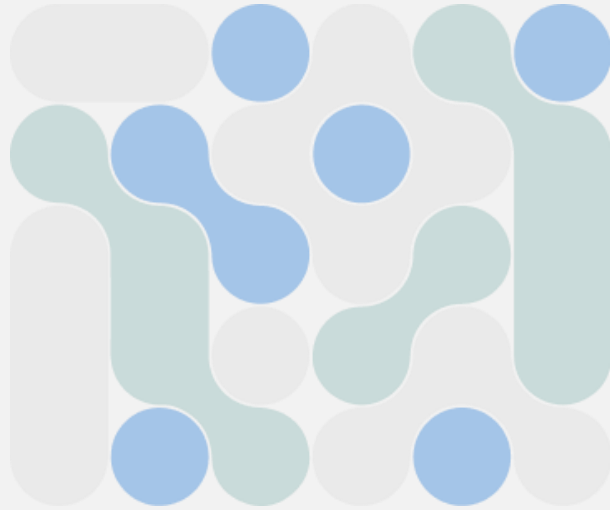


EDICa



EDICa Newsletter - Nov-Dec

EDI Caucus: Supporting UK research and innovation with evidence-based reviews of equality, diversity & inclusion practices.

For the Sway version of the newsletter, please click here

<https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Newsletter/2025-12>

The newsletter will always be written in plain English, however if you would like a version summarised in British Sign Language, let us know.

In This Issue

- **EDICa Updates**
- **Workstream updates**
- **EDICa Seminars - summaries of the highlights**
- **Spotlight on the field**
- **Spotlight on accessibility**
- **Get involved**
- **Our Funders**

EDICa Updates



<p><u>Menstrual Health Workshops</u></p> <p>A workshop for all types of employers supporting employees who manage their menstrual health</p>	<p><u>Training Workshops on Supporting Disabled Employees</u></p> <p>Including neurodivergent employees and those managing menstrual health</p>	<p><u>Virtual Reality Workshops</u></p> <p>Using VR to demonstrate what an 'enabling workspace' looks like. London & Edinburgh workshops</p>
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EDICa's Impact Workshops

EDICa has a no-cost extension until the end of 2026, to use unspent funds to evaluate and disseminate our findings. In addition, EDICa has been granted £200,000 to convert our research into impact. The funding enables us to retain four of our five postdoctoral researchers until the middle of 2026, and we are conducting a series of workshops on different topics to inform change-makers in employers.

Who is a "change-maker"? We've heard from people with the lived experience. Now we want to talk to **those who can make a difference inside the workforce**. Line managers; HR teams; facilities & estates teams; departmental/institutional leaders; heads of operation; occupational health teams; architects; advisory board members. From any size organisation, and from across the sectors.

Have you heard about the Employment Rights Bill? Currently, the language in the bill requires larger employers to have a menopause action plan. Those joining our [Menstrual Health Workshop](#) will review and contribute to working drafts of step-by-step guidance for employers on how to implement *and evaluate* menopause action plans and menstrual health policies. [In-person at HWU on 17 March; BSL-only online on 6 March; online 22 April and 28 April] Workshops are free; attendees will receive a certificate of completion. [Click here to find out more and register for your date.](#)

How can you improve employment for employees who are disabled, neurodivergent and/or managing their menstrual health? Join us in person for our Train the Trainer workshops at HWU on 10 March, or online on 20 March

(BSL offered), 24 March, 20 April, 30 April, or 1 May (in BSL *only*). Listen to our research and learn how your organisation can support employees to remain and thrive in their roles. Maximum 25 people per workshop. Workshops are free; attendees will receive a certificate of completion. [Click here to find out more and register for your date.](#)

What does an enabling workspace look like? Virtual Reality demo

We're holding two interactive demonstration sessions showcasing our virtual reality enabling workspace. (See photos in the Workstream 3 section of this newsletter.)

24 February 2026 - am or pm - Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

5 March 2026 - am or pm - Royal Geographical Society, South Kensington, London

Learn how to make workspaces more enabling for a range of different kinds of needs.

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Local travel can be remunerated, contact us.

New EDICa Report A qualitative study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK's research and innovation ecosystem: Structural inequality, lived experience and recommendations for change

We stopped the newsletter presses to be able to announce our latest published report with the ink still wet. In 2023 EDIC launched a comprehensive survey of the UK's research & innovation ecosystem to assess the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions on the sector. In 2025 we hosted a series of focus groups delving more deeply and qualitatively into the numbers.

Now you can read our findings, conclusions and recommendations in a 89 page report replete with appendices. A shorter executive summary is available for those short on time or energy. <https://edicaucus.ac.uk/covid-qualitative-study/>

"The COVID-19 pandemic acted as both a stress test and a spotlight, revealing and exacerbating longstanding structural inequalities across the UK's R&I ecosystem. While adaptive measures such as flexible working temporarily expanded opportunities for inclusion, these shifts were not

accompanied by sustained structural reform. As a result, many inequalities not only persisted but deepened.

"This study highlights how exclusion continues to manifest in complex and often hidden ways, particularly at the intersections of gender, race, disability, and employment precarity. These patterns were evident both before the pandemic and have intensified in its wake.

Addressing the aftershocks of the crisis requires more than a return to business as usual. It calls for a transformative agenda that embeds EDI into the core of institutional practice, policy, and accountability mechanisms across the R&I ecosystem."

The graphic features the title "EDICa Report" in white on a dark blue background. Below it, a white-bordered box contains the text: "A qualitative study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK's research and innovation ecosystem: Structural inequality, lived experience and recommendations for change". A URL is provided in a white box: <https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Covids-Impact-Qualitative-Study>. To the left is a white icon of a hand with the index finger pointing up. To the right is a circular inset image showing a modern office with several people working at desks.

Employment Rights Bill

The image shows a snippet of the UK Parliament website. At the top left is the UK Parliament logo. Below it, the text "Parliamentary Bills" is displayed in white on a dark blue background. A breadcrumb trail reads: "UK Parliament > Business > Legislation > Parliamentary Bills > Employment Rights Bill". The main heading "Employment Rights Bill" is in large white font, followed by "Government Bill" in a smaller white font. At the bottom, it states "Originated in the House of Commons, Session 2024-26" and "Last updated: 17 December 2025 at 09:37".

On 16 December, the Westminster parliament passed the Employment Rights Bill, which applies to England, Scotland and Wales but not Northern Ireland.

EDICa will be working with employers, unions, employees, professional bodies and other stakeholders to develop guidance for employers on their new responsibilities under the

Employment Rights Bill. If your company or organisation would like to learn more about effective menstrual health and menopause workplace policies

and practices, and how to develop menopause action plans, get in touch!
edicaucus@hw.ac.uk

Our expertise is evidence-based and we can work with you on tracking whether your actions are working. This is not a tick-box exercise, it's about supporting your workforce to be their best.

EDICa Symposium

On **20 November 2025**, EDICa hosted a hybrid symposium to look at the work achieved to date to advance equity in the Research and Innovation (R&I) sector.

- What EDICa has achieved, showcasing guidance and recommendations
- Insights and proposed practical changes from 13 EDICa funded research projects
- Suggestions on what UKRI could do differently based on EDICa's findings
- Co-designing the future of the UK R&I sector and priorities for the sector

Watch the recordings

We recorded the symposium for catch-up and repeat viewings. Visit our website <https://edicaucus.ac.uk/symposium/> where you will find recordings of the symposium broken up into seven sections, each with the option to download slides, watch or listen to the version with slides shown or the version with British Sign Language interpretation but no slides.

We have also left available for viewing the preparatory information we provided for those attending the symposium, as a model for others holding such events.



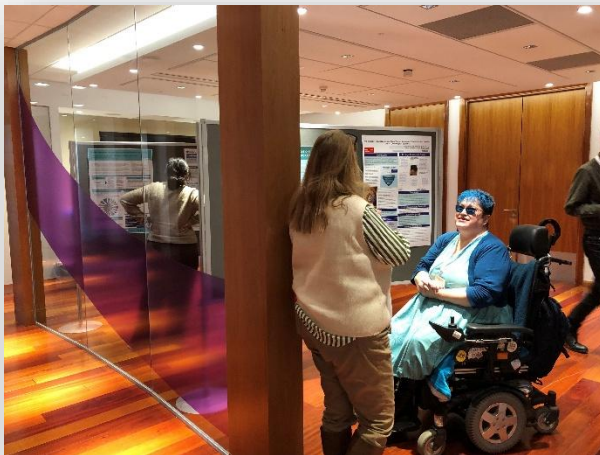
1 - EDICa team delivering the symposium



2 - The in-person Flexible Fund panel, during the Q&A section.



3 - Posters on display, one of our Advisory Board members viewing.



4 - Attendees chatting. One of our Flexible Fund award holders and speakers facing the camera.

5 - EDICa's newly finished virtual reality headsets were available for demonstrations. People could wear them or watch on the screen.





6 - We had a Quiet Room available for people to rest in.



7 - The registration desk. Attendees had the option of the red lanyard if they did not want to be in photographs, or white ones. EDICa team members wore rainbow lanyards to be visible helpers.

View the posters

There were 9 posters on display at our conference, which can be found on our website. <https://edicaucus.ac.uk/symposium-posters/>



8 - EDICa's display of posters at the symposium

Disability Inclusive Careers in Engineering & sciences - report and comics

In 2024, a few members of the EDICa team won an EPSRC Impact Acceleration Award to take EPSRC-funded research and drive impact, and formed DICE - Disability Inclusive Careers in Engineering & sciences.



Disabled and neurodivergent individuals continue to face structural, cultural, and practical barriers in science and engineering workplaces across the UK. To better understand these challenges – and identify positive practice – the DICE project brought together insights from 48 participants across eight

UK science and engineering organisations, including large corporations and SMEs. Through one-to-one interviews with employees with lived experience and people managers, this research identifies key themes around disability inclusion, accessibility, and the role of leadership in creating inclusive environments.

Common issues included limited understanding of neurodiversity, lack of confidence among managers, inaccessible recruitment processes (inaccessible in terms of disabled and neurodivergent candidates put at a disadvantage through, e.g. selection interviews or tests), and overreliance on individuals with lived experience to drive change. However, the findings also highlighted enablers such as flexible working, inclusion initiatives, and network groups.

The report for public reading is now published on EDICa's website:

<https://edicaucus.ac.uk/improving-workplace-support-for-disabled-and-neurodivergent-engineers-and-scientists/>

In addition, DICE developed a prototype platform that has been shaped by insights from interviews with disabled and neurodivergent employees, as well as those who manage and support them within science and engineering organisations.

It includes a course on disability inclusion and a resource centre which features a dedicated Neurodiversity Hub. The site brings together practical, evidence-based learning and resources in one easy-to-access space. It's

designed to be flexible and user-friendly, helping the user find the support and information needed, when they need it.

If you are interested in this training platform, contact us at edicaucus@hw.ac.uk

The DICE team was led by Prof Kate Sang, with Heriot-Watt chemist Dr Graeme Barker, EDICa's Prof James Richards, Research Assistant Beth Wedgwood, and Project Manager Fenella Watson.

DICE Comics - by Dekko Comics

The DICE project teamed up with Glasgow-based [Dekko Comics](#) who have years of experience of converting research into visuals. This is an important alternative learning tool for people who are more visual learners. The two comics each tell a story of two fictional people, experiencing some of the challenges heard in participant interviews. [Click here to view and download comics.](#)

In Alan's Story, a man with incontinence and energy limitations struggles with a commute, lack of bins in toilets, and work pressures. Workplace adjustments help mitigate those challenges, like a room to rest during lunchtime, but further support needs to be put in place to support Alan. In Zara's Story, the barriers in the recruitment for neurodivergent candidates are depicted.



Workstream Updates

The Career - Life Cycle

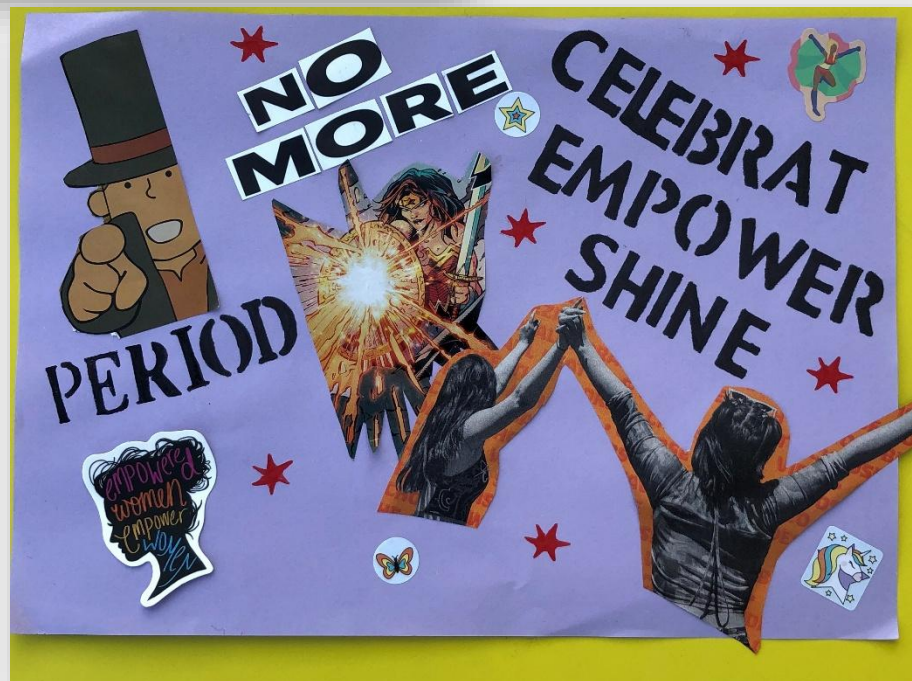
EDICa held two workshops for the Being Human Festival, which took place at Wester Hailes' Community Wellbeing Collective. Wester Hailes is only two miles from Heriot-Watt University and is an area of multiple deprivation in Edinburgh, meaning it experiences high levels of hardship across multiple indicators like income, employment, education, and health. This is a result of factors such as its post-war housing estate design, historical image problems, and issues like low literacy and numeracy rates, and challenges with poverty and addiction.

The participants, all resident in Wester Hailes but originating from around the world, crafted their own personal pages for a magazine inspired by real life experiences of periods and (peri)menopause. These pages have been collated into a zine, which is being finalised and will be published in January. You can see a few of the pages here.



The event was part of the Being Human Festival, the UK's national festival of the humanities, which took place 6-15 November 2025. Being Human is led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy. For further information please see beinghumanfestival.org.





The Research Process

Bias in assessment panels

EDICa's Workstream 2 will hold two stakeholder co-design workshops in January to discuss the study findings on the role of bias in assessment panels and peer review, as well as the Good Practice Report developed from those findings. The insights collected in those two co-design workshops will inform and refine the Good Practice Reports. Additional co-design workshops will also be held to support the development of reports on demand management and the organisation of flexible funds. (Demand management being when funders limit the number of applications from an institution, requiring an internal competition.)

EDI Training

EDICa's series of training sessions over two years with the Equity Champions has now ended. EDICa held two co-design workshops in November, with those Equity Champions who had engaged with the programme throughout the two years. These workshops will inform the final version of the *Good Practice for EDI Training in HEI* that will be published on the EDICa website in the beginning of 2026 and shared widely.

The Organisation of Work

Virtual Reality - An Enabling Workspace

On 20 November, EDICa showcased its virtual reality simulation of an enabling workspace. This VR was co-designed by gathering a broad collection of thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences from buildings' users, and how their working environments affect them.

Users at our symposium who experienced the VR were really positive. Many people said it looked and functioned better than they expected or had experienced in VR before. Others, who had expressed fears of motion sickness, found that they actually didn't experience any. Others who had never used a VR headset before found it was easier than they thought it would be. At least four people asked for demos of the headsets at their organisations.

To create impact, we now invite individuals with the power to facilitate change to experience this virtual reality, and take what they learn to positively impact how buildings and spaces can be designed to be more enabling.

EDICa will be showcasing its VR in two locations: in Edinburgh on 24 February, and in **London on 5 March**. Other locations may be added, depending on demand and capacity. Find out more and register here:

<https://edicaucus.ac.uk/vr/>

Below are some early-version still shots of the virtual reality space. Our enabling workspace shows a lobby, off of which is a single office, a toilet, lift that take you to the roof garden, a hallway to the laboratory and dining area, and an exhibition room where we display photos of disabling workspaces to spark discussion in our workshops.



9 - The lobby



10 - The office



11 - The lobby



12 - The lab



13 - The lab

Spotlight on the field

Webinar 13 January: Do narrative CVs really change research evaluation?

The Research on Research Institute hosts a webinar discussing evidence on narrative CVs from funding panels at major European funders, taking place on **13 January 14:00-15:30 GMT**.



For more information and to register: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-narrative-cvs-reshape-research-assessment-in-practice-tickets-1977904858676?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl>

"Prestige-driven metrics have long dominated research evaluation - but they are now under growing scrutiny from researchers, funders, and policymakers alike.

"In response, Narrative CVs have been introduced as a key instrument in research assessment reform. They aim to broaden notions of scientific excellence, recognise diverse forms of knowledge and contribution, and support healthier, more innovative research cultures.

"But how do Narrative CVs actually work in practice, and what difference do they make to evaluation processes?"

Mothers in STEMM - Mentoring Programme. Deadline 15 January

"You can't be what you can't see. Mothers face unique challenges in the STEMM sector, including isolation and a lack of role models. Mothers in STEMM are often 'invisible' because they need to hide motherhood to avoid career penalties due to bias and assumptions.

"The aim of this mentoring scheme is to empower and inspire women in STEMM to continue pursuing their career aspirations after having children, by connecting them with inspirational role models who can provide career guidance and support. **This is the only mentoring program dedicated exclusively to mothers in STEMM.**

"Mentors are mothers in STEMM with experience and strong expertise in their STEMM field who have overcome the challenges of combining motherhood and a demanding career in a typically male-dominated sector. Mentees are mothers in STEMM at earlier career stages who are searching for support and guidance from a like-minded peer.



Applications are now open for the 2026 cohort! Deadline is on 15th January 2026. This program is free and exclusive for members.

<https://www.mothersinscience.com/mentoring-program>

Now open: Call for EPMS EDI Hub+ Inclusion Advocates

The EPSRC EDI Hub+ is inviting expressions of interest for a new national network of **Inclusion Advocates** - individuals who are passionate about equity, diversity and inclusion and ready to make a difference - **across the Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences (EPMS) community**.

This is a unique opportunity to contribute to a visible, peer-led movement for inclusive research and innovation. Advocates will help amplify the work of the EDI Hub+, build engagement across their networks, and share practical tools and outcomes that support meaningful change.

This voluntary role is:

- Open to researchers, technical professionals, professional services staff and innovators across the Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences research and innovation community
- Flexible and designed to complement existing commitments
- Ideal for those motivated to engage new audiences and strengthen inclusive practice across the sector



Full details and how to apply with application link: [Become an EDI Hub+ Inclusion Advocate](#)

Deadline: Friday 6 Feb 2026, 4pm

About the EPSRC EDI Hub+

- Linked in: [Follow us on Linked In](#)
- Website: <https://edihubplus.ac.uk/>
- Email: EDIHubPlus@leeds.ac.uk

To stay up to date with EDI Hub+ activity, why not [subscribe to our mailing list](#).

Towards the 'care-full' university: A national study of staff who are caregivers in the UK Higher Education sector

A report published by Anglia Ruskin University, authored by [Lucie Wheeler](#), [Marie-Pierre Moreau](#), [Chinenye Ifeoma Ubah](#).

"Staff with caring responsibilities represent a significant presence in the UK higher education sector although their exact numbers are unknown. Historically, the research literature has focused on parenting, with specific reference to the mothers of healthy, 'abled' children, prompting the need to explore carers from a more diverse and intersectional perspective.

"This research report presents the key findings of the *Towards the 'care-full' university: A national study of staff who are caregivers in the UK Higher Education sector*. Its key ambitions are to gain an understanding of the experiences of UK-based Higher Education (HE) staff who are caregivers at a



time of considerable transformation, so as to foster the development of a more inclusive culture for carers across the sector. This endeavour also coincides with the development of a range of policies at both institutional and national levels, as well as with the emergence of new modes of working associated with the

Covid-19 pandemic. "For the purposes of this report, the term *carer* refers to individuals who have primary or shared responsibility for children and/or for relatives, partners, or friends who are elderly, disabled, or in ill health. " *The opening paragraphs of the report.*

The study's recommendations include:

- HESA collecting statistics to inform policies
- A database of research-informed 'care-full' practices
- Organisations co-designing carers' policies meeting the needs of a range of carers, and disseminated widely with regular 'refresher' sessions.
- Review of university policies "so that any negative impact on carers is avoided or addressed early on. Specific attention should be given to policies related to flexible work, recruitment & promotion, workload as well as to the setting up of deadlines."

Citation: Wheeler, L., Moreau, M.-P., & Ubah, C. I. (2025). Towards the 'care-full' university: A national study of staff who are caregivers in the UK Higher Education sector (Version 1). Anglia Ruskin Research Online (ARRO). <https://doi.org/10.25411/aru.29204606.v1>

Who stays and who leaves? Mapping arts, culture & heritage careers
A report from the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre, led by Newcastle University Business School.

"This report continues our State of the Nations series, building on previous Arts, Culture and Heritage (ACH) research. The key finding is that exit rates from the sector are higher compared with other sectors. ACH jobs rely on a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce, with freelancers forming the vital backbone (comprising approximately 59% of the ACH workforce). However, the new analysis highlights structural vulnerabilities, especially in retaining early and mid-career workers, and shows the need for improved workforce support. Tailored support for freelancers is also shown to be critical, supporting the announcement in the DCMS' Creative Industries Sector Plan to appoint a new Freelance Champion.

"The report is written by Dave O'Brien (University of Manchester), Mark Taylor and Ruoxi Wang (University of Sheffield), Peter Campbell (University of Liverpool) and Kate Shorvon (University of Manchester) and is part of Creative PEC's State of the Nations series.

"Key findings:

- Self-employed and freelance workers are less likely to leave than employees, suggesting that they provide continuity for the sector but may stay freelance out of necessity rather than choice given limited opportunities for secure employment or progression.
- Most people leaving ACH careers move into managerial or professional roles in other sectors, pointing to a retention challenge.
- People aged 35 and younger are much more likely than people in other age groups to leave ACH occupations.
- Conditions are particularly challenging for people with caregiving responsibilities, with women being disproportionately affected. Women with children reported that the working hours in ACH jobs and schedules were often incompatible with family life." (taken from https://pec.ac.uk/state_of_the_nation/mapping-arts-culture-heritage-careers/)

The Launch event was recorded and is publicly available. Alexander Jacob (freelance television director) provided a long list of barriers to freelancers in the television industry, which is interesting to the lay person wanting an insight into the industry.

For an accessible summary, check out [Paule Constable's blog](#).

"In the structures of power within the Performing Arts the freelancers are consistently overlooked, unseen, and unheard. Ironic really, considering that the majority of those we see and hear on our stages are freelance. The public see them – but often to the Treasury, to policy makers, to the sector, we are both dispensable and invisible."



Spotlight on accessibility

Crippling the Exhaustion Economy - Radically reimagining the neoliberal academy from the sick bed

"Energy limiting conditions (ELC) are long-term health conditions that involve, as a key symptom, debilitating fatigue, also known as energy impairment, which has a significant negative impact on all areas of a person's life.

"Not just "being tired": Energy impairment is usually both physical and cognitive. It is far more debilitating than the tiredness that someone without an energy limiting condition feels at the end of a long day, or when life is busy."

A team at the University of Liverpool have produced two guidance documents with research, key findings and recommendations on supporting academics with energy-limited conditions (ELCs).

There is a general lack of understanding of ELCs. The term ELC is promoted as way of having conversations over the symptoms, without involving a person's diagnosis. The label could cover a number of conditions like Long COVID, autoimmune conditions, epilepsy, or HIV/AIDS. "Sometimes it is the treatment for specific conditions that causes energy impairment. This is often the case for people who are undergoing, or have previously undergone, chemotherapy or radiotherapy to treat cancer. Some neurodivergent people and people living with some mental health conditions also experience debilitating energy impairment."

"Whilst data aren't available on the percentage of staff with ELC in Higher Education (HE), **22.2% of disabled academic staff have a long-term illness or health condition** (the second highest impairment type)."

If you are are line manager, HR professional, union representative, EDI representative, conference organiser, publisher, colleague, or an academic with an energy-limiting condition, then you should review this useful guidance. [Main Guidance Document](#). Did you find it useful? Then please share feedback to the team [in this form](#).

For Funders

A separate guidance document was created for funders. [Guidance for Funders](#). If you find the guidance useful, let the team know by [filling in this form](#).

Launch Webinar Recording

The project team held a launch webinar on 24 November 2025, which you can listen to and view here. <https://youtu.be/6jZwkuG-pk4>

Thanks to Prof. Bethan Evans, Dr. Alison Allam, Dr. Anna Ruddock and Catherine Hale for producing this research and these valuable reports.

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

Independent Social Research Foundation

CREATING MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES FOR ACADEMICS WITH ENERGY LIMITING CONDITIONS

INDIVIDUAL ADJUSTMENTS AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Prof. Bethan Evans, Dr Anna Ruddock, Dr Alison Allam, Catherine Hale

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