DISABILITY ACCESS IN LABORATORY ENVIRONMENTS

PROTOCOL

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Introduction

There is an under-representation of disabled researchers. Approximately 20% of the UK's working population is disabled, but only 3% of UK academics self-identify this way. Laboratories have often been designed without consideration to disability access due to the historic assumption that disabled scientists could not work safely in such environments. Currently there is no consensus on what constitutes accessibility within laboratory environments.

Provision of laboratories and equipment which can be booked and shared by researchers from other institutions is a cost-effective way to utilise costly specialist equipment and facilities. Using these shared resource laboratories is a particular challenge to visiting disabled staff as reasonable accommodations may not be able to be implemented in the usual way, or at all. It is essential for institutions to assess their accessibility in order to share access information with disabled researchers, and to let institutions plan a program of access improvements.

This project would assess the accessibility of shared resource laboratories, their structures, equipment, and the protocols for their booking and use. We have access to shared facilities in the four universities of the Eastern Academic Research Consortium (EARC; University of East Anglia (UEA), University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex).

UEA also has two highly accessible facilities. These are a new build (New Science Building), and a refurbishment (Productivity East), which have been in use for over six years.

Aims

1. To characterise how shared resource laboratories in universities currently accommodate disabled staff and students.
2. To create an assessment to allow shared resource laboratories for any subject to describe their accessibility.
3. To examine the impact on disabled staff and students of laboratories designed to a highly accessible standard after 5 years of use.
4. To create a list of possible access improvements for the surveyed laboratories.

The Team

This project is led by a multi-disabled researcher mentoring a multi-disabled ECR research associate and technician in research and leadership skills. We have partnered with a range of institutions and learned societies in order to have diverse and intersectional perspectives on this challenge. The project will amplify the voices of and experiences of disabled ECRs throughout. The project will have a particular focus on technician's role in facilitating disability access in these laboratories, providing evidence to the Technician's Commitment.

Project Collaborators

Individual	**Organisation**	**School or department (or relevant equivalent)**	**Role**
Katherine Deane	University of East Anglia	Associate Professor, School of Health Sciences	Principle Investigator (PI)
Research Associate	University of East Anglia	School of Health Sciences	Research associate (RA)
Joanna Semlyen	University of East Anglia	Professor of Psychology and Equity, Norwich Medical School	Co-investigator (Co-I1)
Jeff Banks	Lightyear Foundation	CEO Lightyear Foundation	Co-investigator (Co-I2)
Brendan Burrill	University of East Anglia	Honorary Teaching Fellow	Co-investigator (Co-I3)

Partners

Organisation	Involvement
Partner 1: (P1)University of East Anglia — Representatives from /Eastern ARC IPA, New Science, Productivity East	Will provide access to shared resource imaging labs, New Science, Productivity East, their documentation, and relevant people for interviews. Will also provide representation on the steering group from these facilities Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P2 Phil Ward Chair of Eastern ARC IPA	Will provide oversight on the use of the shared resource imaging facilities. Will attend steering groups when appropriate.
P3 Eastern ARC IPA – University of Sussex	Will provide access to labs, staff and students.
P4 Eastern ARC IPA University of Essex	Will provide access to labs, staff and students.
P5 Eastern ARC IPA University of Kent	Will provide access to labs, staff and students.
P6 Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy, Jacqueline Barry	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P7 Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), Ilaria Meazzini	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P8 Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), Zoe Andrews	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P9 Hamied Haroon, Chair of National Assoc of Disabled Staff Networks (NASDN)	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.

P10 Vania Dimitrova, Louise Jennings, EDI Hub leads, Leeds University,	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P11 The Wellcome Trust, Sophie Demellweek	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P12 The Royal Society, Jolene Foster	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.
P13 The Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC)	Will attend the monthly steering group, and aid in the co-creation of the design of the project, the interpretation of the data, and the dissemination of the findings.

- PI is a multiply disabled wheelchair user. She is based in one of the Imaging Platform Alliance (IPA) universities. She conducts research on the co-created management disabilities and is the University's Access Ambassador. She led the Access All Areas in Labs (AAAiLabs) project and the creation of the Lab Access Guidelines. She is Access Ambassador to the Wellcome Trust's expansion of the Sanger Institute. She is the Disability Access Champion on the £2.5 million EPSRC funded EDI Hub, and the £1 million Wellcome Trust funded Increasing Diversity and Equity of Access (IDEA) project.
- Co-I1 leads the £1 million IDEA project.
- Co-I2 is a small disability-led educational charity with the almost unique aim of increasing access to STEM for disabled students. We are paying for their time due to the charity's small size.
- Co-I3 is now an Honorary Teaching Fellow. He is willing to be a Co-I on this grant and play a key role in the training of the RA. He was part of the AAAiLabs project team as an electronics teaching lab technician with experience of supporting disabled students. He has an IIMS Diploma in yacht and small craft surveying and an IOSH Certificate in Managing Safely. He will be mentored by the PI to develop his research and project management skills.
- The RA post will be advertised externally and will be trained and supported in particular by Co-I3. They will also be mentored by the PI to develop their

research and project management skills.

- Our partners in the shared resource imaging collaboration (Partners 1-5) will provide access to labs, staff and students. Partners and Co-Is will attend the monthly steering group. They will aid in the co-creation of the project design, the data interpretation, and the dissemination of the findings.
- Partner 1 (P1): This partner is member of a 4 university IPA. They will provide representatives to the steering group for these labs and the other facilities being assessed in this project, a new build highly accessible suite of labs (covering biology, chemistry, physics and electronics), as well as a refurbished highly accessible engineering lab. They will ensure access to the labs, documentation, and relevant people for interviews.
- P2 is IPA chair. He supports the use of the IPA facilities for this project.
- P3, P4 and P5 will provide access to shared resource imaging labs, documentation, and relevant people for interviews.
- P6 funded the Access All Areas in Labs project, designed and assessed a highly accessible clean room pharmaceutical lab. They have a mandate to catalyse and facilitate growth between academic and industrial partners.
- P7 and P8 are learned societies with approx. 69,000 members with an interest in chemistry, and biomedical science, respectively.
- P9 has personal experience of disability, researches biomedical MRI, and is chair of a super- network that connects and represents disabled staff networks.
- P10 are co-leads of the EDI Hub project. They have extensive experience in EDI in engineering, maths, and physical sciences.
- P11 supports discovery research into life, health and wellbeing with a £36.8 billion investment portfolio.
- P12 has 8000 fellows and promotes science for the benefit of humanity awarding £110 million in grants last year.
- P13 is is the main funding body for engineering and physical sciences research in the UK awarding £800 million in grants per year.

The Research Context

There is a clear need for a social model of disability informed and co-created assessment of the accessibility of laboratory design and use. This project would assess the accessibility of shared

resource laboratories, their structures, equipment, and the protocols for their booking and use. We have access to shared facilities in four universities of the Eastern Academic Research Consortium (EARC; University of East Anglia (UEA), University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex). They have created the EARC Imaging Platform Alliance (EARC IPA) that allows researchers to access a wide range of highly specialist imaging equipment hosted across the four institutions.

UEA also has two facilities designed to meet highly accessible guidelines (UEA 2016). These are a new build (New Science Building) with biology, chemistry, physics and electronic labs, and a refurbishment (Productivity East) with engineering labs, which have been in use for over five years.

Research Design

Work package 1 (WP1): Review disability access records and processes in shared resource laboratories.

We will review the anonymised disability-related records and processes from the shared resource labs e.g. reasonable accommodations, health and safety reports etc. Staff interviews will reveal how processes work and are recorded. The analysis plan will include descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. We will characterise the frequency and types of impairments and associated accommodations, and their impact on usefulness, safety, and acceptability of the lab facilities. We will conduct root cause analyses for safety breaches.

Work Package 2: Assessment of the disability access of shared resource laboratories.

Co-create an accessibility assessment using our access guidelines and refined with input from our research partners. This will include asking their memberships to comment on the initial draft of the access assessment. Then assess the accessibility of all of the facilities where we have permission. Staff at the facilities will be asked to show the research associate around and demonstrate how they are used by visiting researchers.

Work package 3: Interviews with staff and students on the experiences of the accessibility of shared resource laboratories.

Semi-structured interviews will explore people's experience of the shared resource facilities in the context of disability access. For UEA's New Science and Productivity East,

the interviews will examine the experiences of 6 years of use of these facilities designed to be highly accessible.

Interviewees will include those with an interest in or experience of disability access, including students and staff. The analysis plan will include descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

Co-Design

This proposal embeds co-design and co-creation at every stage of development and delivery. Two members of the AAAiLabs team are working on this project which draws on their experiences of and research into lab accessibility and research culture, and the creation of access guidelines (AAAiLabs 2023). Co-I1 is working with the PI on a Wellcome Trust funded project to improve the EDI aspects of research culture. She will help ensure the recruitment of interviewees is intersectional across protected characteristics, lab hierarchy, and roles.

We have permission from partners 1-5 to assess their facilities, share anonymised documents, and ask relevant staff and students to participate in interviews. Recruitment for the interviews will be purposive and intends to identify a wide range of expertise and experience. The interviewees will be disabled or support disabled people, and hold a range of roles (students, technicians, lecturers, researchers, research administrators or managers, human resources, and union representatives) and work in a range of STEMM subjects, in a variety of contexts (teaching, research, support, innovation). In this way we hope to amplify previously under- served populations' voices and ensure the access assessment is generic enough to be applied to most STEMM lab settings, but comprehensive enough to evaluate access needs for a wide variety of impairments (physical, mental, sensory, neurodivergent).

We have recruited a wide range of expert partners in lab accessibility to participate in our steering group. Partners will attend monthly steering group meetings, and comment on emailed documents as needed. Partners will be able to share the project as it develops with their membership for their feedback e.g. refinement of the design of the lab assessment. This will allow a wide range of STEMM subject expertise and disability experience to feed into the project. We expect our partners to co-create with us;

The content of the lab access assessments including advice on which documents to identify and evaluate. They will reach consensus to ensure our assessment criteria are relevant to as wide a range of subject areas and lab types as possible.

The semi-structured interview guides and their associated ethics application.

The analysis and interpretation of all results.

The dissemination of all findings. This will include publishing usable summaries of the access assessments for each facility on their web page so future disabled researchers can view this.

This project will ultimately generate a co-created consensus assessment of lab accessibility, alongside suggestions for solutions that improve or reduce the identified barriers. This access assessment is in high demand, with many of the partners and other STEMM research funders already requesting use of it once created and piloted.

Adverse Event Reporting

There is a low risk that survey or interview participants may become upset by discussing access challenges or discrimination. If an unanticipated adverse event occurs, we shall follow the relevant procedures for the location where the event occurs. If necessary, the unanticipated adverse event is reported using the appropriate protocols (safeguarding, health and safety, data protection etc). All adverse events will be reported to FMH SREC via Ethics Monitor.

All adverse events will be reported by the principal investigator (Dr Katherine Deane). This will occur within the timeframes required by the relevant protocols, usually as soon as possible and at least within a week of the incident occurring.

We will ensure the wellbeing of the participant is prioritised by referring them to wellbeing resources (MIND and staff and student support services). We will provide all participants with the web address for the mental health charity MIND which provides a wide range of mental wellbeing support via a range of routes of access. The number of people accessing this support will not be recorded or reported.

Participants

Participant Group 1: Access Assessment Reviewers

Participant Group 2: Staff demonstrating lab accessibility

Participant Group 3: Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Access Assessment Reviewers will be recruited by advertising the project on social media, web sites, press releases etc. We will ask partner organisations and other relevant organisation whose members are likely to be eligible to share the link to comment online

on the access assessment with their members e.g. Royal Society for Chemistry.
Staff demonstrating lab accessibility will be recruited for the staff showing the DALE research associates around the labs as they are being assessed for access. This will be staff from the EARC Imaging Platform Alliance (EARC IPA) in the Eastern Academic Research Consortium (EARC) i.e. the University of East Anglia (UEA), University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex). They will also be recruited from the staff running the New Science and Productivity East laboratories at UEA.
Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities (EARC IPA, New Science, Productivity East) will be recruited by advertising the project by email, internal newsletters, social media, web sites, etc. Interviewees will include those who currently or historically (within last 6 years) work or study within the shared resource facilities. This will include students, technicians, lecturers, researchers, research administrators or managers, human resources, and union representatives. Whilst students will be eligible (ie a disabled scientist working in a lab/ someone with an interest in lab access) we do not anticipate more than a few students to have relevant expertise and interest.

Invitations and Adverts

The text of the proposed invitations and advertisements are provided in Appendix 1.

1. Access Assessment Reviewers will receive this recruitment material August-September 2025.
2. Staff demonstrating lab accessibility will receive this recruitment material August-September 2025.
3. Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities will receive this recruitment material September-October 2025. This group will include students. The interviews will also run in September-November 2025.

Inclusion Criteria

All participants will be adults (over 18 years old).

1. Access Assessment Reviewers will have an interest in disability access.
2. Staff demonstrating lab accessibility will be members of staff at EARC Imaging Platform Alliance (EARC IPA) i.e. the University of East Anglia (UEA), University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex) and the New Science and Productivity East laboratories at UEA.
3. Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities will

have experience or knowledge of disability access within the EARC IPA, New Science or Productivity East facilities.

Gatekeepers for accessing participants

1. The gatekeepers for Access Assessment Commentators will be relevant learned societies (e.g. The Royal Society for Chemistry), networks (e.g. National Association of Disabled Staff Networks), unions (eg Student Union, University and College Union), and social media groups. In all cases the research team will not access membership contact details directly. Instead, the gatekeepers will advertise the projects to their membership and provide a link to the web pages with details of the project and links to the review of the access assessment.
2. Staff demonstrating lab accessibility will be contacted by email by the management of EARC IPA, New Science, and Productivity East facilities. Many of these staff are already named partners on the grant.
3. Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities will be contacted via email, social media, internal newsletters, posters etc by the relevant university departments that use the facilities and the university alumni teams. Some of the interviewees are already named partners on the DALE project but excluding these individuals the research team will not be given direct access to potential participant's contact details.
4. The projects will be advertised generally on social media, and through contacts known to the project team.

We have agreement in principle from many of these groups and organisations. We will seek gatekeeper permission once ethics has been obtained. We will contact gatekeepers Aug-Oct 2025 by publicly available contact details and via contact details of partners on the DALE grant.

We will document outreach and dissemination methods systematically. We will monitor and record which groups are contacted, all gatekeeper permission documents will be saved and provided to ethics prior to us sharing materials. Any gatekeepers who fail to respond or who refuse permission will be recorded and no materials will be shared with them. If we become aware of any groups that have shared our materials without us directly contacting them, we will ask them for written confirmation of their willingness to act as gatekeepers and share our recruitment materials. However, as we will not have direct access to their membership it is possible that some groups may advertise our project without our

knowledge.

Sense of Obligation to Participate

There is no obligation to participate in groups 1 and 3.

Group 2 are staff demonstrating their lab's accessibility. The facilities they are showing the research team around are partners on the DALE project. Individual staff members will be able to refuse to participate or withdraw, but they will have to let their line managers know so a replacement member of staff can be identified. We recognize that this may generate a sense of obligation to participate. Phil Ward, Director of the Eastern ARC, has written a letter (Appendix 5) which will be sent by email direct to the staff in all of the facilities involved in this project. A similar article will also be published in staff newsletters (Appendix 6). This letter and newsletter article explains the voluntary nature of staff's involvement and emphasises that managers must find alternate willing staff should anyone indicate that they do not wish to participate. The letter and article provide web links to all of the relevant information sheets and consent forms. This letter will be sent to all facilities' staff as soon as we have ethics approval i.e. well in advance of the lab assessments taking place. The newsletter article will be published in September.

These staff will be asked to demonstrate how the lab facilities and protocols work and are adapted for disabled users. They will also comment on the comprehensiveness and usefulness of the lab access assessment. They will be doing this as part of their normal role as technicians/ researchers working in the participating facilities.

If we get any serious concerns raised regarding the possibility of coercion, we will report these to FMH SREC as soon as possible, i.e. within a week of their being reported.

Payment for interviews

Groups 1 and 2 will not receive any payment.

Group 3 Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities will receive a £100 payment in recognition of their time and expertise.

Other ethical considerations regarding participation.

The project will be advertised to all potential participants Aug-Oct 2025.

The project will be advertised through articles in newsletters, social media etc. The articles will include a link to the DALE webpage which will have the full details of the project and the three groups in which people could participate if eligible. This will include full information sheets and consent forms.

Interviewees who indicate they are willing to participate on the survey will be responded to on the email address they supply. They will be sent the information sheet and consent form prior to the interview.

Information and Consent

Full text of the following information and consent forms are available in Appendix 2

a) Information for Access Assessment Review
b) Consent for Access Assessment Review
c) Consent to Contact
d) Information for Access Assessment
e) Consent for Access Assessment
f) Information for Interviews
g) Consent for Interviews

1. Access Assessment Reviewers will be provided with an information sheet and consent form before they can view the assessment for review.
2. Staff demonstrating lab accessibility will be provided with an information sheet and consent form before they start to demonstrate the accessibility of their facilities.
3. Interviewees with disability access experience of the shared resource facilities will be provided with an information sheet and consent form before the interview is started.

All participants will provide written confirmation of their decision to take part in the research.

Research Process Documents

Please see Appendix 3 for the outlines of the research processes.

a) Review of Disability Access Assessment.
b) Outline of Access Assessment Process.
c) Interview Demographics Survey
d) Semi-Structured Interview Outline

Influence of research team's characteristics on study design

The project team have substantial expertise and personal experience of working

professionally as disabled people, and of working in scientific settings. They have also received training in how to approach these issues with sensitivity and support. We have checked the survey and interview guide for ease of comprehension and usefulness within the team and our project partners.

The fully accessible project website (W3C compliant) will have a description of the project in video form with closed captions and British Sign language interpretation. The information sheets and consent forms will be provided online as separate documents (via a link) in pdf and word to ensure screen readers can access them. Potential participants can contact the research team to ask for hard copy versions of the information sheets and consent forms in standard text (12pt) or large text (16 pt) formats. Prepaid envelopes will be provided to allow the return of the signed consent forms. If interviewees require access accommodations e.g. British Sign Language interpreters, or rest breaks these will be provided.

The research team recognises that discussion of barriers to accessing work can be upsetting. We will provide all participants with the web address for the mental wellbeing charity MIND. This charity provides holistic support for mental wellbeing via a number of routes (email, online, phone) which makes it suitable to access for a wide range of disabilities.

Records of research data

Transcription

Comments made during lab assessments and interviews will be recorded e.g. using MS Teams. It will be auto-transcribed and the audio checked by the research associate to ensure accuracy of the transcript where needed.

In our experience participants do not have the time or inclination to check transcripts as long as we ensure the anonymisation of all quotes and data collected - which we will do. Therefore, we will not offer participants the opportunity to review their transcripts.

The audio recordings will be kept only as long as it takes us to check the auto-transcription and correct it for accuracy. We expect all audio recordings to be deleted by 6 months after they are recorded i.e. June 2026 at the latest. The transcripts will be anonymized as far as possible and stored on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years after which time they will be deleted.

Photography or video footage (digital assets) of lab access assessment

We will take photographs or videos of our research team and/or the staff from EARC IPA, New Science, Productivity East. These digital assets will be used to demonstrate disability accommodations. The default will be that we will try to record videos and photographs that do not include identifiable images, but we recognize this may not always be possible. We will gain specific consent for photographs and videos that identify individuals as part of the consent form. This is entirely optional and anyone can refuse to have photographs or videos that identify them taken.

The photographs and films will be integrated into the project outputs (guidelines, assessment, reports, papers, training). They will be stored on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years after which time they will be deleted.

Adverse Events

It is possible that discussion of the impact of disability on a person's ability to work in a laboratory setting could be upsetting. Information on MIND's website will be provided. MIND is a charity that has expertise in mental wellbeing. They provide support via a wide range of modes (email, web pages, phone line) which is suitable to ensure access for all participants of this project.

It is possible that an accident could occur during the assessment of the included labs' accessibility. This risk is low as the research team will not be undertaking any specific processes in the labs, just observing their accessibility in use. All members of the research team have been trained in basic lab safety protocols. Any member of the research team undertaking an assessment of a lab's accessibility will have been briefed on any specific hazards present in that lab by the relevant university's lab staff. The university's lab staff will ensure safety protocols are followed, and in the event of an accident they will follow all relevant clean up, first aid, and notification protocols.

Sensitive topics

The impact of disability on working life in laboratories can be a sensitive topic. It can include disclosure of highly sensitive personal data i.e. medical diagnoses, some of which may be socially stigmatized. This could also include discussions around toileting, personal care, physical and psychological damage caused by access barriers.

Provision of guidance to people

The output of the research will create an assessment of disability access in laboratories. These will be used in conjunction with a set of guidelines to enhance the access of disabled scientists to laboratory work settings. These guidelines will be updated as part of this project. Both the assessment and guidelines will state that they are in addition to all other legal duties (e.g. health and safety), and do not supersede or replace them.

Benefits from the project

The research is not intended to be of immediate benefit to the participants. However, we do hope that the publication of the assessment and updated guidelines will highlight how to ensure the accessibility of laboratory facilities. The EARC IAP facilities have committed to publishing the access assessment of their labs online. This will enable all disabled users of the facilities a better understanding of their accessibility and the processes needed to request reasonable accommodations. It will also allow these facilities to identify the need for, and plan for, future access improvements.

Monitoring the research with respect to ethical compliance

The project will be monitored by the principal investigator (Dr Katherine Deane) for ethical compliance. The funder (EDI Caucus) may also examine our research processes to ensure ethical compliance. Any complaints regarding the research process will be directed to HSC Head of School (Prof Christopher Burton) who may also examine our ethical compliance as part of any investigation into a complaint.

Other ethical considerations regarding data collection methods.

We are asking disabled interviewees to provide information about their disability. We will ensure that any reports on this information will not have the potential to identify individuals by aggregating rarer disabilities e.g. "neurodegenerative diseases" rather than "motor neuron disease".

We will take particular care to ensure examples of barriers or poor practice do not identify individuals. Due to the limited number of labs undergoing assessment it will be clear in any

reports that examples will be drawn from EARC IPA or New Science or Productivity East laboratories. Where possible we will try not to identify individual labs in examples of access barriers or poor practice, but all of the facilities are partners on this grant and were aware of this potential reputational risk when agreeing to participate. Where we believe it would be helpful to identify a specific lab that has examples of good practice or access solutions we will aim to do so. If labs could be individually identified, or we wish to name them, we will gain specific written permission from the lab manager to name them in this context. If such permission is not granted, they will only be referred to in a generic manner e.g. “a shared use facility”.

However, we recognize that crediting contributions to this project from all three participating populations is important and respectful of the expertise and efforts of our participants. Therefore, we will specifically ask everyone if they wish to have their contribution credited to them. This credit will take the form of a list of contributors at the end of the revised Access Guidelines. If the contribution results in an unique and original recommendation their details can be listed against this item in the Access Guidelines. Participants will be asked for information on how to cite them and/or their institution/ learned society/ etc. They will always have the option to not be cited.

We will offer to share the results of the DALE research project with participants. This will include a final report on the DALE project, revised Disability Access Guidelines and a Disability Access Assessment. Our default will be to provide these electronically as Word documents. However, we are also able to provide pdf format electronic documents, or hard copy documents with standard sized text or large text. Participants will be asked to contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let the DALE team know their access needs.

This is part of a program of disability access and EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) research. We will invite participants to provide us with their contact details so they can be able to be contacted in the future to take part in other disability access and EDI research. We will never use these contact details for any marketing. Participants will be specifically asked if they are happy being invited to take part in future research by providing their email addresses (and physical address if they require hard copy documents to be posted to them for access needs). This information will be asked for in a survey that is separate from the other information gathered in the three projects so as to ensure the anonymous provision of information if participants so wish.

Participants can decline to give us their contact details at all. Or participants can ask that we just send them the DALE results, after which we will delete their contact details. This will happen no later than 6 months after the end of the project (June 2026). If participants agree to being contacted for future research opportunities their contact details will be kept for 5 years (Dec 2030) on the secure and encrypted computer servers at the University of East Anglia.

Health and safety

There is a low risk that participants in any of our 3 populations may become upset by discussing access challenges or disability discrimination. Information will be provided to all participants on how to gain mental wellbeing support from the mental health charity MIND.

There is a low risk to the research team and staff demonstrating lab accessibility. They will be walking around active labs and examining equipment and seeing how it is used. However they will all have had suitable health and safety training for working safely in laboratory settings, and will be informed of any lab-specific hazards before they start any assessments. Additionally they will not be running any active protocols using the reagents and samples present in the labs. The team will wear appropriate PPE (lab coats and goggles) and face masks on request. So the hazard risk is low.

The interviews about the disability access experiences of the shared resource facilities will be conducted either face-to-face or virtually (online or by telephone). The participants will be able to choose how they wish the interviews to take place. For face-to-face interviews we will ensure the room is well ventilated and wear face masks on request. Online or telephone interviews will remove infection risks and reduce the energy needed to attend an interview. All interviews will allow breaks for fatigue management. Should an interviewee request that we pause the interview and continue it on another day we will do so. However if the interview was being conducted face-to-face it is likely that the continuation will have to be online (due to a limited travel budget).

Safeguarding protocol.

Many of the participants in this research study will be adults with disabilities, and so considerations must be made to safeguard them if they are vulnerable. However, they are also all adults working professionally or studying at university (or who have retired or stopped studying) and so it is reasonable to assume that they possess mental competence. We will assume that they will be able to judge if they need further

assistance to address safeguarding concerns highlighted by this research e.g. breaches of health and safety or discriminatory behaviours. In both these instances an adult professional or adult university student would be expected to address these concerns by following appropriate reporting policies within their workplace or university.

All reviews about the assessment will be anonymised so we will not be able to respond to any safeguarding issues raised in this part of the study. A link to the mental health charity MIND will be provided in the information sheet for anyone who finds recalling any incidents of disability discrimination distressing.

The researchers conducting the assessment of lab access and the interviews will have undertaken safeguarding training. If a disabled participant raises an issue which causes safeguarding concerns this will be identified immediately to them, and they will be asked if they wish to have a safeguarding report to be made in order to assist them in addressing the issue. If they indicate that they do not, we will record this and take no further action. If they do wish for a safeguarding report to be made, the research team will take advice from the UEA Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@uea.ac.uk) as to the appropriate next steps.

Harm mitigation

It is possible that participants in either the survey or interviews could disclose poor practices. These practices could be in breach of health and safety rules, or could be descriptions of poor behaviour e.g. bullying or discrimination.

In general no personally or institutionally identifying information will be collected in the review of the access assessment. Should an open text response identify a person or institution this response will be anonymised.

Particular care will be taken to ensure reviewer's comments about poor practice or access barriers identified in the lab access assessment or the interviews will be anonymised as far as possible. We will take particular care to ensure participants are aware that complete anonymisation may be impossible as the pool of labs being evaluated is by necessity limited, and that they should use their professional judgement about the potential for harm to them personally or institutionally around disclosing issues that could lead to reputational harm to the institution. All issues relating to individuals will be anonymised in full.

Secondary Datasets

The Eastern Academic Research Consortium Imaging Platform Alliance (EARC IPA) Laboratories at the Universities of East Anglia, Kent, Sussex, and Essex and the New Science and Productivity East laboratories at the University of East Anglia are partners to the DALE project. All of these facilities have agreed to share anonymised data detailing the disability-related reasonable accommodations and disability-related health and safety reports for their facilities. The names of the people involved will be deleted from the documents they share with the DALE team. The data in these datasets were provided to the participating universities. The legal basis for processing this data is listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR which allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

However, we recognise that due to the unique nature of disabilities, individuals could still be identified even though names are removed. The DALE team will analyse these documents to identify frequency of issues, common themes and create generic case studies for publications and training. This data will be used to refine the access guidelines and assessments being created by the DALE team. Care will be taken to ensure that no individual could be identified from the descriptions used in the DALE outputs (reports, papers, guidelines, assessments, training). This will be done in a number of ways e.g. by grouping impairments or institutions, or describing them in more general terms e.g. mobility impairment rather than wheelchair user. The original reports will be stored by the DALE team on the secure computer server at UEA for no more than 6 months after the end of the project (June 2026). After this point these records will be securely destroyed.

Health and safety - researchers

The DALE research associates will be assessing the accessibility of the lab facilities. They will not be directly using the facilities. They will use personal protective equipment (PPE) as required by each laboratory facility. They will wear face masks if requested by any member of staff present.

There is a low risk that the researchers or the staff showing them around the lab environments could have an accident involving the equipment, reagents, and samples present in these labs. All staff will have training in lab safety protocols and will be supervised by the lab's staff. Therefore, we believe the risk will be very low. However, if an accident occurs it will be reported according to the facility's safety protocols.

Action Plan for Lone Working.

The project does not require the research team members to do any lone working.

The review of access assessment is online.

The access assessment of included labs will be conducted with the assistance of laboratory staff. The assessment will take place during normal working hours and so no lone working will occur.

The interviews will be conducted online or face-to-face at the partner universities. The interviews will take place in suitably accessible private working spaces during normal working hours and so no lone working will occur.

Risk assessment

The risk assessment for the staff conducting the access assessment of labs is provided in Appendix 4.

Data management

Anonymised data

The project will collect personal data. These data will be anonymised by removing the names. Datasets of responses to the review of reasonable accommodation requests and health and safety reports, review of the access assessment, the assessment of lab accessibility, and the interviews will have names removed as soon as possible and replaced with unique identifiers.

However, we recognise that due to the unique nature of disabilities, individuals could still be identified even though names are removed. The DALE team will analyse these data to create descriptive statistics of demographics, impairments, accommodations, and safety issues, identify common themes, and create generic exemplars. This will allow us to create data for reports, publications, guidelines, assessments, and training resources. This data will be used to refine the access guidelines and assessments being created by the DALE team. Care will be taken to ensure that no individual could be identified from the descriptions used in the DALE outputs (reports, papers, guidelines, assessments, training). This will be done in a number of ways e.g. by grouping impairments or institutions, or describing them in more general terms e.g. mobility impairment rather than wheelchair user.

Data that identifies participants

We will take photographs or videos of our research team and/or the staff from EARC IPA,

New Science, Productivity East. These digital assets will be used to demonstrate disability accommodations. The default will be that we will try to record videos and photographs that do not include identifiable images, but we recognize this may not always be possible. We will gain specific consent for photographs and videos that identify individuals as part of the consent form. This is entirely optional and anyone can refuse to have photographs or videos that identify them taken.

We will take particular care to ensure examples of barriers or poor practice do not identify individuals. Due to the limited number of labs undergoing assessment it will be clear in any reports that examples will be drawn from EARC IPA or New Science or Productivity East laboratories. Where possible we will try not to identify individual labs in examples of access barriers or poor practice, but all of the facilities are partners on this grant and were aware of this potential reputational risk when agreeing to participate. Where we believe it would be helpful to identify a specific lab that has examples of good practice or access solutions we will aim to do so. If labs could be individually identified, or we wish to name them, we will gain specific written permission from the lab manager to name them in this context. If such permission is not granted, they will only be referred to in a generic manner e.g. “a shared use facility”.

We recognize that crediting contributions to this project from all three participating populations is important and respectful of the expertise and efforts of our participants. Therefore, we will specifically ask everyone if they wish to have their contribution credited to them. This credit will take the form of a list of contributors at the end of the revised Access Guidelines. If the contribution results in an unique and original recommendation their details can be listed against this item in the Access Guidelines. Participants will be asked for information on how to cite them and/or their institution/ learned society/ etc. They will always have the option to not be cited.

Public Data Repository

Fully anonymised datasets will be placed into the Open Science Framework (OSF) https://osf.io/. Care will be taken to deposit data that cannot easily inadvertently identify participants due to rare disabilities etc. This data will be available for scholarly and educational purposes. We have explicitly asked for permission for this on all the consent forms.

Data Access and Storage

The DALE research team and steering group will have access to the data during the project. This data will be stored on the secure UEA Shared Drive. After the project is complete, anonymised datasets will be deposited with the OSF and be available publicly for up to 10 years.

How long will research data be stored after the study has ended?

The audio recordings of interviews and lab access assessments will be kept only as long as it takes us to check the auto-transcription and correct it for accuracy; at most 6 months after they are recorded i.e. June 2026 at the latest.

Participants who wish to receive copies of the DALE project's outputs will provide their contact details. These will be kept until the reports, guidelines, and assessments are disseminated. This will be at most 6 months after they end of the DALE project i.e. June 2026 at the latest. After this time the contact details in this dataset will be deleted.

Participants who indicate that they would be interested in being appraised of future research projects in the disability access or EDI areas will have their emails kept for 5 years after the end of the DALE project i.e. December 2030. After this time the contact details in this dataset will be deleted.

The data from the review of the access assessment, the transcripts for interviews, and the transcripts and notes for the lab access assessments will be anonymized as far as possible and stored on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years i.e. December 2035, after which time they will be deleted.

Fully anonymised datasets will be placed into the Open Science Framework for 10 years after which time they will be deleted.

Data deletion

Paper copies provided as disability accommodations of responses to the review of the access assessment, or the demographic survey for interviewees will be copied onto the electronic forms as soon as possible. The paper copies will then be placed in confidential waste bins and disposed of.

All other project data will be deleted from the UEA Shared drive or the OSF data repository when no longer required

Outputs

- Final report and seminar for EDICa.
- A revision of the Lab Disability Access Guidelines.
- A consensus and pilot of how to assess lab accessibility.
- Publication of disability access information on the facilities' webpages.
- Peer reviewed publications highlighting lab access challenges and solutions.
- Present findings at relevant conferences.
- Creation of training materials in the use of the access guidelines and assessments.

Appendix 1: Invitations and Adverts

Gatekeeper documentation (letters of invite, emails etc).

1. Email text to gatekeepers for review of access assessment

DALE: Disability Access in Laboratory Environments is seeking people with an interest in disability access to review our lab access assessment to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. This project is funded by The EDI Caucus and has ethical approval from the University of East Anglia (ETH2425-2405). Please can you share the following advert with your membership.

2. Advert for review of access assessment

DISABILITY ACCESS IN LABORATORY ENVIRONMENTS

We need people with an interest in disability access to review our lab access assessment to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. We want to know if the assessment is asking about the right areas of access, whether it is the right level of detail, and whether there are any areas we have missed. We also want to understand if there will be any challenges for implementing this assessment e.g. training needed, provision of exemplar assessments etc. This project is funded by The EDI Caucus and has ethical approval from the University of East Anglia (ETH2425-2405).
If you are interested, please click here [LINK TO DALE WEBSITE AND ACCESS REVIEW INFO]

3. Email text to gatekeepers at Eastern ARC institutions for interviews. (University of East Anglia (UEA), University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex)

Please can you share the following advert to your staff and students. We need people with experience of using the labs of the Eastern Academic Research Consortium Imaging Platform Alliance who have an interest in disability access. We wish to interview them about their experience of using these facilities. We will pay participants £100 for their time. The DALE project is creating an assessment of disability access in labs and we need to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. This project is funded by The EDI Caucus and has ethical approval from the University of East Anglia (ETH2425-2405).

4 Advert for interview of users of New Science and Productivity East

DISABILITY ACCESS IN LABORATORY ENVIRONMENTS

£100 FOR INTERVIEW

We need to interview people with experience of using New Science and/or Productivity East at UEA, and who have an interest in disability access. New Science and Productivity East were designed to be highly accessible. We want to check that the design advice was correct, comprehensive, and useful. We want to know how these facilities work for disabled people and for staff supporting disabled people using these labs.
The DALE project is creating assessment of disability access in labs and we need to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. These interviews will help refine the access assessment.
This project is funded by The EDI Caucus and has ethical approval from the University of East Anglia (ETH2425-2405). You will be paid £100 for taking the time to take part in this interview.
If you are interested, please click here [LINK TO DALE WEBSITE AND INTERVIEW INFO]

5 Advert for interview of users of Eastern Academic Research Consortium Imaging Platform Alliance (EARC IPA) Laboratories

DISABILITY ACCESS IN LABORATORY ENVIRONMENTS

£100 FOR INTERVIEW

We need to interview people with experience of using Eastern Academic Research Consortium Imaging Platform Alliance (EARC IPA) Laboratories and who have an interest in disability access. We want to know how these facilities work for disabled people and for staff supporting disabled people using these labs.
The DALE project is creating assessment of disability access in labs and we need to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. These interviews will help refine the access assessment.
This project is funded by The EDI Caucus and has ethical approval from the University of East Anglia (ETH2425-2405). You will be paid £100 for taking the time to take part in this interview.
If you are interested, please click here [LINK TO DALE WEBSITE AND INTERVIEW INFO]

Appendix 2: Information and Consent

a) Information for Access Assessment Review

b) Consent for Access Assessment Review

c) Consent to Contact

d) Information for Access Assessment

e) Consent for Access Assessment

f) Interviews Information Sheet

g) Consent for Interviews

Information for Access Assessment Review

REVIEW OF DALE ACCESS ASSESSMENT INFORMATION SHEET

Language used

We have used the following short-hand terms throughout this document. “Disabled researchers” refers to research staff and students from any discipline who are disabled, D/deaf, have long term health conditions or injury (physical or mental), or who are neurodivergent, and whose condition has a significant impact on their ability to carry out everyday tasks. “Labs” refers to laboratories, manufacturing and production lines, engineering facilities, workshops, technical workspaces etc.

Information about the disability access assessment for labs

The thinking behind this assessment comes from the idea that people are most often disabled by inaccessible structures or procedures that do not appropriately accommodate disabled people’s needs (also known as the Social Model of Disability). Disabled people often have expertise on how best to accommodate their needs, so any assessment must be co-created with them, which has been done in this lab access assessment. This assessment aims to assess disability access across lab work ecosystems:

1. Structural access – the physical design of laboratories and fixed equipment in them.
2. Equipment access – e.g. how to access controls.
3. Protocol access – adaptation of lab protocols e.g. evacuation protocols, when technician assistance is used, remote access etc.
4. Dissemination access – e.g. what information is available on the lab’s web pages describing access, how to request reasonable accommodations.
5. General working practices – e.g. flexible working, wellbeing, staff training.

We are asking people with an interest in lab access to read and review the proposed disability assessment for labs. We want to know if the assessment is asking about the right areas of access, whether it is the right level of detail, and whether there are any areas we have missed. We also want to understand if there will be any challenges for implementing this assessment e.g. training needed, provision of exemplar assessments etc.

The assessment will take around 30 minutes to read and then your review will take a further 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the detail of review you are able to provide. Any information you provide is extremely useful and you can skip any sections that you do not feel are relevant to you.

The review data will be stored in an anonymised format on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years after which time they will be deleted. Any quotes of your comments that we subsequently use in reports, guidelines, or assessments generated from the DALE project will ensure no people or institutions are specifically identifiable.

How we will use the review data

This project will ask you to review an initial draft assessment of disability access in labs. Your comments will inform the revision of this assessment and its associate access guidelines to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. The review data will be anonymized as far as possible and stored on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years after which time they will be deleted.

How will we make this project accessible for you?

We want to ensure that this project is accessible to all. A video of this information sheet being read out is available at [https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs/DALE/DALE]. Feel free to use an assistant to help you complete your review. We believe the JISC platform hosting this review is compatible with most screen readers. If you have any problems with this or would prefer the review to be emailed as a Word or pdf formatted document. If you want a hard copy document posted to you, we can provide this with standard sized text (12 point font) or large text (16 point font) and we will provide you with a stamped addressed envelope to return your review. Please email the project's research associate May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

Can I withdraw from the review?

Your review can be anonymous. If so, once you have hit submit at the end of the review (or posted it to the team) you will not be able to withdraw your review as we will not be able to identify them.

However, we will also be asking if you wish to be credited for your revisions. If you agree to be identified, or for your institution to be identified, then we would be able to identify your responses. In this case we ask that you let us know no later than 2 weeks after submission if you do not wish to be identified, or you wish to withdraw your review.

If you find completing the review upsetting

We recognise that recalling discriminatory events can be distressing. If you feel you need support for your mental wellbeing after completing this review, we highly recommend the services provided by the mental health charity MIND (https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/).

Being given credit, final reports, and keeping in touch

At the end of the consent form, you have the option to follow a link to a separate web page. Here we will ask if you wish for your suggestions to be credited to you and/or your institution on the revised Access Guidelines. If you agree, we will ask for information on how to cite you. We will also ask if you wish to receive a copy of the report on this project and the final version of the lab disability access assessment. This can be by email or hard copy.

Finally, this is just one project in a program of EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) research. If you might be interested in participating in other related research, we will ask for your email. We will not use this for any marketing purposes and will keep your email address for 5 years only on the secure encrypted computer servers at the University of East Anglia.

Ethics Approval

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the FMH S-REC (Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Subcommittee) reference ETH2425-2405. The project is funded by the EDI Caucus who are funded by UKRI and The British Academy.

Queries, complaints or concerns

If you have any queries or complaints or concerns, please contact the project lead, Dr Katherine Deane, Associate Professor in Healthcare Research, School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, NORWICH NR4 7TJ, k.deane@uea.ac.uk

If you have concerns or complaints that you wish to make to someone independent of the study, please contact Professor Christopher Burton, Head of School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, NORWICH NR4 7TJ, chris.burton@uea.ac.uk or 01603 59 7094

Data management information

Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy. According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.

- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

What are you consenting to?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have downloaded a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep. (Available in word or pdf formats, standard or large fonts, electronic or hard copy. Please email your access requests to May Gauntlett m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk).

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia (or the EDI Caucus) now or in the future.

This information was last updated on 12/08/2025.

Now click here [*INSERT LINK TO WEB ADDRESS FOR CONSENT SURVEY*].

to complete your consent and start your review of the lab access assessment.

Consent for Access Assessment Review

CONSENT FORM FOR REVIEW OF ACCESS ASSESSMENT

Please make sure you have read the Information Sheet carefully before consenting to take part – it can be found here: *[INSERT LINK TO ONLINE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET]*

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

We aim to make this project as accessible as possible. A video of this document being read out is available here [*INSERT LINK TO ONLINE VIDEO OF READING OF CONSENT FORM*]. If you need this document in an alternate format (pdf format electronic documents, or hard copy documents with standard sized text or large text), please contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the review of the DALE access assessment. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me.

Yes

No

2. I understand the purpose of the review of the DALE access assessment, what I will be asked to do, and any risks or benefits involved.

Yes

No

3. The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the review of the DALE access assessment, and I am happy with the answers.

Yes

No

4. I understand that participating in this review of the DALE access assessment is completely voluntary and I am not required to take part. My decision whether to be in the survey will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or the EDI Caucus. *

Yes

No

5. I understand that the results of this review of the DALE access assessment will only be used in the way described in the information sheet. *

Yes

No

6. I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this review of the DALE access assessment will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to.

Yes

No

7. I consent to the anonymised dataset to be re-used by other researchers.

Yes

No

8. I consent to take part in this review of the DALE access assessment.

Yes

No

[If answering 'No' to questions 1 – 8 only]

Thank you for your interest in the DALE research project.

However, you are required to confirm 'Yes' to participate in this review of the DALE access assessment.

Please press 'Back' to return to the previous section or 'Submit' if you no longer wish to take part.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

[If answering 'Yes' to questions 1 – 8 only]

Thank you for consenting to complete the review of the DALE access assessment.

Please click here to review the DALE access assessment *[INSERT LINK FOR REVIEW OF DALE ACCESS ASSESSMENT*].

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

Consent to Contact

CONSENT TO CONTACT

We aim to make this project as accessible as possible. A video of this document being read out is available here *[INSERT LINK TO VIDEO].* If you need this document in an alternate format (pdf format electronic documents, or hard copy documents with standard sized text or large text), please contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

We would like to share the results of the DALE research project with you. This will include a final report on the DALE project, revised Disability Access Guidelines and a Disability Access Assessment. Our default will be to provide these electronically as Word documents. However, we are also able to provide pdf format electronic documents, or hard copy documents with standard sized text or large text. Please contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

This is part of a program of disability access and EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) research. We would love to be able to invite you in the future to take part in other disability access and EDI research. We will never use these contact details for any marketing. If you are happy being invited to take part in future research, please indicate below. These contact details will be kept for 5 years on the secure and encrypted computer servers at the University of East Anglia. If you do not agree to being contacted for future research opportunities, we will only keep your contact details until we have sent out the DALE results.

I wish to get a copy of the report on this study YES ☐ NO ☐

I wish to get a copy of the access guides and assessment YES ☐ NO ☐

I consent to be invited to take part in future access research for up to 5 years

YES ☐ NO ☐

Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐

(If YES to any of the above 3 options)

Email address .....

Postal address (only if you require hard copy versions) .....

Signature (typed name) .....

Date .....

Information for Access Assessment

DISABILITY ACCESS ASSESSMENT OF LABS INFORMATION SHEET

Language used

We have used the following short-hand terms throughout this document. “Disabled researchers” refers to research staff and students from any discipline who are disabled, D/deaf, have long term health conditions or injury (physical or mental), or who are neurodivergent, and whose condition has a significant impact on their ability to carry out everyday tasks. “Labs” refers to laboratories, manufacturing and production lines, engineering facilities, workshops, technical workspaces etc.

Information about the disability access assessment for labs

There is a clear need an assessment of how accessible labs are for disabled people. The thinking behind this assessment comes from the idea that people are most often disabled by inaccessible structures or procedures that do not appropriately accommodate disabled people’s needs (also known as the Social Model of Disability). Disabled people often have expertise on how best to accommodate their needs, so any assessment must be co-created with them, which has been done in this lab access assessment. This assessment aims to assess disability access across lab work ecosystems:

2. Structural access – the physical design of laboratories and fixed equipment in them.
3. Equipment access – e.g. how to access controls.
4. Protocol access – adaptation of lab protocols e.g. evacuation protocols, when technician assistance is used, remote access etc.
5. Dissemination access – e.g. what information is available on the lab’s web pages describing access, how to request reasonable accommodations.
6. General working practices – e.g. flexible working, wellbeing, staff training.

Information about the access assessment process

We will assess the disability access of your laboratory and relevant spaces associated with laboratories e.g. corridors, stairs, break rooms, toilets, lifts, fire escapes, entrance foyers. You will be asked to show the DALE team members around and demonstrate how they are used by visiting researchers. The DALE team will use force gauges, light and sound meters, and 3D scanners to assess the facilities against a checklist.

We want your opinion on whether the assessment is asking about the right areas of access, whether it is the right level of detail, and whether there are any areas we have missed. We

also want to understand if there will be any challenges for implementing this assessment e.g. training needed, provision of exemplar assessments etc.

We plan to visit your labs twice to complete the access assessment. The duration of the lab assessment is unclear at present (determining this is one of the project outcomes), however we expect to spend between 5-15 hours in total over 2 visits completing the assessment. You may not need to be present for the entire time.

We may record our conversations with you as we assess the lab's accessibility. These conversations will be auto-transcribed. The research team will then edit the auto-transcription for accuracy and destroy the audio recording. You will be provided with a transcript of these conversations within a week of our visit. You have the option to edit or delete any of the transcript but are under no obligation to do so. If you do wish to edit the transcript we ask that you return the edited version to the DALE team within a fortnight of you receiving it.

We may take photographs of the facilities and videos to demonstrate their use as part of the access assessment. This may include identifiable images of yourself. If you do not wish to be identifiable in the photos or videos please let us know and we will edit them to ensure you are not identifiable. This will include deleting photos in which you are identifiable. We may also edit photos to remove any possibility of identification e.g. cropping photos to include just a hand, pixelating or blurring identifiable features e.g. tattoos, unique jewellery, logos on clothing etc. The originals of these edited photos in which you are identifiable will be deleted. Photos and videos will be used in reports, guidelines, assessments etc. generated from the DALE project.

Anonymisation of data

Any quotes used in reports, guidelines, assessments etc. generated from the DALE project will try to ensure no people or institutions are specifically identifiable. However complete anonymisation may be impossible as the pool of labs being evaluated is by necessity limited. All participating institutions are aware that disability access is a rapidly evolving field, and that no institution will currently achieve a perfect assessment, which could be seen as institutionally embarrassing. However, they understand that the project aims to improve access and is not looking to shame or embarrass institutions that are actively trying to improve the systemic accessibility of laboratories. Negative observations made by staff to the DALE team about disability access will be regarded as constructive steps in allowing the institutions to identify access deficits and therefore make plans to mitigate or solve these

issues. So, if you make negative observations about your facility's access, we have been assured that no negative impacts on your career, job appraisals etc. will result from these.

How we will use the access assessment data

This project will ask you to facilitate the assessment of disability access in labs. Your comments on this process will inform the evaluation of the access assessment's usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. We expect all audio recordings to be deleted by 6 months after they are recorded i.e. June 2026 at the latest. The transcripts will be anonymized as far as possible and stored on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years after which time they will be deleted.

How will we make this project accessible for you?

We want to ensure that this project is accessible to all. A video of this information sheet being read out is available at [https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs/DALE/DALE]. Please email the project's research associate May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know if you have any other access needs.

Can I withdraw from the lab access assessment?

Your institution has agreed to participate in the DALE project. If you do not wish to facilitate the assessment of your facilities by the DALE team, that is completely allowed. However, we do ask that you inform your line manager of this refusal to participate, as they will need to organise the provision of an alternate member of staff to facilitate the assessment.

If you decide to withdraw whilst the lab access assessment is ongoing, you will need to inform your line manager so we can discuss alternate arrangements to allow the completion of the access assessment.

If you find completing the lab access assessment upsetting

We recognise that recalling discriminatory events can be distressing. If you feel you need support for your mental wellbeing after completing the lab access assessment, we highly recommend the services provided by the mental health charity MIND (https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/).

Being given credit, final reports, and keeping in touch

At the end of the consent form, you have the option to follow a link to a separate web page. Here we will ask if you wish for your suggestions to be credited to you and/or your institution on the revised Access Guidelines. If you agree, we will ask for information on how to cite you. We will also ask if you wish to receive a copy of the report on this project and the final version of the lab disability access assessment. This can be by email or hard copy.

Finally, this is just one project in a program of EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) research. If you might be interested in participating in other related research, we will ask for your email. We will not use this for any marketing purposes and will keep your email address for 5 years only on the secure encrypted computer servers at the University of East Anglia.

Ethics Approval

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the FMH S-REC (Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Subcommittee) reference ETH2425-2405. The project is funded by the EDI Caucus who are funded by UKRI and The British Academy.

Queries, complaints or concerns

If you have any queries or complaints or concerns, please contact the project lead, Dr Katherine Deane, Associate Professor in Healthcare Research, School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, NORWICH NR4 7TJ, k.deane@uea.ac.uk

If you have concerns or complaints that you wish to make to someone independent of the study, please contact Professor Christopher Burton, Head of School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, NORWICH NR4 7TJ, chris.burton@uea.ac.uk or 01603 59 7094

Data management information

Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy. According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

What are you consenting to?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have downloaded a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep. (Available in word or pdf formats, standard or large fonts, electronic or hard copy. Please email your access requests to May Gauntlett m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk).

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia (or the EDI Caucus) now or in the future.

This information was last updated on 12/08/2025.

Now click here [*INSERT LINK TO WEB ADDRESS FOR CONSENT SURVEY*].

to complete your consent.

Consent for Access Assessment

CONSENT FORM FOR LAB ACCESS ASSESSMENT

Please make sure you have read the Information Sheet carefully before consenting to take part – it can be found here: *[INSERT LINK TO ONLINE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET]*

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

We aim to make this project as accessible as possible. A video of this document being read out is available here [*INSERT LINK TO ONLINE VIDEO OF READING OF CONSENT FORM*]. If you need this document in an alternate format (pdf format electronic documents, or hard copy documents with standard sized text or large text), please contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

2. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the DALE Lab access assessment. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me.

Yes

No

4. I understand the purpose of the DALE Lab access assessment, what I will be asked to do, and any risks or benefits involved.

Yes

No

5. The researchers have answered any questions that I had about DALE Lab access assessment, and I am happy with the answers.

Yes

No

5. I understand that participating in this DALE Lab access assessment is completely voluntary and I am not required to take part. My decision whether to be in the survey will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or the EDI Caucus. *

Yes

No

6. I understand that the results of this DALE Lab access assessment will only be used in the way described in the information sheet. *

Yes

No

7. I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this DALE Lab access assessment will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to.

Yes

No

8. I understand that photographs and/or videos to demonstrate the use of the facilities may include identifiable images of myself. I agree to these being published in a form that can identify me. (NB. This is optional, we can edit the photos and videos to ensure no-one is identifiable).

Yes

No

9. I consent to the anonymised dataset to be re-used by other researchers.

Yes

No

10. I consent to take part in this review of the DALE Lab access assessment.

Yes

No

[If answering 'No' to questions 1 – 6 and 8-9 only]

Thank you for your interest in the DALE research project.

However, you are required to confirm 'Yes' to participate in this review of the DALE Lab access assessment.

Please press 'Back' to return to the previous section or 'Submit' if you no longer wish to take part.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

[If answering 'Yes' to questions 1 – 6 and 8-9 only]

Thank you for consenting to complete the review of the DALE access assessment.

The DALE team will visit your lab and assess its accessibility on the date and time agreed with you.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

Interview Information Sheet

INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET

Language used

We have used the following short-hand terms throughout this document. “Disabled researchers” refers to research staff and students from any discipline who are disabled, D/deaf, have long term health conditions or injury (physical or mental), or who are neurodivergent, and whose condition has a significant impact on their ability to carry out everyday tasks. “Labs” refers to laboratories, manufacturing and production lines, engineering facilities, workshops, technical workspaces etc.

Information about the disability access assessment for labs

The thinking behind this assessment comes from the idea that people are most often disabled by inaccessible structures or procedures that do not appropriately accommodate disabled people’s needs (also known as the Social Model of Disability). Disabled people often have expertise on how best to accommodate their needs, so any assessment must be co-created with them, which has been done in this lab access assessment. This assessment aims to assess disability access across lab work ecosystems:

3. Structural access – the physical design of laboratories and fixed equipment in them.
4. Equipment access – e.g. how to access controls.
5. Protocol access – adaptation of lab protocols e.g. evacuation protocols, when technician assistance is used, remote access etc.
6. Dissemination access – e.g. what information is available on the lab’s web pages describing access, how to request reasonable accommodations.
7. General working practices – e.g. flexible working, wellbeing, staff training.

Information about the interview

We need to interview people with experience of using the labs of the Eastern Academic Research Consortium Imaging Platform Alliance (University of East Anglia (UEA), University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex) or UEA’s New Science or Productivity East labs, who have an interest in disability access. We want to know how these facilities work for disabled people and for staff supporting disabled people using these labs.

For those with experience of using New Science and/or Productivity East, these labs were designed to be highly accessible. We want to check that the design advice was correct, comprehensive, and useful. We want to know how these facilities work for disabled people and for staff supporting disabled people using these labs.

The DALE project is creating an access assessment for labs and we need to ensure its usefulness and relevance to the widest possible range of labs and disabilities. These interviews will help refine the access assessment.

We will ask you to complete a brief survey of your demographic characteristics before the start of the interview (5 minutes). The interview will take 1 hour and you will be paid £100 for your participation. You will be asked to separately provide UEA's finance team with your bank details in order for this payment to be processed. The interview will be recorded and auto-transcribed. The research team will then edit the auto-transcription for accuracy and destroy the audio recording. You will be provided with a transcript of these interviews within a week. You have the option to edit or delete any of the transcript but are under no obligation to do so. If you do wish to edit the transcript, we ask that you return the edited version to the DALE team within a fortnight of you receiving it.

Anonymisation of data

Any quotes used in reports, guidelines, assessments etc. generated from the DALE project will try to ensure no people or institutions are specifically identifiable. However complete anonymisation may be impossible as the pool of labs being evaluated is by necessity limited. All participating institutions are aware that disability access is a rapidly evolving field, and that no institution will currently achieve a perfect assessment, which could be seen as institutionally embarrassing. However, they understand that the project aims to improve access and is not looking to shame or embarrass institutions that are actively trying to improve the systemic accessibility of laboratories. Negative observations made by interviewees to the DALE team about disability access will be regarded as constructive steps in allowing the institutions to identify access deficits and therefore make plans to mitigate or solve these issues. So, if you make negative observations about disability access, we have been assured that they will have no negative impact on your student progression, career, job appraisals etc.

How we will use the interview data

This project will ask you about your experiences of using the lab facilities either as a disabled user or as a member of staff facilitating access. The interview results will inform the revisions of the disability access assessment, its associated access guidelines, as well as papers and presentations on the themes identified. We expect all audio recordings to be deleted by 6 months after they are recorded i.e. June 2026 at the latest. The transcripts will be anonymized as far as possible and stored on the secure UEA computer server for 10 years after which time they will be deleted.

How will we make this project accessible for you?

We want to ensure that this project is accessible to all. A video of this information sheet being read out is available at [https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs/DALE/DALE]. The interviews will be arranged at a time and date convenient to you.

If you need someone with you for disability access reasons to help you communicate clearly at your interview please feel free to bring them along. Because these communication partners may contribute to the interview they will also need to read the information sheet and sign the consent form.

We believe the JISC platform hosting this review is compatible with most screen readers. If you have any problems with this or would prefer the review to be emailed as a Word or pdf formatted document. If you want a hard copy document posted to you, we can provide this with standard sized text (12 point font) or large text (16 point font) and we will provide you with a stamped addressed envelope to return your review. Please email the project's research associate May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

Please email the project's research associate May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know if you have any other access needs.

Can I withdraw from the interview?

You can ask for the interview to be stopped at any point. You can then decide if you wish for your data to be withdrawn from the DALE project. You have 2 weeks after the interview is completed to decide if you wish to withdraw your interview from the DALE project. After 2 weeks your suggestions will be integrated into the guidelines and assessments and we will not be able to remove them.

If you find completing the lab access assessment upsetting

We recognise that recalling discriminatory events can be distressing. If you feel you need support for your mental wellbeing after completing the lab access assessment, we highly recommend the services provided by the mental health charity MIND (https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/).

Being given credit, final reports, and keeping in touch

At the end of the consent form, you have the option to follow a link to a separate web page. Here we will ask if you wish for your suggestions to be credited to you and/or your institution on the revised Access Guidelines. If you agree, we will ask for information on how to cite you.

We will also ask if you wish to receive a copy of the report on this project and the final version of the lab disability access assessment. This can be by email or hard copy.

Finally, this is just one project in a program of EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) research. If you might be interested in participating in other related research, we will ask for your email. We will not use this for any marketing purposes and will keep your email address for 5 years only on the secure encrypted computer servers at the University of East Anglia.

Ethics Approval

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the FMH S-REC (Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Subcommittee) reference ETH2425-2405. The project is funded by the EDI Caucus who are funded by UKRI and The British Academy.

Queries, complaints or concerns

If you have any queries or complaints or concerns, please contact the project lead, Dr Katherine Deane, Associate Professor in Healthcare Research, School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, NORWICH NR4 7TJ, k.deane@uea.ac.uk

If you have concerns or complaints that you wish to make to someone independent of the study, please contact Professor Christopher Burton, Head of School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, NORWICH NR4 7TJ, chris.burton@uea.ac.uk or 01603 59 7094

Data management information

Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy. According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

What are you consenting to?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have downloaded a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep. (Available in word or pdf formats, standard or large fonts, electronic or hard copy. Please email your access requests to May Gauntlett m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk).

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia (or the EDI Caucus) now or in the future.

This information was last updated on 12/08/2025.

Now click here [*INSERT LINK TO WEB ADDRESS FOR CONSENT SURVEY*].

to complete your consent and provide demographic information before your interview.

Consent for Interviews

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

Please make sure you have read the Information Sheet carefully before consenting to take part – it can be found here: *[INSERT LINK TO ONLINE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET]*

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

We aim to make this project as accessible as possible. A video of this document being read out is available here [*INSERT LINK TO ONLINE VIDEO OF READING OF CONSENT FORM*]. If you need this document in an alternate format (pdf format electronic documents, or hard copy documents with standard sized text or large text), please contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

3. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the DALE interviews. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me.

Yes

No

6. I understand the purpose of the interview, what I will be asked to do, and any risks or benefits involved.

Yes

No

7. The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the interview, and I am happy with the answers.

Yes

No

6. I understand that participating in this interview is completely voluntary and I am not required to take part. My decision whether to be in the survey will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or the EDI Caucus. *

Yes

No

7. I understand that the results of this interview will only be used in the way described in the information sheet. *

Yes

No

8. I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this interview will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to.

Yes

No

11. I consent to the anonymised dataset to be re-used by other researchers.

Yes

No

9. I consent to take part in this interview.

Yes

No

[If answering 'No' to questions 1 – 8 only]

Thank you for your interest in the DALE research project.

However, you are required to confirm 'Yes' to participate in this interview.

Please press 'Back' to return to the previous section or 'Submit' if you no longer wish to take part.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

[If answering 'Yes' to questions 1 – 8 only]

Thank you for consenting to complete our interview. You will be contacted by the DALE team to organise a date and time for the interview.

Please can you now complete a quick survey of your demographic characteristics prior to the interview. *[INSERT LINK FOR INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY*].

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Katherine Deane (DALE Principal Investigator) k.deane@uea.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Outlines of the research processes.

a) Review of Disability Access Assessment.

b) Outline of Access Assessment Process.

c) Interview Demographics Survey

d) Semi-Structured Interview Outline

Review of Disability Access Assessment.

Review of Disability Access Assessment.

Please read our Disability Access Assessment document. [*INSERT LINK TO WORD AND PDF ACCESS ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTS*]. If you need it in another format please contact May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk to let us know your access needs.

This assessment aims to assess disability access across lab work ecosystems. We intend to create a disability access assessment that is useful and generic enough for any subject area, and any type of lab. We just need a few pieces of information about your role and work context and then a record of your review of our access assessment.

1. Which of the following best describes the discipline or sector you have experience of disability access in? (tick all that apply)

- Agriculture
- Architecture and design
- Astronomy / Astrophysics / Cosmology / Planetary science
- Arts / Visual arts / Theatre / Fashion
- Biology / Genetics
- Biomedical
- Chemistry
- Computer science
- Culinary arts, food, and nutrition
- Earth and environmental science
- Engineering / Chemical engineering / Technology
- Geography
- History / archaeology / archives
- Human physical performance and recreation
- Journalism, media studies, and communication
- Library and museum studies
- Materials science
- Mathematics
- Medicine / Dentistry / Veterinary Medicine / Health sciences
- Microbiology / Mycology
- Pharmaceutical / Pharmacology
- Physics
- Transportation
- Other

(If Other) Please specify other discipline

_____

2. Which best describes your current place of study or work? (select one)

- Academia / university
- Not-for-profit research institute (including charity funded, research council funded etc.)
- Government laboratory

- Healthcare setting (hospital, community-based etc.)
- Art, theatre, fashion workshops
- Document or artifact repository / Conservation workshop
- Geographical or environmental lab
- SME (small to medium enterprise) / start-up company
- Larger corporation (>500 employees)
- Retired / unemployed / caring
- Other

(If Other) Please specify

3. Please provide your review on how well it does this for each of the following areas. Consider if we are;

- Asking for the right amount of detail.
- Asking about the right issues. Please let us know if you think anything should be added or deleted.
- Asking in an understandable manner.
- Is the assessment implementable?
- Would staff need training on how to run this assessment? Any areas of knowledge in particular.

You are welcome to download and edit the assessment document directly *[INSERT LINK TO WORD DOCUMENT OF ACCESS ASSESSMENT]*. Please keep track changes on so we can see the edits you recommend easily. Email the edited document to May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk

Or you can provide comments in the open text boxes below.

(Open text boxes for each of the areas.)

- Structural access – the physical design of laboratories and fixed equipment in them.
- Equipment access – e.g. how to access controls.
- Protocol access – adaptation of lab protocols e.g. evacuation protocols, when technician assistance is used, remote access etc.
- Dissemination access – e.g. what information is available on the lab's web pages describing access, how to request reasonable accommodations.
- General working practices – e.g. flexible working, wellbeing, staff training.

[Have a box to tick for each section for "I have made comments on the word document"]

4. Is there anything else you wish to comment on in regard to these access assessments? (Open text box).

Consent to Cite

We intend to use your responses to this interview to refine the Disability Access Assessment and associated Access Guidelines. Therefore, we would like to credit everyone who has contributed. This credit will take the form of a list of contributors at the end of the revised Access Guidelines. If your contribution results in an unique and original recommendation

your details will be listed against this item in the Access Guidelines. If you wish to be credited, we need information on how to cite you and/or your institution/ learned society/ etc.

I consent to being cited for my contributions to the access assessment

YES ☐ NO ☐

If YES: We will use the following citation formats: DALE contributor [Surname, first initial], DALE contributor [Surname, first initial, Institution], DALE contributor [Institution].

This will look like this in the Access Guidelines:

- Unique and Original recommendation (DALE contributor, Deane K, University of East Anglia).

Or in the Access Guidelines under a list entitled:

Contributors to the DALE project.

- Deane K, University of East Anglia.

Please state how you wish to be cited:

.....

Consent to Contact

If you would like us to send you the outputs of this research, or for us to be able to contact you about other disability access or EDI research projects please click this link *[INSERT LINK TO CONSENT TO CONTACT FORM]*

If you have made comments on the word version of the access assessment, please remember to email the edited document to May Gauntlett at m.gauntlett@uea.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to review our access assessment. If you have any questions please contact Dr Katherine Deane, Principal Investigator, k.deane@uea.ac.uk

Outline of Access Assessment Process.

Outline of Access Assessment Process.

Check that the lab team have read the information sheet and signed the consent forms.

Note whether permission has been given for identifiable photos or videos.

Remind the lab team that we will be audio recording our assessment.

Consent to Cite

We intend to use your responses to this lab assessment to refine the Disability Access Assessment and associated Access Guidelines. Therefore, we would like to credit everyone who has contributed. This credit will take the form of a list of contributors at the end of the revised Access Guidelines. If your contribution results in an unique and original recommendation your details will be listed against this item in the Access Guidelines. If you wish to be credited, we need information on how to cite you and/or your institution/ learned society/ etc.

I consent to being cited for my contributions to the access assessment

YES ☐ NO ☐

If YES: We will use the following citation formats:

- DALE contributor [Surname, first initial],
- DALE contributor [Surname, first initial, Institution],
- DALE contributor [Institution].

This will look like this in the Access Guidelines:

- Unique and Original recommendation (Deane K, University of East Anglia).

Or in the Access Guidelines under a list entitled:

Contributors to the DALE project.

- Deane K, University of East Anglia.

Please state how you wish to be cited: ……..

Consent to contact

If you would like us to send you the outputs of this research, or for us to be able to contact you about other disability access or EDI research projects please click this link *[INSERT LINK TO CONSENT TO CONTACT FORM]*

Outline of Disability Access Assessment

Complete the Disability Access Assessment document. [*INSERT LINK TO WORD AND PDF ACCESS ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTS*]. The research team and the lab team should make comments on the assessment process.

This assessment aims to assess disability access across lab work ecosystems. We intend to create a disability access assessment that is useful and generic enough for any subject area, and any type of lab.

As we go around the lab completing the access assessment please provide your opinions on how well it does this for each of the following areas.

- Structural access – the physical design of laboratories and fixed equipment in them.
- Equipment access – e.g. how to access controls.
- Protocol access – adaptation of lab protocols e.g. evacuation protocols, when technician assistance is used, remote access etc.
- Dissemination access – e.g. what information is available on the lab's web pages describing access, how to request reasonable accommodations.
- General working practices – e.g. flexible working, wellbeing, staff training.

Consider if we are;

- Asking for the right amount of detail.
- Asking about the right issues. Please let us know if you think anything should be added or deleted.
- Asking in an understandable manner.
- Is the assessment implementable?
- Would staff need training on how to run this assessment? Any areas of knowledge in particular.

Is there anything else you wish to comment on in regard to these access assessments?

Remind the lab team that we need participants for the interviews discussing experiences of working with or accommodating disabilities in these facilities. [*INSERT LINK TO INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS]*

Interview Demographics Survey

Interview Demographics Survey

We ask for your patience in completing this detailed information about your demographics. They will allow us to see the frequency of characteristics and if themes from the interviews link to any particular characteristic. Also anonymised data from this study is expected to be used in future research studies e.g. those assessing the representativeness of participants in research.

1. **What is your age?**
   - Up to and including 24 years
   - 25-34 years
   - 35-44 years
   - 45-54 years
   - 55-64 years
   - 65-74 years
   - 75+ years
   - I prefer not to say
2. **Which of the following best describes your gender?**

- Female
- Non-binary
- Male
- I prefer to self-describe (please describe)
- I prefer not to say

3. **Do you identify as trans?**
   - Yes
   - No
   - I prefer not to say

4. **Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**
   - Asexual
   - Bi/bisexual
   - Gay man
   - Gay woman/lesbian

- Queer
- Straight/heterosexual
- Pansexual
- I identify in another way (please describe)
- I prefer not to say

5. **What is your ethnic group?**

- **White**
    - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northen Irish or British
    - Irish
    - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
    - Roma
    - Any other White background, please describe
- **Asian or Asian British**
    - Indian
    - Pakistani
    - Bangladeshi
    - Chinese
    - Any other Asian background, please describe
- **Black or Black British**
    - African
    - Caribbean
    - Any other Black background, please describe
- **Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups**
    - White and Black Caribbean
    - White and Black African
    - White and Asian
    - Any other Mixed or Multiple background, please describe
- **Other Ethnic Group**
    - Arab
    - Hispanic
    - Latina/Latino/Latinx
    - Any other ethnic group, please describe
    - Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe

- I prefer not to say

6. **What is your religion or strongly held belief, if any?**
   - No religion
   - Buddhist
   - Christian
   - Hindu
   - Jewish
   - Muslim
   - Sikh
   - Spiritual
   - Any other religion or belief (please describe)
   - I have a religion or strongly held belief but prefer not to specify what this is
   - I prefer not to say

6. **Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

7. **Do you experience barriers or limitations in your day-to-day activities related to any health conditions (including mental health), physical, sensory or cognitive differences?**

- Yes – substantial barriers or limitations
- Yes – some/small barriers or limitations
- No
- I prefer not to say

8. **If yes, please tick what type of barriers or limitations you face? (Tick all that apply). If you are willing, please describe these barriers. Please do not include any identifying information.**

9a Attitudinal barriers e.g. discriminatory attitudes; negative or incorrect assumptions

- Yes

- No
- I prefer not to say

If you are willing, please describe

9b Physical barriers e.g. no step free access to buildings; physical expectations of participating

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

If you are willing, please describe

9c Travel or transportation barriers e.g. lack of accessible transport and accommodation

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

If you are willing, please describe

9d• Communications barriers e.g. lack of information in different accessible formats; lack of BSL interpretation

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

If you are willing, please describe

9e• Organisational barriers e.g. length of time and when meetings are scheduled limits participation

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

If you are willing, please describe

9f Social barriers e.g. expectations in social interactions

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

If you are willing, please describe

8. **Do you have any differences/ impairments? (tick all that apply)**

- Very tall or short i.e., over 190cm or 6’3” or under 147cm or 4’10”

- Hearing (not corrected by use of hearing aids)
- Vision (not corrected by use of eye glasses)
- Colour perception deficiency/colour blindness
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Respiratory difficulties
- Allergies (not controlled by use of anti-histamines etc.)
- Immunocompromised
- Mobility – legs
- Mobility – arms
- Mobility – hand dexterity
- Seizures / uncontrolled movements
- Mild cognitive impairment (brain fog)
- Specific learning disability e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia
- Neurodivergence, e.g. autism
- Mood e.g. depression, anxiety
- Other cognitive or mental health challenge
- Communication difficulties (speaking, understanding, writing)
- Sensitivity to magnetic fields e.g. pacemakers
- Sensitivity to smells
- Susceptibility to sensory overload
- Other, please describe
- I prefer not to say

9. **Do you have any caring responsibilities?** (tick all that apply)
    - None
    - Primary carer of a child or children (under 18)
    - Joint primary carer of a child or children (under 18)
    - Primary carer of a disabled child or children
    - Joint primary carer of a disabled child or children
    - Primary carer or assistant for a disabled adult (18 years or over)
    - Joint primary carer or assistant for a disabled adult (18 years or over)
    - Primary carer or assistant for an older person or people (65 and over)
    - Joint primary carer or assistant for an older person or people (65 and over)

- Secondary carer (another person carries out the main caring role)
- I have caring responsibilities but prefer not to specify what these are
- I prefer not to say

10. What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were about aged 14?

• Modern professional & traditional professional occupations such as: teacher, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer, accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil / mechanical engineer.

• Senior, middle or junior managers or administrators such as: finance manager, chief executive, large business owner, office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager.

• Clerical and intermediate occupations such as: secretary, personal assistant, call centre agent, clerical worker, nursery nurse.

• Technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, plumber, printer, electrician, gardener, train driver.

• Routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, sales assistant, HGV driver, cleaner, porter, packer, labourer, waiter/waitress, bar staff.

• Long-term unemployed (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for more than a year).

• Small business owners who employed less than 25 people such as: corner shop owners, small plumbing companies, retail shop owner, single restaurant or cafe owner, taxi owner, garage owner.

• Other such as: retired, this question does not apply to me, I don't know.

• I prefer not to say.

11. What type of school did you attend for the majority of your time between the ages of 11 - 16?

In the UK

• A state-run or state-funded school in the UK - Nonselective

• A state-run or state-funded school in the UK - Selective on academic, faith or other ground

• Independent or fee-paying school in the UK - where I received a means tested bursary covering 90% or more of the total cost of attending throughout my time there

• Independent or fee-paying school in the UK

Outside the UK

• A state-run or state-funded school outside the UK - Non-selective

• A state-run or state-funded school outside the UK - Selective on academic, faith or other ground

• Independent or fee-paying school outside the UK - where I received a means tested bursary covering 90% or more of the total cost of attending throughout my time there

• Independent or fee-paying school outside the UK

• I don't know

• I prefer not to say

12. **If you finished school after 1980, were you eligible for free school meals at any point during your school years?**

• Yes

• No

• Not applicable (finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas)

• I don’t know

• I prefer not to say

13. **Did either of your parents attend university and gain a degree (e.g. BA/BSc or equivalent) by the time you were 18?**

- No, neither of my parents attended university
- Yes, one or both of my parents attended university
- Do not know / not sure
- I prefer not to say

11. **What type of role did you hold when you experienced using the laboratory facilities?**

- Staff - academic researcher

- Staff – academic teacher
- Staff – academic teaching and research
- Staff – technician
- Staff – professional/support services (HR, Estates, Cleaning etc)
- Student – undergraduate
- Student – taught postgraduate
- Student – research postgraduate
- I prefer not to say

12. **Which of the following best describes your current employment status?** (tick all that apply)

- Full-Time job (over 37 hours per working week)
- Part-Time job (less than 37 hours per working week)
- Full time student
- Part time student
- Full time carer (paid or unpaid)
- Part time carer (paid or unpaid)
- Unemployed/ retired/ unable to work
- Other, please specify
- I prefer not to say

Consent to Cite

We intend to use your responses to this interview to refine the Disability Access Assessment and associated Access Guidelines. Therefore, we would like to credit everyone who has contributed. This credit will take the form of a list of contributors at the end of the revised Access Guidelines. If your contribution results in an unique and original recommendation your details will be listed against this item in the Access Guidelines. If you wish to be credited, we need information on how to cite you and/or your institution/ learned society/ etc.

I consent to being cited for my contributions to the access assessment

YES ☐ NO ☐

If YES: We will use the following citation formats:

- DALE contributor [Surname, first initial],

- DALE contributor [Surname, first initial, Institution],
- DALE contributor [Institution].

This will look like this in the Access Guidelines:

- Unique and Original recommendation (DALE contributor, Deane K, University of East Anglia).

Or in the Access Guidelines under a list entitled:

Contributors to the DALE project.

- Deane K, University of East Anglia.

Please state how you wish to be cited:

.....

Consent to Contact

If you would like us to send you the outputs of this research, or for us to be able to contact you about other disability access or EDI research projects please click this link *[INSERT LINK TO CONSENT TO CONTACT FORM]*

Payment information

We have the funds to pay you £100 in recognition of your time and expertise in this interview. If you wish to be paid please click this link [*INSERT LINK TO FINANACIAL INFORMATION FORM]*

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed. If you have any questions please contact Dr Katherine Deane, Principal Investigator, k.deane@uea.ac.uk

Semi-Structured Interview Outline

Semi-Structured Interview Outline

We will provide all interviewees with this interview outline in advance of the interview taking place. This aims to enhance the quality of the answers (interviewees can bring notes, look up specific numerical data etc) and reduce access barriers (less cognitive load, reduced anxiety etc). All interviewees will be asked if they need to take breaks and/or wish to complete an interview at another date. NB If the interview is being undertaken face-to-face it is likely we would have to offer an online interview to complete an interview at another time.

We will use relevant questions from the suggestions below using discretion as to relevancy to the experience of disability access being discussed. We may also ask interviewees to provide further details, clarify, and expand on initial answers.

- Ask interviewees to complete the interview demographics survey. (This will be sent in advance of the interview).
- Ensure interviewees have read and understood the information sheet and signed the consent form. Answer any queries they may have.
- Ask interviewees for their name.
- Ask interviewees in what context they have experience of disability access in laboratory environments. Which facility (facilities), what was their role.

- Describe their experience of disability access in detail. Can be personal experience, or specific knowledge of cases. (NB cannot be “hearsay”, i.e. they have to know the names of the people involved – but do not have to state them in the interview).
    - Case studies of disability access, good or bad. What specific impairment(s) needed accommodation. Did it have any safety implications? How was it solved? Did it require any reporting processes to be followed? Did anything change subsequently?
    - Experiences of using structures and equipment. What does or does not work? What is never used? What could be adapted / better designed in the future?
    - Experiences of disability access information. Either providing it or using it. How easy to find? Usability? Sufficient or too much detail? Clear guidance on who to contact and how to ask for disability accommodations.
    - Experiences of disability access protocol creation or adaptation.
    - Experiences of working practices created or adapted for disability accommodations e.g. provision of hybrid access to teaching, flexible working, attitudes, bullying, discrimination etc.
    - Experiences or requests for disability access/ EDI training.

For interviewees being asked about their experiences of the highly accessible New Science or Productivity East.

- What response have they had from disabled staff/students/visitors who have used these facilities – any impact on recruitment or retention, or ease of working.
- What response have they had for the other people using these facilities. Any impact on space, working protocols, “wash-over benefits” (e.g. powered doors are helpful for anyone pushing a trolley).
- Any improvements or variations that could further enhance New Science/ Productivity East’s accessibility or vary its accessibility for differing needs.
- How robust is the accessibility – has it needed adaptation, repair, or updating.
- Usefulness – what lab protocols does it/ can it address, how easy is it to use day-to-day; compatibility with usual supplies; cleaning and decontamination; how much space does it take up; how often is it used; how often does it have to be calibrated/ set up in the accessible format?
- Costs – remember to ask about staff training, protocol adaptation and validation, updates for software etc. Also remember to ask about cost savings e.g. saves time, allows for 24/7 working etc.
- Training needs – for the disabled scientist using it, for the technician team, for other scientists working in the same lab. NB can include personnel training e.g. disability awareness, communication training etc.

- Do they know of anyone else we should be speaking to?

Provide interviewees with Consent to Contact form – talk them through the options – and get agreement (and signature) to us keeping their email address where appropriate.

Appendix 4: Risk assessment for the access assessment of labs.

DALE Project Risk Assessment

Prepared by: Mr. Brendan Burrill Dip. Comp. MIScT

Reviewed by: Dr. Katherine Deane BSc PhD MIScT

Date prepared: 2025/07/15

Background

Researcher 1 is an experienced laboratory technician across a wide variety of disciplines. Most recently they have been responsible for a large undergraduate teaching lab at UEA. They hold an IOSH Certificate in Managing Safely. Researcher 2 has extensive experience of various practical workshops and studios, as well as writing and implementing risk assessments. They have experience of planning and implementing access adjustments in a technical environment. They have mobility issues, use crutches, and are an occasional, ambulatory, wheelchair user. Researcher 3 is an undergraduate volunteer, with experience from psychology labs and fieldwork as part of their degree and external volunteering. Researcher 4 has worked in wet labs through to post-doctoral level, but then changed field due to disability. They use a powered wheelchair. Researchers 2 and 3 have received induction training in lab safety from researcher 1, similar to that given to a new technician with no prior laboratory experience. Researcher 4 will only be assessing labs at UEA, which they are largely already familiar with. Researchers 1, 2, and 3 will, in addition, be travelling to assess labs at the University of Essex, University of Kent, and University of Sussex. Outline Statement of Intended Work The assessment shall consist of a visual, auditory, and physical examination of the laboratories, equipment, and associated space. It is like the routine inspections performed as part of good laboratory practice. Researchers will also be talking to people connected to the labs, and conducting formal interviews with some of them. The vast majority of this falls within the general risk assessments covering the routine activities of the universities in question.

Mitigations in place

All researchers will familiarise themselves with the relevant health and safety policies and briefing materials for the facilities in question. These materials are being collected at an early stage of the research protocol, so are readily accessible to all researchers. All researchers shall follow relevant UEA policies, procedures, and codes of conduct at all times. This shall include (but is not limited to) policies on lone working, travel within the UK, or interacting with members of the public. All researchers shall also follow all relevant policies and procedures when on site at other universities. Access assessments will start with a meeting with relevant site staff, at which any specific health and safety requirements can be communicated. In the event of a researcher discovering a significant, imminent, risk to health and safety, they shall suspend the assessment, secure their own safety, and attempt to inform an appropriate member of site staff as soon as practicable. Other potential unaddressed risks to health and safety shall be noted, and communicated to an appropriate member of site staff during or shortly following the assessment. The assessment is pragmatic, and the bar for a measurement or observation to be recorded as ‘not accessible’ shall be either discomfort, or a researcher not being confident that they are able to complete the activity safely. Estimates, secondary data, or measurements taken by others are perfectly acceptable substitutes where necessary. With these mitigations in place, the risk from participation in the DALE project is assessed as being as low as is reasonably practicable.

Appendix 5: Letter to staff from Phil Ward

Eastern Arc
The Registry Canterbury
CT2 7NX

8 August 2025

Dear colleague

Disability Access in Laboratory Environments (DALE)

I'm writing to you to let you know about an exciting new research project, and see if you are able and willing to take part in it.

The DALE Project

The Disability Access in Laboratory Environments (DALE) project was funded by the EDI Caucus to better understand the extent of disability access in labs of the Eastern Arc universities (UEA, Essex, Kent and Sussex).

Around 1 in 5 working people in the UK has a disability, but in the research and innovation sector this drops to 1 in 25, or 4% of the workforce. As a result the needs of those with disability are not always taken into account. This is particularly so in laboratory environments, where people with disabilities have been regarded as a safety hazard.

In order to start to address this we need to understand the current state of accessibility in our labs. To do so, we hope to visit the labs at each of the EARC universities, and will pilot a new access assessment that we've co-created with a number of professionals and disabled people.

Your involvement

When we visit we would really appreciate being shown around the facilities by you, and to talk to you about your experiences of using the facilities and ensuring access to them for disabled people.

Your comments will be audio recorded and you may be photographed or videoed to demonstrate a specific aspect of access.

The team will endeavour to anonymise the information reported in publications, assessments, guidelines etc. However, given the small number of institutions involved, it

may be possible for others to identify an individual facility from the description of a particular access issue.

All of our institutions are aware that disability access is a rapidly evolving field, and that no institution will currently achieve a perfect assessment. This could be seen as embarrassing, but we would stress that it should not be. The Eastern Arc universities are very similar to others across the country.

Recognising where we are is a really important step in making changes, and demonstrating a willingness to change. Negative observations made by staff to the DALE team about disability access are just as important as positive ones, and will be seen as constructive steps in allowing the institutions to identify access deficits and therefore make plans to mitigate or solve these issues.

So if you make negative observations about your facility's access, no negative impacts on your career, job appraisals etc. will result from these.

Your choice

I recognise that whilst you are very expert at supporting researchers to implement research protocols, it is far less common that you are asked to participate in the research, as you would be in the DALE project.

As such, I wish to reassure you that participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you are asked to show the DALE team around a lab, and after reading the full information on how data will be anonymised, can be edited by you etc, you decide you do not wish to participate, that is completely fine. Your managers will find someone else who is willing to participate and no pressure or negative impacts on your career, job appraisals etc. will result from your lack of participation.

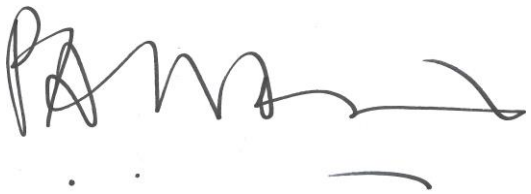
More information

Full details of the project are available on the projects web page (https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs/DALE/DALE), where full information sheets, consent forms, and outlines of the likely questions and measurements needed for the access assessment are provided.

DALE: DISABILITY ACCESS IN LABORATORY ENVIRONMENTS

I think this is a project that has the potential to change the access landscape of laboratories across the UK. I hope you will consider taking part in the project carefully. Please feel free to contact the project lead, Dr Katherine Deane (k.deane@uea.ac.uk) if you have any questions. You may also contact me if you have any concerns about the project.

Yours faithfully



Phil Ward
Director of Eastern Arc and Chair of the Coda Network

Appendix 6: Draft article for staff newsletters regarding lab assessment and interviews

The DALE Project

The Disability Access in Laboratory Environments (DALE) project was funded by the EDI Caucus to better understand the extent of disability access in labs of the Eastern Arc universities (UEA, Essex, Kent and Sussex), [UEA Ethics reference ETH2425-2405].

Around 1 in 5 working people in the UK has a disability, but in the research and innovation sector this drops to 1 in 25, or 4% of the workforce. As a result, the needs of those with disability are not always taken into account. This is particularly so in laboratory environments, where people with disabilities have been regarded as a safety hazard.

In order to start to address this we need to understand the current state of accessibility in our labs. To do so, we hope to visit the labs at each of the EARC universities, and pilot a new access assessment that we've co-created with a number of professionals and disabled people. When the DALE team visit, we would really appreciate being shown around the facilities by you, and to talk to you about your experiences of using the facilities and ensuring access to them for disabled people. Your comments will be audio recorded and you may be photographed or videoed to demonstrate a specific aspect of access. The team will endeavour to anonymise the information reported in publications, assessments, guidelines etc. However, given the small number of institutions involved, it may be possible for others to identify an individual facility from the description of a particular access issue. The DALE team will also be conducting in-depth interviews with staff and students with experience of disability access in these facilities.

All of our institutions are aware that disability access is a rapidly evolving field, and that no institution will currently achieve a perfect assessment. This could be seen as embarrassing, but we would stress that it should not be. The Eastern ARC universities are very similar to others across the country. Recognising where we are is a really important step in making changes, and demonstrating a willingness to change. Negative observations made by staff to the DALE team about disability access are just as important as positive ones, and will be

seen as constructive steps in allowing the institutions to identify access deficits and therefore make plans to mitigate or solve these issues. So if you make negative observations about your facility's access, no negative impacts on your career, job appraisals etc. will result from these.

We wish to reassure you that participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you are asked to show the DALE team around a lab, and after reading the full information on how data will be anonymised, can be edited by you etc, you decide you do not wish to participate, that is completely fine. Your managers will find someone else who is willing to participate and no pressure or negative impacts on your career, job appraisals etc. will result from your lack of participation.

Full details of the project are available on the projects web page (https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs/DALE/DALE), where full information sheets, consent forms, and outlines of the likely questions and measurements needed for the access assessment are provided. Please feel free to contact the project lead if you have any questions, Dr Katherine Deane (k.deane@uea.ac.uk)