

News release

Disability in the workplace report highlights best practice

12 March 2020

A new report published today has found an apparent reluctance among disabled legal professionals to inform their employers of their disability. This in turn means firms are potentially not introducing measures which would help those individuals, and the broader practice, work more effectively.

While finding this under reporting was a problem, our survey of 3,000 firms also found examples of specific initiatives and approaches within individual which are delivering positive outcomes for employees and clients alike.

According to our most recent statistics 3% of solicitors currently declare they have a disability, a figure virtually unchanged in the last ten years. This compares to figures released by the Government which estimate that 13% of the overall workforce in the UK have a disability.

Reasons identified for this apparent under-reporting included concerns that declaring a disability may suggest a lower level of competency, a lack of opportunities for staff to request reasonable adjustments within a supportive environment and firms not having policies, practices and procedures in place to help disabled staff.

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive said: "It is important that people who need legal services have access to a profession that is diverse and inclusive. We know that diverse businesses are better businesses so wanted to find out more about what lies behind the apparent under-declaration of disabilities in the legal workforce. Our new report also looks at what firms can do to promote a much more disability inclusive working environment, highlighting best practice."

Good practice examples within the report focus on seven key areas, including culture, leadership, recruitment and making reasonable adjustments. Under each area the report provides general advice, top tips and case studies examples from specific named firms.

In compiling our 'Promoting disability inclusion in law firms' report we surveyed 3,000 law firms about their policies and practices and engaged directly with disability experts and disabled solicitors. It also conducted a review of existing published research on the topic of disability in the workplace.

View the report [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/disability-workplace/>]