

050 Oh UEA...Home of the Broken Lifts

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Summary

Lifts on campus keep breaking down (and it feels like this is getting worse). This disproportionately affects disabled students, impacting their capacity to access their education.

The support the University gives disabled students on this issue is basically non-existent. Under the 2010 Equalities act the university not providing reasonable adjustments to support disabled students is discriminatory and actively endangers disabled students.

So, we call for the SU to lobby the University to do the bare minimum and provide the reasonable adjustments disabled students are entitled to e.g.

- a. Notify students when and where lifts are broken in a way that effectively meets student needs,
- b. Support students stranded due to broken lifts in an appropriate and timely manner, and
- c. Work proactively to stop lifts from breaking as often as they currently do.

Union Notes

1. On the 7th of February, a disabled student had to report 3 broken lifts in one day.
2. Last term in the DiSCo (Disabled Students Community) group chat, at least one lift in an academic building was reported broken by students every week, these were broken lifts that the reporting students weren't otherwise notified about in advance.
3. Between the 6th-10th of February alone, the lift in Congregation Hall, the internal stair lifts in Lecture Theatre 4, Chrome Court East, Chrome Court West, and a lift in Union House were all broken.
4. Since September at least 4 students, that we know of, have been stuck in lifts or stuck in a building because of a broken lift, this is dangerous as they would have been unable to evacuate the building in the case of an emergency.
5. Only last week (Feb 1st), The president of DiSCo (Disabled Students Community) was stuck in Congregation Hall, they reported this to the University and were left, stuck, waiting for the engineer for 2 hours before

having to ask their taxi driver for help as the engineer they were left waiting for never turned up. Nobody was sent to check that they were okay. Consequently, they missed their advisor meeting and were left feeling unsafe on their own campus.

6. According to the University's own Pulse survey, only 34% of disabled students believe UEA cares about them. And no wonder if a taxi driver is more reliable urgent support the University's own services.
7. Under the University's current system, everyone with a PEEP (Personal emergency evacuation plan) gets a weekly email at some point on a Monday updating them on any broken lifts.
8. This means that students who receive these emails are left unaware of any breakdowns reported between Tuesday and Friday until the following Monday students are left completely in the dark.
9. Lifts that are reported only appear once on these weekly emails, when they are first reported, and so if they aren't fixed within the week students, aren't made aware that the problem is ongoing.
10. In the best case, these problems are causing students to miss and be late to seminars and lectures impacting their right as students to access their education.
11. In the worst case, these breakdowns and the lack of a reliable system to alert students to the breakdowns are actively endangering students.
12. Please note before the Lasdun wall was reinforced, all students received email alerts every single time the wall was closed due to the disruption it caused because they knew students would need to plan and reroute accordingly, they sent these updates daily if necessary.
13. Broken Lifts are unsafe and a danger to students.
14. Broken Lifts disproportionately affects disabled students, impacting their capacity to access their education.
15. Disabled students are entitled to reasonable adjustments under the 2010 equalities act.

Union Believes

1. All students have a right to education.
2. All students have a right to access their education.
3. Disabled students have as much right to attend their classes as every other student.

4. Therefore, the University has an obligation under the 2010 equalities act to provide appropriate and reasonable adjustments to facilitate and support disabled students and their capacity to access their education.
5. The university has an obligation to make sure they support disabled students, within reasonable means, to make sure they can access their classes as easily as non-disabled students do.
6. The University has shown through their reports of the Lasdun wall they can and will inform students when campus may be unsafe meaning ability to access routes on campus is impeded and that they will need to plan accordingly.
7. They are not providing disabled students with the same service, suggesting they value the time, education, and lives of their disabled students less than those of non-disabled students.
8. The University is not appropriately reporting broken lifts and not providing reasonable adjustments to mitigate the impact on disabled students and inadequate aid to support stranded students.
9. This is not just the University failing to meet their legal obligation, but discriminatory and dangerous.

Union Resolves

1. For the C&D and the Welfare Officer to work with the Disability PTOs and DiSCo (Disabled Students Community) to lobby the University for:
 - a. A better system to inform students that lifts are broken, and that accessibility is compromised,
 - b. A map made available of routes on campus that are traversable to students with additional mobility needs,
 - c. For broken lift alerts to also sign post to alternative routes available to students that are impacted,
 - d. For UEA to improve on the urgency with which it deals with students stuck due to broken lifts,
 - e. For UEA to devise a proactive solution to fortify its lifts and reduce the number of breakdowns occurring on campus

References

1. Legislation.gov.uk. 2010. Equality Act 2010. [online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
2. The statistics referenced here come from UEASU's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Submission and are not publicly available currently, however the submission is available on request.
3. Evidence of Broken Lifts Collected from the DisCo Group Chat