**Society Inclusion Guide**

Every society should strive towards inclusivity. Your society should factor inclusivity and accessibility into your event planning and delivery. This guide aims to give you some points to consider when planning society activity to be as inclusive as possible.

The guide will cover:

* Protected characteristics
* What societies can do
* Other Student Demographics
* Law and Policy
* An exercise to determine what **your** society can do to improve the accessibility of your activity

## The Protected Characteristics

This section lists the protected characteristics that are covered by the Equality Act (See the Law and Policy section of this document for more information on this), and how society activity can support these groups. For more information on protected characteristics, check out this link to the Equality and Human Rights Commission: [Protected characteristics | Equality and Human Rights Commission (equalityhumanrights.com)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics)

* **Age:** Higher Education is a wonderful opportunity to meet individuals that span multiple generations. Each student brings their own unique experiences to the table and can enrich your academic experience. That said, many societies across the country target their activity at the ‘stereotypical’ first year student, especially during recruitment.
* **Disability:** When we talk about the inclusion of disabled students, it is important to remember that not all disabilities are visible.
* **Gender Reassignment**
* **Marriage and Civil Partnership**: As a protected characteristic, we have included marriage and civil partnerships in this list. The Equality Act states that same-sex couples should not be treated any less favourably than heterosexual couples.
* **Pregnancy and Maternity**: As a protected characteristic, we have included pregnancy and maternity in this list. The Equality Act states that in a non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
* **Race**
* **Religion or Belief**
* **Sex:** While the legislation typically refers to the binary sexes, for the purpose of this inclusion guide we will be discussing the inclusion of all genders.
* **Sexual Orientation**

| The Protected Characteristic |  | What can Societies do? Some examples: |
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| Age | Mature Students | For your society to be more inclusive of students of a variety of ages, consider the themes of your activity and determine if there are alternative ways to host your activity that will appeal to a wider demographic, considering time, activity, and commitment expectations.Collaborate with the Mature Students Society on projects to gain a better understanding of mature student interests. |
| Disability | Physical disabilityUnseen disabilityLearning differencesMental Health | Ensure your venues are physically accessible, with appropriate parking, drop curbs, automatic doors where appropriate, lifts and ramps. Consider lighting and other sources of overstimulation, temperature regulation, colour schemes of your resources, complexity of written language and attend mental health basics training. |
| Gender Reassignment | Transgender students | Transitioning is an incredibly personal journey. Ensuring that this is respected within a society is important to the process. Ensure society membership uses the correct name and pronouns that the student is comfortable with.Normalise the use of pronouns within a society as standard. Work with the LGBTQ+ society to educate membership on the barriers faced by transgender individuals and work to reduce those barriers within the community. |
| Race | BAME  | Ensure the Society does not create bias based on members' race and ethnicity. Any kind of racial discrimination or abuse is not tolerated and should be reported through the appropriate channels. |
| Religion or Belief | Festivals and HolidaysDietary RequirementsPrayer Requirements | Consider the dates and times of your events to be considerate of festivals and holidays of your members.Ensure any venue you wish to attend for food has options for those with various dietary requirements. When planning overnight trips ensure your venue has suitable space for prayer facilities or organise to set a temporary one up with the venue when those facilities do not exist.  |
| Gender | Examples include: Women, Non-binary, gender fluidFor a full list please see: [Gender 101 - A lesson in gender everyone needs | Unite UK (uniteuk1.com)](https://uniteuk1.com/2017/10/gender-101/) | Ensure your Society does not create bias between genders, for example consider membership roles. Ensure your venues and accommodation have suitable facilities for your membership to be comfortable such as private rooms or bathrooms. Work with your membership to normalise the use of pronouns.  |
| Sexual Orientation  | Examples include: Gay/Lesbian, BisexualAsexual, PansexualFor a full list please see: [A-Z List of sexualities in 2021 | Unite UK - LGBTQ+ Community (uniteuk1.com)](https://uniteuk1.com/2018/06/a-z-list-of-sexualities/) | Ensure the Society does not create bias based on members' sexual orientation. Any kind of discrimination or abuse based on a member’s sexuality is not tolerated and should be reported through the appropriate channels.Work with the LGBTQ+ society to educate membership on the barriers faced by the LGBTQ+ community and work to reduce those barriers within your Society and the Hallam Community. |

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## Other demographics

**Parents and Carers**: Some students are Parents or Carers or both. This can restrict the time that they can engage with Society activity for a number of reasons, from childcare to financial priorities. When planning your events, consider when you are hosting your events (does it clash with school pick up times?), how much notice your event advertisement provides you members, the cost of attending your event. If in doubt, speak to your membership and determine what you can do to create activity that Parents and Carers are able to attend without conflicting with their other commitments. Your whole committee is responsible for making your society and your events accessible, but your Equality and Diversity Officer would be a good person to spearhead these considerations.

**Commuter Students**: Not all Students will live in Sheffield. When planning your events and regular activity, consider students who may wish to attend but are restricted by things such as public transport.

**First Language**: Not every student in the UK is first language English. Online platforms provide the opportunity to simulcast translations for individuals to be able to contribute to online discussions in their preferred language. This is not the easiest thing to set up and you will need a translator, but if this is something you and your society want to explore, get in touch (activitiesadmin@shu.ac.uk)! Additionally, consider the language you use in your written and verbal communication with your membership. Some phrases may be difficult to translate so it is important that your communication is clear and to the point.

**Apprentices:** Students who study through an apprenticeship program may find that their time is limited and engaging with extracurricular activities like Societies can be a struggle. Incorporating time friendly, low commitment events and activities will provide these students options to engage and participate with your Society.

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## Law, Policy and Training

There are several Laws in the UK that are enforced to ensure individuals are protected and not discriminated against based on a number of characteristics. We want to make you aware of these so that you can consider the programmes in place nationally as well as use this as a starting point for your own research should you wish to explore this further.

***The Equality Act 2010*** is the primary piece of legislation, and it details the full extent of accommodations that should be made for any individual or group of people who meet the criteria for any of the protected characteristics we have explored in this document. You can read more about the Equality Act here: [Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents)

The Students’ Union and the wider University also have policy in place to protect our students from discrimination. Here at the Students' Union, we are committed to embedding the FREDIE principles in everything we do: Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement.

The Union provides training for staff to tackle unconscious bias and support individuals who struggle with mental health concerns and learning differences. If you feel that your Society would benefit from further training in this area, please get in touch with the Student Communities team at activitiesadmin@shu.ac.uk to discuss it! The Students’ Union champions the rights of all students and ensures that all student identities are protected and represented so we will support you to take a zero tolerance approach to bullying, harrassment and discrimination within your own student communities .

## Get in touch!

If you want to create an inclusive Society environment but aren’t sure where to start or want to discuss your ideas, email Activities Admin at activitiesadmin@shu.ac.uk and we would be happy to discuss it with you.

You can also get in touch with us if you are concerned your Society isn’t being inclusive or is struggling to adapt your activities. Part of the journey to a more inclusive Hallam community is supporting the development of you, your Society, and the wider community.

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## Accessibility and your society

This exercise is designed to get you thinking about what you can do to make your activities more accessible to a wider range of people.

Using the table below, list the activities you regularly participate in as a society.

Then consider which demographic groups may find this activity difficult to access.

Once you have done this, spend some time considering what **reasonable adjustments** you can make as a committee to reduce any barriers to those individuals and groups.

Later in the academic year, spend some time reflecting on how implementing these adjustments has affected your membership.

***Reasonable adjustments*** *refers to small measures or changes that can reduce or remove a barrier to an individual engaging with your activity. There will be some barriers that can’t be removed in their entirety, but individuals who wish to join you will know what they are able to participate in. The first step is for you to reduce any foreseen barriers as much as possible to increase your potential membership.*

| Activity | Who may struggle to engage with this type of activity? | What is the barrier to this individual or group? | What reasonable adjustments can you make to your activity? | Review (Reflect on how implementing these changes has affected your membership) |
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