# Disability, Accessibility, and Mental Health (DAMH) Staff Network

## Mission Statement:

**Positively Change the Perception of Disability at the University of Leeds.**

Many staff and students have recounted micro-aggressions experienced at the University. This network aims to alter the culture at the University via the below terms of reference, celebrating diversity and disability, and ensuring that all staff feel supported, valued, welcome, and safe - whether or not they are visibly or invisibly disabled, have physical, sensory and/or mental health difficulties, and/or are neurodiverse.

## Terms of Reference:

1. **Persuade the UoL to revert the reasonable adjustments process back to external/ independent assessment**, rather than placing the burden on individual line managers who often have not been able to undergo relevant training. This support should aim to include a wide range of expertise to allow specialist support for particular types of disability as needed. Current practice has resulted in very inconsistent levels of support for staff in need of said adjustments across the university. This work includes advising our members on appropriate external organisations to approach, supporting line management training and education, supporting dispute resolution, and supporting the reintroduction of the written Reasonable Adjustments Plan.
2. **Standardise the level of support that is to be provided by line managers** by lobbying for mandated, adequate, and specific equality, diversity, and inclusion training for line managers, and particularly in regards to the reasonable adjustment process. Ensure all line managers (and HR reps) are aware of the meaning of the term ‘reasonable’ in this context, and offer this training to all other staff.

Provide both bespoke and general training packages for our DAMH members, working closely with colleagues in OD&PL, inviting relevant staff and students to participate.

1. **Lobby for mandatory Mental Health Awareness Training**. This training has already been successfully trialled in 40 workshops in Faculty of Medicine and Health by the previous Staff Mental Health and Disability Network. Network members agree that this training should now be extended across the University and provided for all staff and students. This training programme should also be expanded to include mandatory neurodiversity training.
2. **Lobby for access to quiet rooms to rest or work,** in conjunction with the work done by the Chronic Pain & Fatigue Network. Many members have stressed the importance of access to a quiet room in order to prevent feelings of being stressed or overwhelmed, or to perform physical therapy that offers vital protection against long-term staff sickness and absence due to deteriorating health. Currently there are very few such spaces available. *Asking staff to use the prayer rooms or breast-feeding rooms is deeply inappropriate, encroaching on the rights of other marginalised groups as well as failing to meet the needs of individuals.*
3. **Improve the reporting hostility and discrimination at the UoL**. In the 1990s, UoL colleagues were instrumental in ensuring that disabled people were legally protected from discrimination in the UK. Part of that work included proving the need for that legislation by showing the government that discrimination was being universally experienced by disabled people across the UK.

We want to continue this work. In our university now, our members have indicated that it is sometimes very difficult to raise a concern or make a complaint about hostility, lack of support, or discrimination, due to a lack of anonymity, or that the person they are asked to report to may be involved in the complaint itself.

Without the adequate reporting of problems, we cannot hope to address such problems. The network will work towards the introduction and publicising of a range of institutional paths for staff to report discriminatory conduct, including paths outside immediate line managers and designated HR officers, and supplying our own anonymous network reporting method. This will improve our ability to collect important data on the rates and types of discrimination occurring at the University, which will in turn shape our future network improvement strategies.

1. **Support staff who submit grievances**. The grievance process can be daunting and exhausting, especially alone. The DAMH network will offer support for members who submit grievances against the university, guiding them through the procedure, connecting them with the right people, and providing practical, professional, and moral support throughout the process. This will involve the network working closely and collaboratively with the three campus Trade Unions.
2. **Increase accessibility, especially online.** We aim to answer the question: How do we report access issues? This relates to online and physical campus accessibility. We will develop a reporting system which will ensure that awareness is raised across the community, and that the network can begin to put into action positive systemic and structural improvements. These include but are not limited to; scaling back of the use of PDFs, ensuring that closed captions of live meetings give an accurate representation of what is said, ensuring all pre-recorded videos are accurately captioned, providing written transcripts where captions could not be provided, and reducing the use of colour-coding (in particular red-green colour-coding) etc.
3. **Work closely with LUU, Students, Trade Unions, Staff Networks, and all University Schools and Services.** We wish to work closely with students who are impacted by ableism, inaccessibility, and related issues, as we face many of the same issues. We will develop excellent relationships and networks with our various colleagues, other Staff Networks, and our campus Unions, as well as utilising our membership to actively forge relationships with all areas of the University.
4. **Educate against and stop the use of inappropriate language.** Words such as insane, lunatic, idiot, stupid, cripple, etc. are accepted in virtually all settings across the University, including in formal meetings, despite this language being deeply ableist and closely tied to the long history of institutionalisation of disabled people. Language matters. It contributes to stigma, and has a significant impact on work culture. The DAMH network will increase awareness of this, both by running our own campaigns but also through EDI work within the University structure.
5. **Provide a safe space** for members to discuss issues without judgement, share frustrations, or even vent, where they can access and give peer support, and where they can collaborate across campus to resolve issues.

*Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually from date of publication.*

*The network will be led by 2 – 4 co-chairs at any one time, who all share an equal level of responsibility.*

*Co-chairs will be elected by network members in July 2022, for a 12 month term. Among other things, co-chairs will be responsible for creating meeting documentation according to the requests of network members, and chairing meetings, which take place monthly on Zoom until further notice.*

*Communication between co-chairs and network members will predominantly be conducted via email and MS Teams.*