



Discrimination Law Association

**ANNUAL REPORT
2025-2026**

**Presented to the
Annual General Meeting**

**Held
online only
via zoom**

**on Tuesday 14th April 2026
at 6:00pm**

Discrimination Law Association

**Company Limited by Guarantee 3862592
Incorporated in England & Wales
Registered Charity Number 1124892**

Contents

| Section | Subject | Page |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | History and Aims | 3 |
| 2. | Overview and Chair's Report | 4 |
| 3. | Membership | 10 |
| 4. | <i>Briefings</i> and E-mail News | 10 |
| 5. | Practitioner Group Meetings | 12 |
| 6. | Influencing Law and Policy | 13 |
| Appendix 1 | Staffing | 14 |
| Appendix 2 | Support and Thanks | 14 |
| Appendix 3 | Executive Committee | 14 |

[

1. History and Aims

At a time when much of the public funding for supporting victims of discrimination has either been removed or is under serious threat, the Discrimination Law Association remains fully committed to advocate and support a complainant-centred approach to anti-discrimination law and practice.

The DLA was founded in 1995 for the purpose of advocating for better legal protection for complainants in discrimination law through engaging with the political and legislative process and improving education and increasing resources for those involved in practice.

From the start, strong emphasis has been placed on the important role of the voluntary sector and trade unions, and that remains the case today.

In 1998 a three-year grant was received from the Community Fund which enabled us to employ a part-time member of staff to assist us in our activities, and we have continued to do so ever since, even though we are now self-sufficient.

In 1999 we were incorporated as a company limited by guarantee.

In 2008 the Association was granted charitable status. Our charitable aims are to promote good community relations by improving the assistance and support given to people who are or may be subjected to discrimination and to advance education and training in the field of legal representation for people who are or may be subjected to discrimination.

The DLA acts as a forum of lawyers and advisers and others who deal with discrimination law in considering the impact of proposed changes to the law and submitting responses and in disseminating training and good practice. Looking beyond our membership, the DLA works to encourage the development of meaningful public discourse on defeating discrimination amongst legislators, policy makers and civil society generally.

Membership is open to any lawyer, legal or advice worker, trade unionist, equality officer or other person substantially engaged or interested in discrimination law and any organisation, firm, company or other body engaged or interested in discrimination law. The membership comprises, in the main, persons concerned with discrimination law from a complainant perspective.

2. Overview and Chair's Report

DLA Chair's Report

This Chair's report covers the period from the previous AGM on 22nd January to today's date 14th April 2026.

Overview

Another fifteen months have passed since my last DLA Chair's report, and it is time to reflect not only on what the DLA has done but also on how much has changed over this time.

For those of you who advise on employment law and housing law, the introduction of two new pieces of legislation towards the end of last year must have been immense.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 arrived and has set all our employment law adviser members and colleagues into action, advising on the new provisions that are already in force and those to come later in the year, October 2026 and in January 2027. This legislation has been the biggest shake-up of employment law for decades, with the highest impact being on employers to get their houses, or workplaces, in order.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 coming into full force next month (1st May 2026), housing law advisers everywhere have been getting ready for the biggest shake up in the landlord and tenant sector since the Housing Act 1988. An important part of which is that it will provide extra protection for tenants against discrimination, so something for our members to look out for and report on. I predict a full agenda and an abundance of speakers for our future PGMs.

30 years of the DLA

In-person events made a welcome return with the DLA hosting its [DLA 30th Anniversary Special Event - Friday 28th November 2025](#).

Contributions came from:

- [Gay Moon](#) - "Tribute to Barbara Cohen" & [Robin Allen KC](#) - "Tribute to Sir Geoffrey Bindman KC"
- [Karon Monaghan KC](#) - "Developments in discrimination law: Where have we come from and where are we going?"
- [Catherine Casserley](#) - "30 years of disability discrimination law: and what next?"
- [Audrey Ludwig](#) - "Avoiding "Goodies and Baddies" thinking ... Balancing conflicts of rights"
- [Robin Allen KC](#) - "The 2024 Council of Europe AI Convention duty to respect equality in 'the lifecycle of AI Systems': Is there hope for you and me?!"

It was an excellent event and good to meet committee members of days gone by. We were able to swap knowledge and tips because the same challenges appear no matter which decades we are in.

DLA delegates out and about

The DLA was also represented at the following events:

- JPEG/MoJ Public Engagement Group Conference
- Humanists UK President's Reception
- Equally Ours/EHRC Joint Event on the Future of Human Rights

Following on from the online JPEG workshops that the DLA attend three times a year, a JPEG/MoJ collaboration brought back its in-person Public Engagement Group Conference on 17/03/26. It was held at the MOJ building, 102 Petty France, London and was its first conference since pre-covid times with a full day's agenda which included speakers and workshops.

Nick Goodwin, CEO HMCTS, opened conference and welcomed us all before we split up into groups to attend individual workshops.

The DLA attended the following workshops, although there were too many to choose from:

- Online digital upload journey for LiP in Financial remedy - Family
- Experience the ET system from the user perspective - Employment
- Responsible AI adoption across HMCTS

There were helpful discussions and feedback provided by the delegates for the organisers to take away and at the end of the day, the Hon. Justice Robin Knowles and Miriam Davidson closed conference.

They thanked everyone for attending the first in-person conference since before lockdown and commented how it had been a success. HJ Knowles remarked on how HMCTS was so hugely different when he was a practicing barrister and judge. He said it was a closed shop to all, implementing ideas into the legal system with no outside input at all. HJ Knowles commented on how far we had come in just the last year, providing results for change by working together. He also praised that by everyone meeting up in person to discuss ways to improve the service, did so not just for service users today but for service users of the future as well.

You can keep up to date with the HMCTS Reform Programme by using the following link:

[HM Courts and Tribunals Service information bulletins - GOV.UK](#)

Humanists UK event

In June 2025, the DLA attended the final Humanists UK President's Reception by Dr Adam Rutherford as he stepped down from the role he held since June 2022. It was a well-attended event at One George Street, London, and discussions included the campaign for the assisted dying bill to be passed into law.

The new president of Humanists UK was announced at the end of last year and is Janet Ellis MBE:

<https://humanists.uk/about/our-people/patrons/janet-ellis/>

Joint Equally Ours/EHRC event.

Also at One George Street, London, on 19/03/26, the DLA attended the Equally Ours/EHRC joint event on The Future of Human Rights. Speakers included Ali Harris, Sonali Naik, KC from Equally Ours, and the new chair of EHRC, Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson. They all took part in a panel discussion before the afternoon workshops where groups were

asked to consider the barriers and opportunities available when protecting and promoting Human Rights in society today. It was an interesting discussion and gave us all things to consider.

You can view Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson's and Ali Harris's speeches on the EHRC and Equally Ours websites. Access links below:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/news/speech-ehrc-chair-sets-out-vision-human-rights>

[The future of human rights: the view from civil society - Equally Ours](#)

New Briefings Editor and Designer

The DLA committee have been busy recruiting and inducting a new editor for our thrice yearly publication, DLA Briefings. After 17 years excellent work, our DLA *Briefings* team, Geraldine Scullion (editor), and Alison Beanland (designer) retired from their roles, so after a summer recruitment campaign, we welcomed our new DLA *Briefings* Editor, Lisa Crivello and designer Christina Woollatt. Their first edition in November 2025 coincided with the DLA 30th Anniversary Event and was a remarkable success. Followed by the March edition which focused on the decision in the FWS case and was equally successful. We hope our members enjoy reading, and writing, the articles it produces. Well done, Lisa and Christina. We look forward to the July edition.

Governance Documents

The committee has also been discussing the updating and future proofing of our DLA governance documents

Those attending the 2026 AGM will have seen the proposal to adopt new Articles of Association. The committee and Chris have been working extremely hard to get this document ready for today. The new articles will hopefully future proof the DLA's rules of business for many years to come, well at least 5, when it will be time to review them again.

DLA Consultation work

The DLA have taken part in the following consultations and joint working groups.

October 2025 [Equally Ours letter to PM](#)

October 2025 [Joint letter to the Prime Minister and article](#)

February 2025 [MOJ's Call for Evidence on costs protection](#)

DLA Online Conference

In March 2025, the DLA held an online conference entitled “The Future of Equality Law”. It was very well received.

Clare Armstrong (*Principal (solicitor), Equality and Human Rights Commission*) started proceedings with a talk on Sexual harassment at work: where are we now?

Then Jagna Olejniczak (*Policy Researcher, Citizens Advice*) gave us an update on Discrimination in Welfare Benefits

Just before lunch Nicola Lewis (*The Intermediary Cooperative*) spoke on the topic of Creating a Level Playing Field: the work of the court-appointed intermediary in facilitating communication between the justice system and people with communication difficulties or differences.

Then there was a discussion after lunch on ways to find practical solutions without the need for legislation to eliminate housing discrimination and provide better disability accessibility

Finally, Robin Allen KC (*Cloisters Chambers*), Yara Ali-Adib (*Principal Lawyer - Equality & Human Rights Commission*) and Colin Davidson (*Senior Associate, Cole Khan*) provided a panel session about the future of discrimination law and the challenges of AI.

PGMs

We held six excellent PGMs which were well attended:

March 2026 PGM: "Unintentional indirect discrimination" with speakers Helena Ifeka & Declan O'Dempsey of Cloisters Chambers - 4 Mar 2026

November 2025 PGM: CPR, QOCS and CFAs: Personal Injury Basics for Discrimination Lawyers - speaker: Anna Beale KC - 25 Nov 2025

September 2025 PGM "Agency and Principal" - speaker: Mukhtiar Singh - 8 September 2025

June 2025 PGM "Belief Discrimination" - Chris Milsom - 18 June 2025

March 2025 PGM "Dealing with Litigants with Mental Health Differences" - Sophie Garner - 25th March 2025

March 2025 PGM: "Counting the Cost" speaker: Catherine Knowles of Exchange Chambers, Manchester - 6th March 2025

Our next PGM is directly after this AGM. Elaine Banton, a barrister from 7 Bedford Row Chambers, will speak on *Ms S Pal v Accenture (UK) Ltd* [2026] EAT12, a case Elaine successfully represented Ms Pal on. An unfair and disability discrimination case where judges had to decide on whether the condition of endometriosis was the disability that Ms Pal had suffered discrimination from.

We look forward to learning more about this case from Elaine.

Concluding thoughts

Fifteen months ago, my Chair's report commented that a ceasefire had been declared in the war in Gaza, signaling that the recent Happy New Year celebrations held earlier were proving to be just that, for all those involved anyway. However, since then we have seen conflict grow between USA, and Israel, on Iran, provoking Iran to attack neighbouring gulf states and beyond.

Of course, we must not allow this latest warfare to distract us into forgetting the continuing war between Russia and Ukraine. It is now in its fourth year, and there does not seem to be any sign of ceasing.

All conflict, no matter how far away, has an immense effect on life in the UK, not just with increased oil and petrol prices, cancelled holidays abroad but also by making divisions in society. Polarising communities and turning one group against another, allowing discrimination to creep in, unconsciously at first, until it shows itself publicly. In a main event, street riots or attacks on another group's buildings or assets, or by driving a vehicle into a gathering of people at a social event. In these worrying times, organisations such as the DLA must work with other organisations to help prevent such events from happening. To protect, promote and educate using real life experiences of discrimination and human rights stories. I am sure that the 2026/27 DLA committee and its members will be ready to play their part in the months to come.

Nicola Redhead
Chair of the DLA
14th April 2026

3. Membership

Membership of the DLA has held up well over this past year. As of 31st March 2026, DLA membership stood at 187 members, made up of:

- 60 solicitor/barristers
- 36 individuals - other (including academics, trainers, consultants, trade unionists)
- 43 student/unwaged/retired
- 24 voluntary organisations/law centres
- 5 large solicitors firms
- 6 medium solicitors firms
- 3 small solicitors firms
- 10 national organisations (including equality bodies, trade unions)

Overall membership was slightly down as compared with the same time last year (189 members) and is now below the levels of previous years when we had 250-300 members. In general, we now have rather more individual memberships and rather fewer organisations than in the past.

It is encouraging that there is still a steady flow of new membership applications but the challenge for this coming year will be to retain existing members and recruit new ones. We are especially concerned to retain our members who depend on grants from public authorities and/or legal aid whose survival is at risk due to government spending cuts and reform of legal aid; they make an extremely valuable contribution to the work of DLA as well as to members of the public who rely on them for accessible high-quality legal services.

4. Briefings and E-mail News

Briefings

Briefings is a critical element of the DLA's mission to contribute to the development of equality law and support discrimination law practitioners. It does this by publishing articles and case notes that map developments in case law, highlight relevant legislative changes, and explore legal and policy matters in equality law. This year, *Briefings* published 26 case notes and eight in-depth articles.

The July 2025 edition was dominated by one of the most significant legal developments in recent equality law: the Supreme Court's decision clarifying that the term 'sex' within the Equality Act 2010 (EQA) refers specifically to 'biological sex'. Given the profound implications for service providers, employers, and protected groups, the journal featured three in-depth articles that reported on various aspects of the case and its ramifications for UK equality law.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the Discrimination Law Association, the November 2025 edition took a retrospective and sobering look at the evolution of UK Equality rights. Two founding members reflected on the dramatic expansion of equality rights, which has embraced a wider range of protected characteristics since the launch of DLA in 1995, and contrasted this with the increasing difficulty of enforcement and access to justice for claimants. This theme was echoed in our second article, which traced the trajectory of disability rights from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to the present. The author highlighted that despite significant advances, equally significant barriers to access and justice persist. The final feature by Professor Colin Murray addressed the complex post-Brexit landscape in Northern Ireland. The article examined how withdrawal negotiations have maintained a link with EU law, creating a unique legal "bridgehead" that threatens to cause significant divergence in equality protections between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

The March 2026 edition turned its attention to the ideological and structural pressures facing the legal system. In an article based on her excellent talk at the DLA's 30th anniversary event in November 2025, Audrey Ludwig MBE underscores the urgent need to address conflicts among equality rights. She argues that a modern democracy must be able to balance competing protected characteristics without falling into the trap of polarisation and emphasises that creating a 'civilised and evidence-based' space for debate is not just a preference, but a necessity. Continuing the "access to justice" theme from November, *Briefings* also featured an analysis of the situation facing our ET system, asking if it is now fundamentally broken. With caseloads surging and delays stretching into years, the piece invoked the maxim 'justice delayed is justice denied', calling for urgent reform to prevent the collapse of worker protections.

The DLA is extremely fortunate to include among its members and supporters some of the most experienced discrimination lawyers and activists in the UK. Their analysis of legal developments and emerging trends increases and strengthens our understanding of the law. Their commitment to the DLA and *Briefings* is an invaluable asset; the production of the three editions of *Briefings* each year would not be possible without their willingness to volunteer their time, expertise and experience.

These volunteers are drawn from DLA members, the executive committee and other supporters. In January 2026, the new *Briefings* Editor, Lisa Crivello, invited interested members to form a 'steering group' to discuss ideas and potential themes for forthcoming editions. If you would like to write for *Briefings* or be involved in the steering group, please contact Chris Atkinson at info@discriminationlaw.org.uk.

The DLA would like to acknowledge and express thanks for the 17 years of excellent work by our outgoing editor, Geraldine Scullion, and designer Alison Beanland, who both retired during 2025. We welcome our new publication team, Lisa Crivello and web designer Christina Woollatt, who are taking up the mantle and continuing to maintain the high standard of production in DLA *Briefings*.

E-mail News & Information Circulation

Over the reporting period, we have circulated 8 issues of the DLA's email News, containing updates on DLA institutional developments and responses to consultations, as well as relevant national and international reports, case updates, conferences, vacancies and discrimination law news, plus information circulated at the request of members.

As of 31st March 2026, we had 577 recipients (individual and organisations) on our electronic mailing list and therefore directly receiving our *eNews*.

5. Practitioner Group Meetings

The DLA has continued to run a programme of meetings over this reporting period. During the pandemic, these events had to be run online via zoom but this had the added advantage of enabling members who live beyond travelling distance into London to attend.

Following the pandemic, an attempt was made to hold these events both in-person and online but the attendance in person was rather disappointing and so the decision was taken to revert to online only.

We are grateful to all of our speakers who have given up their time and efforts to help us.

6. Influencing Law and Policy

Influencing law and policy is at the heart of the DLA, and we have continued to play an active part in shaping the national debate around discrimination policy.

As well as formal consultation responses, we also engage with other NGOs and join with other organisations in letters to the press, government departments and others on important topics that we feel touch on the DLA's principles.

As ever, we will create similar opportunities in 2026-27 so that we can continue to influence law and policy effectively in line with our members' interests.

Appendix 1: Staffing

Chris Atkinson became the DLA Administrator/Development Officer as a temporary appointment in October 2010 and his permanent position was confirmed in November 2010; he remains in post. This is a part-time post.

There are no other paid or unpaid staff.

Appendix 2: Support and Thanks

For all of the reporting period, most events have been held online but we are extremely grateful to UCU for hosting our recent Anniversary event.

Appendix 3: Executive Committee

Members

The following individuals have served on the Executive Committee during the period covered by this report:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Nicola Redhead | Chair |
| Colin Davidson | Treasurer |
| Chris Fry | Trustee/Director |
| Gemma Grant | Trustee/Director |
| Peter Kumar | Trustee/Director |
| Declan O'Dempsey | Trustee/Director |
| Jonathan Rackham | Trustee/Director |
| Dave Ratchford | Trustee/Director |
| Maurice Serrell | Trustee/Director |
| Annapurna Waughray | Trustee/Director |