

UJS Disability and Neurodiversity Report 2022-2023

Over the past year, the commitment to fostering inclusion has remained at the forefront of UJS's work. This report details the steps taken by UJS to improve the experiences of Disabled and Neurodivergent Jewish students within our movement, enhance accessibility, and create an environment where every individual, irrespective of their disabilities, is valued and welcomed.

We know there is a lot more work to be done, and we have identified some areas that can be improved as we move into the next term.

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Our Work So Far

Below is a list of some of the steps taken over the last academic year and a half to ensure inclusion for Disabled and Neurodivergent Jewish students within our movement.



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October 2022: Consultations

In October 2022, UJS opened [consultations](#) with Disabled Jewish Students and put out the following call on social media:

Calling Disabled Jewish Students! We want to hear from you.

For Purple Tuesday, an initiative to improve experiences for Disabled people within organisations, we are launching a campaign to raise awareness about accessibility and disability. We want to talk to as many Disabled students as possible and hear about your experience.

If you would like to be involved in our campaign, please get in touch with Dora.

Following this, Dora, the Sabbatical Officer for Inclusion, held a number of meetings with students who responded to this call. This consultation helped inform how UJS would go about this work moving forward.

Thank you to all the students who generously gave their time to help us get a clearer idea of the issues facing Disabled Jewish students.



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November 2022: Purple Tuesday

On Purple Tuesday in November 2022, [UJS committed to](#) “supporting JSocs to improve accessibility at Jewish Student events”. This would include, for example, funding wheelchair ramps in JSoc spaces, or meeting with JSoc Inclusion Officers to help them come up with ideas for more inclusive events.

As a show of support for Purple Tuesday, both Disabled and non-disabled UJS staff all wore purple to the UJS office.



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February 2023: UJS Convention

At UJS Convention, there was a session titled 'Building Disability Community'. Here was the description in the Convention Booklet:

Do you identify as a Disabled student, or as having a disability? This could include a physical, or learning disability, neurodivergence, chronic illness, mental health condition. Everyone is welcome! This chilled and informal session offers a chance to meet other students who understand your experience. The discussion will be participant led - whether you want to talk activism or your favourite movie.

This session was very well attended and produced an interesting and in-depth discussion. Following the session, Manchester JSoc member Xander Ross created a group chat for students who attended that session, as well as other Disabled and Neurodivergent Jewish students. This group later developed into the Jewish Neurodiversity and Disability Alliance.



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February 2023: Accessibility Checklist

Xander Ross, former member of Manchester JSoc, created a model for an accessibility checklist which UJS adopted in full and [published on the UJS website](#). UJS now uses this checklist as a template to share accessibility information for our own events, and encourages JSocs to do the same. [Here](#) is a recent example.

Access requirement and options	Do you have this?	Accessibility text for event listing
Wheelchair users		
- Lift access	<input type="checkbox"/>	This venue is accessible by both stairs and a lift.
- Access ramp	<input type="checkbox"/>	The entrance to this venue is equipped with a wheelchair ramp.
- Wide doors and corridors	<input type="checkbox"/>	The rooms and corridors in this venue are wide enough to accommodate wheelchair movement.
- Parking accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is parking available at [INSERT ADDRESS HERE]
- Dropped curbs	<input type="checkbox"/>	The venue is near a dropped curb.
Other mobility issues		
- Seating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seating will be available for those who need it.
- Queueing	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you require a seat whilst you queue, please speak to a member of staff.
Sensory issues		
- Light sensitivity (including light sensitive epilepsy)	<input type="checkbox"/>	This event/performance will use bright lights/flashing lights/strobe lighting and may not be suitable for those with light sensitive epilepsy.
- Sound sensitivity (general)	<input type="checkbox"/>	This event/performance can be loud. Ear plugs and/or ear defenders will be available on request.
- Sound sensitivity (building work/sound checking)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please be aware that there is building work/sound checking going on in the building which may be a problem for those sensitive to sound. Ear plugs and/or ear defenders will be available on request.
- Quiet area	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a quiet area available for this event, it can be found at [INSERT LOCATION HERE]
D/deaf and HoH students		
- BSL interpreter	<input type="checkbox"/>	A BSL interpreter will be present at the event. Please let a member of staff know if you require interpretation.
- Subtitles/closed captions (also applies to other impairments and non-native English speakers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	This movie/performance will be subtitled/closed captioned in British English.
- Lip reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you lip read, please let us know.
- Priority seating available	<input type="checkbox"/>	Priority seating toward the front of the audience is available upon request.
Blind and visually impaired		
- Audio description	<input type="checkbox"/>	This movie/performance will have audio description in British English.
- Large print	<input type="checkbox"/>	Handouts will be available in large print.
- Physical handouts	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you need a physical copy of the handout (eg. Senate agenda), please let a member of staff know.
General accessibility		
- Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a dry/alcohol-free event. OR Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages will be served at this event.
- Water fountains	<input type="checkbox"/>	The nearest water fountain can be found [INSERT FLOOR/ROOM HERE].
- Accessible toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	This venue has accessible toilets. [Note if the accessible toilet requires a radar key.] There are located [LOCATION].
- Gender-neutral toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	This venue has gender-neutral toilets which are located [LOCATION].
- Access breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	There will be a 5/10 minute access break partway through this session.
- Trigger warnings	<input type="checkbox"/>	This film/talk/event features discussions and depiction of [insert triggering content here]. OR Trigger warnings will be provided on the night by individual speakers.
- Food allergies	<input type="checkbox"/>	[List the allergens in any food present or state that there will be an allergen guide on site.]
- Low-income pricing	<input type="checkbox"/>	A limited number of subsidised tickets are available for those who need them.
- Transliterated text	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are transliterated texts available
- Service animal relief area	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a service animal relief area located at [INSERT LOCATION HERE]
- Assistance dog users	<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional leg room is available for assistance dogs
- Carer tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Free tickets are available for carers
- Gender-neutral seating	<input type="checkbox"/>	This event will/will not have gender-neutral seating

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March 2023: Disability Community Virtual Games Night

In March, UJS hosted a [virtual games night](#) for Disabled Jewish students to come together socially. This was a really fun event that enabled Disabled Jewish students to network with one another. Here was the event description:

Join Disabled Jewish students across the country in a virtual games night. Get to know other students, share experiences, and have a fun evening in the comfort of your own home!



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September 2023: Committee Training Booklet

Earlier this year, UJS published a committee training booklet to support growth and development for JSoc committees. This booklet is used to inform training delivered to new JSoc committees, as well as being a source of support and information for them. Within the section on inclusion, is the following passage:

Inclusivity should be at the core of your events, and not just an afterthought. It's really important that every Jewish student feels fully welcome and included at JSoc, and is able to be their full and authentic self without having to change or hide any part of their identity.

Disability should never be a barrier for Jewish students to access their JSoc. Be considerate of access needs, for example by hosting events in wheelchair accessible spaces. Please ensure you have filled out the [UJS Event Accessibility Checklist](#), so that students can check if their access needs will be met. Also use it for ideas about how to make your JSoc more accessible. Remember that disabilities are not always visible, and can include physical disability, developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, chronic illnesses and others.



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December 2023: UJS Convention

Taking into account feedback received from the previous year's Convention, UJS made a number of adjustments to create a more accommodating and accessible event for Disabled and Neurodivergent members. Among the steps taken were:

1. An email sent out to all students outlining the accessibility arrangements for the site and event, based on the accessibility checklist. This section read as follows:

Accessibility

- The downstairs of the manor house and the accommodation blocks are **wheelchair accessible**. We will be bringing a ramp. There are no lifts, so please get in touch if you haven't done so already, and we will ensure that you get a downstairs room.
- **Seating** will always be available for those who need it. If you require a specific kind of seating, let us know.
- **Queueing**: there will be some queuing for food. If this is not accessible to you, we can ensure you get priority.
- There will be **priority seating** at the front of sessions for any students who need it.
- If you require **large print** hand-outs let us know.
- There will be **alcohol** served (wine at Friday night dinner, and drinks at the silent disco). There will always be **alcohol free options**. If you are concerned about being around alcohol, feel free to speak to one of us.
- No session is compulsory, and the coffee room is open at all times during the day if you need a break.
- There will a **quiet room** available 24/7.
- We will do our best to provide **content warnings** for sessions, but we cannot guarantee that all speakers will remember to mention them. We will put content warnings in the session descriptions.
- Please let us know about any **food allergies** if you haven't already.
- There will be **amplified music** at various points. There will be ear defenders available if this would be helpful.
- The Shabbat Companions provided are **fully transliterated**, but some services will use additional materials which may not be.

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- If you have any access needs not mentioned above, please contact us. We are available for a chat anytime.
2. The email described what would be happening throughout the weekend to ensure students could better prepare themselves, and let us know if they had any concerns or requirements.
 3. There was also a section of the email aimed at students who had concerns about the social aspect of the weekend. It read as follows:

Making friends

We know that making friends and being in new situations can be harder for some people than for others. If you don't know a lot of other people at Convention, you are not sure who to talk to, or you feel lonely, the Sabbatical Officer for your campus, or Dora and Sarah will be on hand for a chat, and we can introduce you to people you might get on with. Please don't be afraid to approach us!

If you would like to be put in touch with another student before you arrive, this can be arranged. Please contact Dora or Sarah!

4. Ear defenders were provided for students who needed them
5. A quieter dining table was provided alongside the main dining hall for students who may have felt overwhelmed
6. A quiet room, open 24 hours, was provided for students who needed a break at any point during the weekend
7. Quiet accommodation blocks were created for students who prefer a quieter environment
8. An alternative Board Games Cafe was created for students alongside the silent disco for students who prefer a calmer environment
9. Students with allergies and dietary requirements were provided with labelled lanyards to ensure they would be given the correct food
10. Quieter music was played during the Convention breaks so as not to be overwhelming
11. Priority seating signs were created for seats near the front of rooms and near exits. The signs read:

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This is a priority seat for those who may need to sit near the front. Please be considerate of those who may need this seat more than you. Not all disabilities are visible.

12. Students were able to join Conference virtually via Zoom and participate in UJS democracy remotely
13. Students who required their own rooms for reasons of disability were provided with one
14. There was a wheelchair ramp on-site available for use if needed



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Current UJS Policy Regarding Disability

UJS has three active policies which specifically mention disability and neurodiversity. They are included below.



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UJ5 Neurodiversity and Inclusion

Proposer's name Dora Hirsh and Katie Freedman

Proposer's J-Soc: Sheffield

Seconders name: Xander Ross

Seconders J-Soc: Manchester

This policy lapses in 2024

What's the idea?

1. Being neurodivergent in a world built for neurotypical people can be disabling, and JSocs are not always as accessible as they could be to neurodivergent students.
2. Neurodiversity refers to the natural diversity between individuals regarding the way they process information, communicate, think, express emotions, manage their attention, and respond to the world.
3. People who vary more widely than average in ways that significantly impact them can be called 'neurodivergent'. Examples of neurodivergence are autism, ADHD and processing disorders.
4. Neurodivergent students often require additional support and accommodations to engage and participate in J-Soc events. Educating J-Soc committees and members in accommodating and supporting the needs of neurodivergent members can ensure they are not only accepted, but embraced and valued.
5. Many neurodivergent people like who they are and do not want to change this part of themselves. We note that neurodivergent people are more likely to be excluded, picked on, misunderstood or spoken about unkindly by their peers. Sadly, this does happen at J-Socs as well.
6. Historically, women, AFAB people and people of colour have been underdiagnosed and overlooked regarding neurodivergence. Many will have struggled most of their lives without support for their difficulties, and may only be diagnosed during their time at university.
7. J-Socs should be aware that some neurodivergent people may be new to advocating for themselves and learning about their needs.

How do you want it to happen?

1. J-Soc Inclusions Officers (or equivalent positions) should receive training specific to neurodiversity and disability so they can ensure that all J-Soc events are genuinely inclusive and accessible.
2. This training should always be delivered by neurodivergent and Disabled students, or organisations that include neurodivergent and Disabled people at their centre.
3. All J-Soc events must be planned with inclusion and accessibility in mind. For neurodivergent students, this might include: creating and maintaining a quiet area at

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- events, and providing details such as timetables of events, menus, noise levels ('social stories').
4. All support directed towards neurodivergent students will be aimed at empowering them to make decisions for themselves.
 5. UJS affirms that neurodivergent students know themselves and their needs best, and can thrive when empowered to create an environment that works for them.
 6. UJS will encourage and support individual J-Socs to run sessions to educate their members on disability and neurodiversity, to help foster an environment of friendship and inclusion.
 7. Noting that most disabled and neurodivergent people prefer 'identity first' language, UJS and J-Socs will always use identity first language unless an individual has expressed a different preference. For example 'autistic person' is preferable to 'person with autism'.
 8. UJS condemns any organisation which promotes 'cures' for neurodivergence, treatments which do not respect the individual's sense of self, or ABA 'therapies' as hate groups, and as such, will never work with them.
 9. UJS will actively check that organisations do not fall into these categories before working with them.
 10. UJS affirms that neurodivergent and disabled students are valued and loved members of the Jewish community, and condemns all forms of ableism

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UJ50 UJS to support Disabled Jewish students

Proposers' names: Ilana Tapper & Hannah Haskel

Proposers' JSocs: Manchester & Cambridge

Seconders' names: Xander Ross & Ábel Keszler

Seconders' JSocs: Manchester & Glasgow

This policy lapses in 2025

What's the idea?

1. The number of Disabled students in higher education is increasing and Jewish students are no different. In 2019/20, 17.3% of the student population identified as having a disability, such as (but not limited to) a learning difference, a long-standing illness or health condition (whether mental or physical) or a physical impairment. (Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2021)
2. JSocs should actively foster an environment of meaningful inclusion, to ensure that Disabled Jewish students can fully partake in Jewish life.
3. With the necessary support and resources, JSocs can make small changes which will go a long way in improving access and inclusivity. UJS is in a unique position to facilitate this.
4. Disabled students are frequently ostracised and left out of events, due to either events being inaccessible or lack of accessibility information being available.
5. We believe that this is of tantamount importance and of the utmost urgency to ensure that students who are currently being left out of events are able to attend and that those who attend currently are able to more easily.

How do you want it to happen?

1. Any action taken should keep in mind the following:
 - a. Students may not want to disclose their disability/disabilities, so any resources regarding support and accessibility should be widely and freely available anonymously.
 - b. Disabilities can be invisible.
 - c. Every disabled student has different needs and preferences.
 - d. Disabled students should be at the centre of decisions regarding accessibility.
2. UJS should provide mandatory accessibility training for JSoc committees and Sabbatical Officers, this should cover (but not be limited to):
 - a. How to ensure that events are accessible, who is responsible for this on the committee, and how to communicate accessibility information.
 - b. The training should be delivered and guided by disabled students, or organisations who include disabled people at their centre.
3. The majority of UJS and JSoc events should be wheelchair accessible events, including those being run by other organisations but advertised through JSoc. UJS

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- sabbatical officers, or a designated UJS officer should be responsible for ensuring this gets implemented across JSocs.
4. UJS should ensure that JSocs consider accessibility needs, this should cover (but not be limited to) provision of seating, quiet spaces, access breaks, step-free access routes, hearing loops, car parking and accessible toilets in venues used for events.
 5. The main event “hub” for JSocs should be wheelchair accessible.
 6. UJS should ensure that JSocs (along with UJS themselves) take accessibility measures into account in virtual meetings or events, such as the provision of automatically generated captions.
 7. UJS should create an access statement template that JSocs can use to help communicate accessibility information for events and venues which would be displayed alongside event information (including events and venues being used by UJS). This should include (but not be limited to):
 - a. Lift access/ramp access.
 - b. Wide doors/corridors.
 - c. Whether seating is available for those who require it.
 - d. Whether events will use bright/flashing lights and/or loud sounds/music.
 - e. If ear plugs/defenders are available on request.
 - f. If BSL interpreters are present at events.
 - g. Whether accessible toilets are available.
 - h. Whether there are relief areas available for assistance/guide dogs.
 8. UJS should offer additional funding for JSocs if required in order to make events accessible.
 9. When considering grants and funding for JSocs, UJS should take into account whether the JSoc has considered and made adjustments for Disabled students.
 10. UJS should clearly signpost support for Disabled students on their website.
 11. UJS and JSocs should consider how Jewish Sporting events can be made more accessible to Disabled students.
 12. UJS should produce a public statement or report detailing the progress made for these actions for review in 12 months time.
 13. Image descriptions and alt-text should be available on social media posts

JEWISH ENRICHMENT AND INCLUSION 6: Ensuring that JSoc spaces and events are accessible to students with physical disabilities and other accessibility needs

Proposers' Names: Sami Berkoff, Samantha Cass & Josh Cohen

Proposers' JSocs: Durham, Leeds & Nottingham Trent

Seconders' Names: Hannah Curtis & Gabe Ross

Seconders' JSocs: City University London & University of Bolton

What is the idea?:

1. Ableism is rampant both nationally and within the Jewish community, and many disabled and neurodivergent Jewish students are not getting the support they need and becoming isolated and alienated from their JSocs and the Jewish community at large.
2. The goal: to foster inclusivity and meet the diverse needs of our community so everyone feels welcome at events. By encouraging JSoc committees and UJS to proactively consider the needs of disabled and neurodivergent members when planning and executing events, UJS can create an Jewish student can access events.

How do you want it to happen?:

1. Conduct an accessibility statement for all JSoc spaces included prayer spaces and event venues to identify potential barriers for disabled and neurodivergent members including but not limited to mobility issues, sensory difficulties and wheelchair access.
2. Ensuring that all JSoc spaces are accessible by providing ramps and other assistance/ accommodations for students.
3. Before planning an event, encourage JSocs to consider accessibility - including (but not limited to), venue selection based on wheelchair accessibility, accessible restroom facilities and clear pathways for movement
4. Creating an anonymous request form for students to address the resources they require to be comfortable and included at JSocs
5. UJS should partner with organisations such as the JNDA (Jewish Neurodiverse & Disability Alliance) to produce and distribute training and accessibility information to all JSocs as well as the Jewish community at large
6. UJS should work to help pressure the wider Jewish community and UK government to better support neurodivergent and disabled people

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Next Steps

We know that there is a lot more work to do. Some areas we have identified that need more work are:

1. Be consistent in creating accessible social media content across all our platforms, including using image descriptions and ensuring that text from and images are reproduced in captions.
2. Continue to take steps to ensure that offers of support for JSocs are known about and taken up, for example our offer to support access modifications to JSoc spaces.
3. Continue to be clear and emphatic in encouraging JSocs to include accessibility information about their events on the UJS website.
4. Put on more events aimed toward Disabled students, like the virtual games night in March 2022.
5. Ensure that JSoc committee training includes training on accessibility.
6. Create more useful content and information on the [Disability Community](#) section of the UJS website.
7. Continue to centre and listen to the voices of Disabled Jewish students and using their input to inform this work going forward.



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