seconds to think about how accessible a venue or place is
- Remember that we have whole, huge lives just like non-disabled people!
- Don't make assumptions about people, especially if you don't know them. If in doubt, just ask!
- Don't single them out, even if you're doing a good thing
- Come prepared for lots of different communication styles...

Disability and communication!

Disabled people can use lots of different communication styles depending on what fits their needs. Here are some examples, but remember this is not an exhaustive list

Some people might prefer to communicate **orally**, and others might prefer **written communication**

Some people use **British Sign Language (BSL)**, **Sign Supported English (SSE)**, or **Makaton**

Some people prefer to use **Augmented and Alternative Communication (AAC)** devices over talking

Some people use **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)** cards

Part 5: Supporting students at Newcastle and NUSU

Guidance to running events in NUSU

Venues

No lift access to level 1 or -2 out of hours

Consider table/chair layout in rooms

Some Barbara Strang rooms have induction loops

Consider:

- Where quiet/safe spaces are - book a second room for large events if possible
- Providing visual information in advance/digitally

Guidance to running events in town

Venues

AccessAble

Euan's Guide

Sociability

Consider;

- How people will get there (e.g. steep hills, lack of public transport)
- Accessible facilities - toilets, noise levels, seating layout, etc.
- Food options (allergies, intolerances)
- Whether captions/audio descriptions are available for movies/plays

Resources and Contacts

Useful contacts

Student Health and Wellbeing Services - <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/wellbeing/>
NUSU Activities Manager - Chris Drummond
Sabbatical Officers and Liberation Officers

Useful links

Does the Dog Die? - <https://www.doesthedogdie.com/>
Accessibility Basics: Designing for Visual Impairment -
<https://webdesign.tutsplus.com/accessibility-basics-designing-for-visual-impairment--cms-27634a>

To keep thinking about disability...

- Read through our resources and blog posts - you can find them on our website!
- Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century, edited by Alice Wong
- Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist by Judith Heumann
- Follow disabled activists on social media!

And to support LUNA's work...

- Sign up to our newsletter!
- Like/comment/share our social media!
- Order some Appointments and Transitions resources
- Spread the word - we love working with professionals/organisations and welcoming new volunteers!

THANK YOU!



@thelunaprojectuk



The LUNA Project



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