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To Whom It May Concern
City, University of London
Northampton Square
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RE: REF Impact Case Study, aphasia and technology research at City, University of London

In 2019 Aviva's digital product and design team were grateful to receive designing technology for aphasia skills training from Prof. Stephanie Wilson and their team. The training provided was both informative and a catalyst for change within the team. I am delighted to give a testimonial about the impact of City, University of London.

Aviva is a large international financial services provider known as an insurance and savings and investments provider. Aviva's products and services are used by more than 33 million customers who have a diverse range of needs. Many of our customers purchase, manage, and engage with Aviva through digital channels. Most significant is our MyAviva website and mobile app, which allows users to interact with their products and services, such as making a home insurance claim or checking the performance of a pension.

Prior to City's training, there were few people in the digital product and design team with formal skills which could be generally associated with accessibility. Indeed, many of the team were unaware of what aphasia was. The skills workshop included an introduction to aphasia, its context within accessibility, and how to design and research with people with aphasia. The session also included a novel activity with City's aphasia consultants in which mixed discipline teams from Aviva worked with a consultant to review insurance journeys.

As a member of the digital product and design team responsible for leading UX research in our savings and retirement space, I'm acutely aware of the importance of connecting with users. It can be such a powerful tool to build empathy and understand the world through someone else's experiences. Therefore, it was hugely impressive that the team at City included Ben, Colin, Ian, and Lynn as aphasia consultants as part of the training. They shared their experiences of living with aphasia and took part in activities with our team.

After the skills workshop, there was a palpable shift in the team, which was different to any accessibility-related event, workshop, or training delivered in the past. One of the primary outcomes was a universal view of the significance of designing for inclusion.

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It created a new openness within the team and inspired an environment in which people were challenging their work to meet the access needs of our customers. This led to more strategic discussions, too, laying the groundwork for establishing an Accessibility Champions Group in Aviva. The group's membership is far beyond the digital product design team, and it's tasked with developing accessibility skills and empowering people in the company—mirroring what Prof. Wilson started.

The skills workshop also showed how the team at City undertakes research with participants with aphasia. More generally, talking through the process and considerations for conducting applied research with people with disabilities. In the months that followed, the research team began exploring how we could start including people with access needs in our research. It was not merely a case of the research team deciding, but also helping stakeholders who were funding the research on particular projects why it was an essential part of our work.

Some initiatives were initially stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in the second half of 2020, a number of research projects in the savings and retirement space I am responsible for actively recruited participants with access needs. It was part of a concerted effort for a more systemic change in our work. This was successful, and now all research projects conducted by the UX research team for savings and retirement are inclusive.

Looking to the future, work has been done to establish a more inclusive practice in savings and retirement, but we are continuing, as before, to look to further this work. One way is through the work of a recently established Accessibility Working Group which is trying to have a more strategic impact in the way we work and applying this to other areas of the organisation too.

Thank you again for providing the skills training to the digital product and design team. It has had a tangible impact on our approach to accessibility.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Darlington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alexander Darlington
Principal UX Researcher