

Welcome to the CCCBU podcast where we bring you perspectives from the CCCU community on important equity and inclusion issues.

CCCBU stands for a celebration of the diversity of our staff and students and the work that we all do to enable everyone to thrive and belong. My name is Chiara, I am the equity and inclusion advisor at the university and today I'll be talking to Maddy Social Sustainability and the work that Maddy is doing in her role.

Hi Maddy, welcome. Hello, lovely to have you.

So I thought maybe you'd start by introducing yourself and talk a bit about what the Student Green Office is and what kind of projects you're involved in. Yeah of course, so yeah my name is Maddy, I'm a second year event management student here and I'm also part of the Student Green Office which is an extension of the Academy for Sustainable Futurists.

We have just celebrated our three-year anniversary and our team is, the Student Green Office itself is made up of four students, there's myself, Felicity, Ametitia and Holly and we're working on a variety of different projects both together and individually including a recipe book.

a recipe book. Our most recent is our I Need Feminism campaign for International Women's Month as well as our dedicated online blog. Lovely, do you want to tell me a bit about the International Women's Month campaign?

Women's Month campaign? So for International Women's Month we decided we wanted to do something that would relate to both students and staff and kind of add a bit of realism to it, something that can make being a feminist seem more attainable and there's obviously there's a big misconception around feminism that you have to identify as female to be a feminist where it's simply not the case and if you have a look at the CCCU Sustainability Instagram you can see our posts that have been going up throughout March. We've got various different posts from both staff and students explaining why they personally need feminism, for example we've had ones where they've said I need feminism because in the past women's wisdom has been put down and to be intellectual or academically educated things like that has been put down if you're a female so it's kind of just giving a bit of power to that notion and explaining why we all need feminism and it doesn't have to be taboo or seem extreme you know it's just about giving people that voice. Yeah I love that I like the sort of this is for everyone sort of attitude and so in relation to the to the Academy of Sustainable Future I thought we could talk a bit about what sustainability means especially social sustainability in the case of some of the projects you're involved in. Yeah of course I mean I've definitely noticed since working for the SDO there is a big misconception around what sustainability actually means and people often forget that there are two sides to sustainability you've got the environmental so things like your climate change and obviously it's something we see a lot more now it's very prevalent in the news forest fires and things like that but you also have the social side which can include things like women's rights issues around racism gender pay gap things like that and I found particularly since working on the SDO it's where I've kind of found my passion is around social sustainability of course I have an interest in both and I do try to implement both into my day-to-day life but as a disabled person myself social sustainability is a big part of what I do and just trying to spread the message of what it means and what it can mean to people and it doesn't have to seem so unusual to people people think oh you're a climate activist and things like that and they immediately just get this kind of idea in their head. A lot of people if they came off to me on the street they wouldn't know that that's what I do look into it educate yourselves there are lots of different avenues for it and it can be really impactful I always say the small things make the biggest difference it seems really cliché but just the small changes really do add up.

Yeah so it sounds like sustainability has to do with this idea of impacting the future and creating a future that works a future that's better right definitely definitely and so because I'm I'm in the equity and inclusion team and we use these words equity and inclusion as well to kind of refer to some of this work what do these words mean to you equity and inclusion do you do you see them as connected to sustainability? Yeah I think they're definitely connected I mean when you break it down in itself equity can be related to being fair and being just and inclusion obviously being included within a group or a structure but to me equity and inclusion kind of means to be treated how we deserve regardless of socio-economic point of view but I'm a firm believer in equal rights for all people you know everyone's got their own story we've all got a different background but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't have the same rights and the same access.

Do you have any sort of examples of situations in which people may be even vertically excluded by certain practices or there's just something that is just not equitable but some people may not realize I'm thinking maybe around accessibility and things like that yeah definitely as an event management student I use that as an example I have a particular interest into the live music setting especially things like concerts festivals and being disabled myself maybe I get a bit of a less rose-colored view on it I guess I in the past when I've gone to these venues can't help but think the accessibility here just isn't great I'm quite lucky in the fact that my disability is dynamic it changes from day to day it doesn't always look the same for me and I do have the luxury in that sense that my accessibility needs are quite minimal however for someone who may be a permanent wheelchair user I have definitely noticed that that accessibility just isn't there in a lot of these industries and interestingly enough I was just writing a research proposal for my dissertation for next year and I'm planning to research the accessibility in the live music setting and I was reading how the World Health Organization explains that disability needs to be treated socially because it is society's responsibility to make these accommodations for disabled people I mean 25% of the UK population is disabled you know it's not a small number yeah it's something that definitely needs working along there are gaps yeah absolutely can you think of in your work at CCCU if there's been kind of opportunities to improve accessibility or situations in which you have thought that something needed to be worked on in relation to accessibility or or other types of inclusion yeah so back in December we had the navigating disabilities talk and we collaborated with the and at the time they were campaigning to estates I believe about making some accessibility adjustments around campus and unfortunately I do appreciate it is a hard task to make somewhere fully accessible especially if you're in older buildings and as well from from the outside looking in you may not always notice the things that need changing it's something as simple as the way doors open if an automated door opens in the wrong direction you don't have enough time to get through that door yeah absolutely and I know that yeah so this is in relation to the worker the a staff and student access forum as well and I know that Accessable the company the accessibility company has been engaged to work on doing an accessibility audit of all the CCCU campuses so I imagine that a lot of of that work will come from that as well so that seems like a really positive step to to address that you've made a really good kind of concrete example right of what of what the problems might be that that really shape the experience of of people at the university and so when you were talking about the navigating disability event which I was at and that was really interesting you talked about intersectionality as well and intersectionality can be a really scary word for people sometimes so I wonder if you feel like kind of breaking down a little bit kind of what it means to you and what kind of examples do you have of like what intersectionality is and what it means to look at things intersectionally yeah so I've always understood intersectionality is where an individual may experience multiple forms of discrimination where the lines kind of overlap and a domino effect kind of happens one thing leads to another and someone may not may not even realize that they're doing it but it does happen I'm a very big advocate

for sexism, ageism and ableism within the healthcare system it's something I've experienced myself being female being young and being disabled I have experienced a lot of dismissal from healthcare professionals and it can be really disheartening and I think a lot of the time they don't even realize they're doing it themselves but there's unfortunately this notion around young people and women in particular that we're hysterical and you know hysteria a translation for uterus everything so it all links back to this idea that women are just this emotional being that they are quite willing to pass everything off as old as the cause and yeah it's definitely a challenge and you've got things like the the gender pain gap where women are left to suffer in pain for far longer compared to males purely because they're women and it's quote unquote normal to be in pain and it's not no one should be in pain it's not normal the body doesn't function that way there is always going to be a root cause but unfortunately we're not at that stage yet yeah no that that's really interesting and I think it explains pretty well if you think about yeah you you're you go to the doctor you talk about being in pain right and and who you are kind of matters in that context in terms of how seriously you're going to be taken and you know as you say being younger it's like well you you know you're you're still growing you don't know what's going on yet you're not quite able to to kind of understand the severity of your symptoms and and all that kind of stuff so yeah absolutely this idea of intersectionality being when you are multiple things at once that shapes your your experience in the world and so thinking back going back to kind of your experience at the university at CCCU what what would you say helped you the most in in kind of having a good experience at university so far I think for me I'm very grateful that I was able to engage with the disability team whether it was just putting my LSP in place like my learning support plan that's been very useful to ensure I was able to be involved with my degree you know I pride myself on my education and I'm I'm really proud of how far I've come but I have my limits you know no days where it's just really not working for me and having that LSP there whether it be to get an extension on a deadline or to get a bit of extra support from lecturers it has been very useful and I definitely recommend it to people you know even just just have a chat with them you never know what they can offer you I was definitely offered a lot more than I thought I would be so I think that has been kind of the main foundation of helping me get through my degree and to think I've only got a year left it's crazy it goes fast isn't it and I'd really encourage people just to engage with what's around you know speech or lecturers they are there to help you and engage with societies if you can it's not always simple and I fully appreciate that especially someone who doesn't live on campus I completely get that but there are a lot of resources around and actually back in September we published a blog post from the student green office called accessing accessibility at cccu so definitely give that a check out and it lists everything available to you that may help you in your time at university that sounds really helpful yeah because I think I think it's important when you when you say you know I didn't think I was going to get even the amount of help that I did get and I think yeah definitely it's worth exploring what might be possible and trying to be particularly difficult maybe you don't have to be and it's worth finding out so yeah great is there anything else that you want to say that we haven't managed to to talk about today my main message would just be like don't be afraid to reach out to the support that's here it is here for a reason and I definitely found that in my first year I was a bit reluctant to kind of ask for the support that's available but going into my second year I was like no I'm gonna try new things gonna take on board what is offered to me and through working through the student green office and using what's been available to me it has definitely improved my experience building on from first year and I think if someone can do that from the start it would definitely help their overall university experience and you know that's what that's what everyone's rooting for whether it's your lecturers your friends the other staff here all rooting for you you know we want you to have a good time and you know if you want to maintain that work-life balance the kind of structures that are in place here can really really help. Wonderful what a great message to end on.

So thank you for listening to the CCCBU podcast if you want to get in touch about anything that we've discussed today you can email us at equity.inclusion@canterbury.ac.uk and we hope to see you all at the CCCBU conference putting equity and inclusion into practice which will take place on the 28th of May in Augustin house and will include conversations and workshops on many topics like the ones we discussed today there will be a link in the episode description where you can go to reserve your place at the conference and look out for the conference flyers and posters around campus as well with more information.