

Middle Temple Disability Forum

Statement of Values

Core Statement

1. The Forum has been created to support, advise, and encourage members of Middle Temple, who identify within the broad heading of being a disabled person or as having a long-term physical, sensory or mental health condition. The Forum was created to be an inclusive organisation and welcomes all allies and non-disabled people are encouraged to support and participate in initiatives organised by the Forum.

Values

2. At the heart of the Disability Forum are equality, visibility, representation, and inclusivity. No one should be discriminated against, made to feel discriminated against or ostracised. This applies to all aspects of work and life at the Bar of England and Wales, and at all the Inns of Court.
3. There are frequently times where disabled people face unequal treatment, prejudice, and inaccessibility at the Bar. The report of Professor Debbie Foster and Dr Natasha Hirst, *Legally Disabled? The career experiences of disabled people working in the legal profession* (Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, January 2020) found that approximately one third of those members of the Bar consulted reported having experienced ill-treatment in some form linked to their disability and that one third of these had suffered discrimination. The most significant ill-treatment related to 'poor attitudes/lack of understanding towards an impairment or health condition', with a significant figure of over 80% of barristers surveyed reporting having experienced this behaviour. The Inns of Court were criticised for the poor level of support provided in relation to disability and access, with recommendations to increase pastoral and mentoring support, as well as targeted schemes for disability equality training.
4. It is the position of this Forum that discrimination of anyone on grounds of their disability is wrong. This Forum seeks to dismantle the barriers and attitudes that prevent disabled people from fully participating in society, that ignorance and prejudices are redressed, that the objectives of equality and inclusivity are advanced, and that Inn's support for its disabled members and employees is clear, concrete, and action orientated.

5. The Disability Forum will provide support and guidance to those who need it; education and assistance to those who seek it; as well as camaraderie and fellowship to all.

Objectives

6. To deliver these broad goals, the following specific objectives will be considered by the Forum when considering its activities. The Forum should take steps to:
 - Provide education and guidance on disability issues for members
 - Provide support and visibility to disabled staff and members;
 - To combat and address issues facing disabled members of the Inn;
 - To promote the accessibility of facilities and organisations within Inn and advocate that facilities are as accessible as possible to disabled people
 - Form links with other existing charities, networks, and organisations whose objectives correlate with our own;
 - To support the continuing work of the Inn to make the Bar an inclusive, accessible, and educated space for its members and employees.
7. Events and projects organised by the Forum will be open to all. This is particularly important where an essential part of eliminating discrimination, prejudice, and ignorance around against the disabled community is to build an understanding by, and familiarity with, others from outside of the community itself. The Forum will ensure that the intersectional identities of disabled people are represented and celebrated.
8. In meeting these objectives, the Forum is mindful of existing organisations and networks, and recognises their role in supporting disabled members of the profession. The Forum is committed to working with these groups to advance its objectives effectively.

Steering Group

9. The Forum will have the designated roles of a Chair, a Vice-Chair, Secretary, Social Media Coordinator, and Inn Representatives. The Chair will represent the Forum on Middle Temple's Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
10. The Forum will seek to ensure members represent a diverse range of individuals within the scope of the disability umbrella.

Membership of the Middle Temple Disability Forum

11. Membership of the Forum is not a formal requirement, nor necessary for the operation of the Forum. Rather, the Forum operates as a group providing opportunities to whoever wants to take advantage of them. Everyone is welcome.

Interaction with Existing Organisations

12. The Forum recognises that organisations already exist and fulfil an important role in supporting disabled members of the profession. The Forum believes that its work will compliment and augment existing structures by representing and supporting the disabled community within the Inns of Court to ensure the Bar is open to all.

Dated: February 2023