

My name is Clare Henley, and I'm about to start my second year of undergraduate studies at Trinity Laban, on clarinet.

At Trinity Laban, 20% of students have a disclosed and diagnosed disability - although there are many more students with an undiagnosed or undisclosed disability too. This makes up a substantial amount of the student community; which is why I believe it's vital to have proper conversations about how all students are supported here.

My first year at Trinity Laban has been a strange mix of blended learning, and whilst I know this has been a challenging process for everybody, I know first-hand how incredibly difficult it's been for lots of disabled students. Moving forward, I am very keen to work with both students and the staff team here at Trinity Laban, to tackle the barriers that have clearly been highlighted this year, and how to prevent more from occurring.

A key example of barriers experienced over this past year has been online lectures and learning. For many students with learning disabilities (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism, and ADHD) adapting to this teaching style has been a very frustrating process. Students with learning disabilities often rely on various methods and techniques to follow and process lectures, many of which haven't been transferable to online formats. Furthermore, it highlighted the importance of accessible resources, for example students struggling to get lecture handouts printed on coloured paper at home.

Another barrier disabled students have faced this year is accessibility around the buildings. Whilst many of these (such as the one-way system and frequently breaking lift in KCC) have been unavoidable and crucial for staying safe during covid, I believe there are straight-forward ways to minimise the impact on physically disabled students. This could be achieved through clear communication and visibility about what alternatives have been put in place for anybody who needs it.

It is also important to acknowledge the benefits of blended learning too. Online lectures being recorded has made them more accessible to disabled students, such as those who may struggle to always attend in person, or people with auditory processing disorders.

All these positive and negative examples show the importance of communication. I believe we need to have lots of conversations and feedback sessions to understand the actual needs of the disabled community at Trinity Laban; this way we can learn what has and hasn't worked, and decide what future actions need to be taken. These could be solutions like having accessible resources around all the buildings, continuing to record lectures, or extra support as we transition back to fully in-person - but we will only really find the right answers by listening to those who are struggling.

This is why I want to create more space for open and honest discussions here at Trinity Laban, through social media, forums, and face-to-face conversations. Most importantly, I want to make all these spaces and resources accessible to everybody - not just those with diagnosed disabilities, so that everybody can receive the support they need.

