

Workforce Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Introduction

1. Doughty Street Chambers is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and to promoting a culture and practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination.
2. Chambers acknowledges that disabled persons face significant structural barriers to entry and practice at the Bar. The aim of this policy is to ensure that:
 - a. Chambers does all that is reasonably practicable to remove such barriers and address fully any potential or actual disadvantage suffered by disabled persons in respect of any area of Chambers' work. No member of Chambers' workforce (staff, all members, pupil or associate) or applicant for any position in Chambers is subjected to disadvantages due to their disability, in comparison to a non-disabled individual, where a reasonable adjustment can be put in place.
3. Chambers regards the provision of the Equality Act 2010 as the basic minimum that it is required to satisfy. It is Chambers' aim to take all of the steps it reasonably can to secure rights and access for disabled persons which are greater than the minimum statutory obligations.
4. This policy applies to all areas of Chambers' work including recruitment, selection, pupillage training, deployment, career development, and promotion.

Chambers' duty

5. The Equality Act 2010 places a positive obligation on Chambers to make all adjustments that are reasonable for the purpose of removing, reducing, or preventing substantial disadvantages faced by disabled individuals, when compared to nondisabled individuals. The duty arises once Chambers knows or could reasonably be expected to know that a member of the workforce, or applicant, is disabled.
6. The duty arises in relation to:
 - a. any workplace provision, criterion, or practice
 - b. any physical feature within the workplace
 - c. any provision of auxiliary aids or service

Chambers' commitment

7. Chambers is committed to taking positive and proactive steps throughout all of our operations and the ongoing engagement of our people to ensure appropriate and effective adjustments are put in place.
 8. This commitment covers all areas of Chambers' work and infrastructure. This is a non-
- Workforce Reasonable Adjustments Policy

exhaustive list of circumstances where reasonable adjustments may be made:

- a. Application process
 - b. Recruitment assessments
 - c. Interview process
 - d. Induction sessions
 - e. Workloads
 - f. Working hours
 - g. Workspaces Training sessions
 - h. Access to facilities such as kitchen facilities
 - i. Absence management
 - j. Practice management
9. We encourage all members of the workforce to make any request for adjustments or for consideration of adjustments using the appropriate form or raise the question of adjustments with your line manager, the People Team and/or the Head of Facilities as soon as possible.
10. Chambers' policy is to make adjustments wherever it will remove, reduce, or prevent a disadvantage or impairment and it is reasonably practical for Chambers to make it regardless of whether it is under a statutory duty to do so. Concerns about whether the individual is disabled as defined by the Equality Act or whether the adjustment will be required by the Equality Act should not discourage individuals from making a request. Chambers will also aim to make adjustments to address disadvantage from health conditions which are not disabilities, wherever reasonable, and will seek to follow the process in this policy by analogy.
11. For reasonable adjustment in pupillage, please refer to the separate policy.

Chambers' approach

12. All requests relating to adjustments, and proactive consideration of adjustments, will be treated positively and with sensitivity in line with Chambers' commitment. No detriment, harassment or unfavourable treatment will result as a consequence of an individual bringing any adjustment matters to the attention of Chambers.
13. All requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the advice and assistance of the Head of People and the Head of Facilities.
14. Requests for reasonable adjustments in relation to the recruitment of barristers to pupillage or tenancy will be considered in the first instance by the People Team.
15. The advice and assistance of barrister members of Chambers and/or relevant committees within Chambers, may also be sought in relation to requests for reasonable adjustments in relation to the recruitment of barristers to pupillage or tenancy.

16. The People Team may grant the reasonable adjustment sought without consultation with barrister members of Chambers and/or members of relevant committees where it:
- a. Does not require first-hand knowledge of practice as a barrister; and/or
 - b. Does not relate to assisting the pupil with meeting the competencies in the Professional Statement to the threshold standard, in accordance with the Curriculum and Assessment Strategy.¹
17. By way of example, if there is a request from a pupil to sit rather than stand during an advocacy assessment, or to receive assessment materials in larger font, the People Team need not consult a member of Chambers. However, if an assessment of the reasonable adjustment would benefit from first-hand knowledge of practice as a barrister, or the competencies in the Professional Statement which applicants to pupillage and tenancy must meet, a barrister member of Chambers should, subject to the applicant's consent, be consulted and involved in the assessment of the reasonable adjustment.
18. Examples of where a barrister member's input ought to be sought include:
- a. Where a pupil requires flexible working arrangements, an alternative seat or supervisor, or an extension to their pupillage;
 - b. Where it is believed, either by the pupil, a barrister member, or a member of staff, that a particular adjustment would be effective to enable the person concerned to meet the competences in the Professional Statement in a particular area of work².
19. The barrister member whose input is sought, subject to the pupil's consent as to their identity, may, be the pupil's supervisor, a member of the Disability Working Group ('DWG'), or member of a relevant practice team (i.e. a member of a practice team for an area of work the pupil intends to do) and/or the EDO. By way of example, it may be appropriate, subject to the applicant's consent, for there to be input to be provided by a member of a relevant practice team about whether a particular adjustment would be effective to enable the person concerned to meet the competencies in the Professional Statement in that particular practice area.
20. The approach to all requests for reasonable adjustments will depend upon consideration of the following:
- a. The type of disability;
 - b. Where relevant, the provision, criterion or practice ("PCP") which is said to give rise to a substantial disadvantage because of the applicant's disability and whether that PCP does cause a substantial disadvantage due to their disability;
 - c. What steps can reasonably be taken to avoid that disadvantage (which might

¹ See: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/bar-qualification-manual-new.html?part=E139B591-FFA0-441F-9651D9E88430A159> at 4B(1) and <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/the-professional-statement.html>

² See: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/the-professional-statement.html>

include physical adjustments to premises or the provision of auxiliary equipment);

21. When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, the assessors may consider the following factors:

- a. Will the adjustment remove or help to remove the substantial disadvantage faced by the person requesting the adjustment?
- b. In the case of applications to pupillage and tenancy, will the reasonable adjustment requested assist the applicant to demonstrate the competences in the Professional Statement? For example, providing extra time for a written exercise may allow an applicant with dyslexia to demonstrate their legal knowledge and analytical thinking skills successfully. For visually impaired applicants this could include screen readers or braille displays.
- c. How practical is the adjustment? Can the adjustment be implemented without causing significant disruption? For example, allowing a candidate to use assistive technology during an advocacy test might be considered reasonable.
- d. Is the cost of the adjustment proportionate to the size and resources of the chambers? Providing sign language interpretation might be a reasonable adjustment even if it incurs a cost, especially if the cost is not excessive compared to the benefit to the applicant.

22. Medical evidence about the disability may help to answer these questions, but it is not the only evidence that may be taken into consideration. Where relevant, evidence about the substance of a competence in the Professional Statement³, what it involves, and what can reasonably be adjusted in assessing it should also be considered.

23. A request for an adjustment may be refused where, in accordance with the above, Chambers considers that the adjustment would not be 'reasonable'. Where a decision is made to refuse a particular reasonable adjustment, the person requesting the adjustment should be invited to meet with the People Team and any other relevant people involved in the assessment to discuss viable alternatives.

24. The response to a request for a reasonable adjustment should involve active engagement with any evidence and advice, and prior consultation with the person requesting the reasonable adjustment and the EDO and/or DWG, as appropriate. Assessors should not refuse any request for a particular adjustment without first undertaking this process of engagement, consultation and consideration of alternative ways of addressing the disadvantage complained of.

Internal process

³ [bsbprofessionalstatementandcompetences2016.pdf](#)
Workforce Reasonable Adjustments Policy

25. Once Chambers receives a request for adjustments or consideration of adjustments, or it becomes aware that an individual is disabled or may be disabled in a way that may be causing a disadvantage, then subject to their consent, the information will be shared only with their line manager (if staff), the People Team and (if applicable) the Head of Facilities.
26. Unless the request is for a particular adjustment which can be actioned without a meeting, then if consent has been given, a meeting will be arranged to provide opportunity for discussion about the disadvantages faced by the individual and the identification of potential adjustments that could reduce or remove these. At the meeting, the reasonable adjustment action plan will also be filled in to contain a record of these discussions.
27. Full consideration will be given to each adjustment to determine whether it:
 - a. reduces, removes, or prevents the disadvantage faced by the individual requesting the reasonable adjustment and
 - b. is reasonable for Chambers to make.
28. A confirmation of the adjustments that will be put in place after this meeting will be sent to the individual in writing. A completed reasonable adjustment action plan will also be placed on the individual's record to ensure this is accessible to the relevant people.

Using trial periods

29. An optional trial period allows Chambers and the individual to evaluate the practical impact of any agreed adjustments, ensuring that these go as far as possible towards reducing, removing, or preventing disadvantages faced by the individual.
30. To ensure Chambers is meeting its commitment of putting in place appropriate and effective adjustments, the use of a trial period for adjustments may be introduced where appropriate. A trial period will only be used where this is agreed by the individual and will be for a short period. A review at the end of the trial period will be used to assess the practical suitability of the adjustment and may, if this is not suitable, lead to amendments or alternative adjustments being introduced.

Reviewing adjustments

31. As part of its ongoing commitment, Chambers will undertake periodic reviews of agreed adjustments in conjunction with the individual concerned to ensure these remain suitable and have the continued required effect.
 32. The review will be undertaken once an adjustment has been in place for at least 3 months and will be repeated at agreed intervals, or at the request of the individual. It will be a collaborative review involving discussion between the individual and the People Team, and, as applicable, a manager or supervisor and the Head of Facilities. The intention is to allow full consideration of the effectiveness of the adjustment.
 33. The outcome of this review may be that the adjustment in place continues, is altered or
- Workforce Reasonable Adjustments Policy June 2025

alternative adjustments are introduced as may be agreed.

External advice and assessments

34. As a Chambers, we recognise that in many cases a person with a disability or medical condition is usually in the best position to advise as to the reasonable adjustments they need in order to conduct their day-to-day work. There may be circumstances in which Chambers' duty to make reasonable adjustments requires it to recommend adjustments in addition to or different from those that might be sought by the person with a disability. By way of example this may occur where a person is transitioning into a new role or has recently become disabled or acquired a new disability or medical condition. In such circumstances Chambers may consider that additional evidence and/or assessment may assist in ensuring that appropriate and effective reasonable adjustments are offered.
35. To aid the consideration of suitable adjustments, individuals are encouraged to provide Chambers with any reports, advice or guidance that they have received from third parties such as GPs, Occupational Therapists, and work coaches. Any advice or guidance provided will be used to consider the effectiveness of introducing, and continuing, the workplace adjustments.
36. It may be the case that an Occupational Health (OH) referral is suitable to receive expert advice on necessary adjustments. In these circumstances, the individual's consent will be sought in advance of any referral.
37. An individual may also ask Chambers to commission an OH assessment, before or after consideration of other adjustments by Chambers. Unless it is clearly unnecessary for the purpose of making the adjustment, an OH assessment is likely to be a reasonable adjustment in itself.
38. In some cases, the assessor may consider that they would be assisted by other advice or evidence (in addition to or instead of an OHA report) in order to identify the most appropriate and effective reasonable adjustment(s). In order to have the best available evidence, it is open to the assessor to request a relevant report or other evidence from the applicant which describes the disability in question and/or makes recommendations as to reasonable adjustments. If it is necessary to commission a new report or assessment, the cost of that report or assessment will be borne by Chambers.
39. The aim of any request for relevant clinical/expert evidence should always be to assist the person concerned with overcoming substantial disadvantage by correctly identifying both the disability and effective and reasonable adjustments. All sensitive information will be handled in accordance with the GDPR and data protection law.
40. The applicant will always be entitled to refuse to provide Chambers with private information in the form of clinical expert reports, advice or guidance or to undertake an OH assessment. The applicant will not be penalised for a decision not to provide information or undertake an assessment. Any request for information or an assessment will take into account the impact of the same on the applicant e.g. by way of intrusiveness

or similar. Any proposal by an assessor to seek medical or clinical reports should be referred first to the People Team for advice. However, a decision not to provide information or undertake an assessment may mean that a potentially appropriate reasonable adjustment, which might only have been formulated as a result of either of those processes, may not be considered or made.

Reasonable adjustment for applicants

41. Applicants for pupillage, tenancy and staff positions are asked to indicate alongside their application form whether any reasonable adjustments are required during the application process. This information is removed before the interview panel receives the application. Requests are dealt with by the Head of People and will only be shared with the interview panel so far as necessary.
42. Insofar as relevant, the information in the rest of this policy will guide Chambers' approach.
43. Potential reasonable adjustments may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Earplugs to reduce audio disturbance.
 - b. Providing interview questions in advance of an interview.
 - c. Changing the interview format.
 - d. Providing materials in accessible formats (e.g. large print, screen reader-compatible documents). Allow extra time for written tests or provide questions in advance. An applicant with a visual impairment may need test materials in braille or large print.
 - e. Permitting alternative means of demonstrating oral advocacy skills, such as text-to-speech technology or other options that might reasonably be implemented in a court room setting with the aim of improving accessibility for disabled advocates (e.g. allowing a candidate with a speech impairment to use assistive technology to deliver oral arguments).
 - f. Allowing flexibility in how scenarios are presented, such as offering them in written rather than verbal formats. A candidate with a hearing impairment or with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may benefit from written ethical scenarios rather than relying on verbal communication.
 - g. Using role-play with reasonable adjustments, such as clear signage or additional breaks to prevent fatigue. A candidate with chronic fatigue syndrome may need more frequent breaks during role-play exercises.
 - h. Allowing additional time for assessments or providing the questions in advance to allow for the use of assistive technology. A candidate with dyslexia may need extended time to process and analyse written information.
 - i. Allowing the use of organizational aids such as digital planners or assistive software. A candidate with ADHD may benefit from using task management software during assessment.
 - j. Changing working hours and patterns to accommodate frequent breaks, medical appointments and recovery.
 - k. In the case of barristers, allowing opportunity to build up their practice gradually –

whether in respect of their practice areas, their overall workload, or the days spent in court each week or month.

- l. Providing dedicated supervision or mentorship to provide advice and training; regular check-ins with supervisors or mentors.
- m. Reducing expectations to attend outward facing/networking events.
- n. Permit the use of collaborative tools that accommodate different communication needs, such as text-based chat during group tasks. An autistic candidate may find it easier to communicate through written text in a chat format rather than verbally.
- o. Changing roles and responsibilities:
 - i. Reviewing tasks and deadlines to help to manage workload;
 - ii. Reducing responsibilities which are a source of stress (for example, reducing requests to undertake urgent work or work outside of core area of practice).

44. The following resources provide further examples of and guidance on reasonable adjustments:

The Equality and Human Rights Commission provides the following examples of workplace adjustments in practice:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/business/employing-people-workplace-adjustments/examples-reasonable-adjustments-practice>.

ACAS provides examples of reasonable adjustments and other related guidance:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments>.

ACAS provides the following guidance on adjustments for neurodiversity:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments/adjustments-for-neurodiversity>.

ACAS provides the following guidance on mental health adjustments:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments/mental-health-adjustments>.

Concerns

45. If an individual has any concerns regarding the making or consideration of workplace adjustments, they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of Chief Executive Officer as soon as possible. The CEO, or a nominated person, will undertake an investigation and report back to the individual concerned, and discuss a resolution.
46. Alternatively, where this is not appropriate, an individual may raise any concerns through the internal grievance policy if all the collaborative processes detailed above have been exhausted.

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