

## Equality and Diversity Policy

1. This policy addresses Four Brick Court's approach to the specific areas listed below. However, more generally, Four Brick Court is committed to fostering an open and inclusive atmosphere for all members, staff, pupils, clerks and visitors, irrespective of culture, disability, gender, race, religion, sexuality, or socio-economic background. Chambers recognises that members of these communities can face inequality in the UK and fairness, justice, and the rule of law demand equality and diversity in the community and in our profession.
2. Members, pupils, employees or clerks can raise concerns about Chambers' Equality and Diversity policy with the Equality and Diversity Officer. This policy is circulated to all members, staff, pupils, clerks and those who are required to read and understand it.
3. If this policy is required in an alternative format, please contact the clerks at [clerks@4bc.co.uk](mailto:clerks@4bc.co.uk).

### Table of contents

1. Reasonable adjustments
2. Flexible working
3. Leave for parents and carers
4. Other leave
5. Harassment

### Named Contacts

	Named Contact
Reasonable adjustments requests for staff, barristers and pupils	Sophie Crampton or Brónach Gordon, Joint Equality and Diversity Officers
Reasonable adjustments requests for visitors	Clive Barrett, Operations and Finance Manager
Reasonable adjustments requests for mini-pupils	Lauren Bovington
Reports, complaints and all other enquiries	Sophie Crampton or Brónach Gordon, Joint Equality and Diversity Officers

## Reasonable adjustments

### Aim and remit of policy

1. Four Brick Court intends to make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce substantial disadvantage for disabled people, both to those within Chambers and those visiting Chambers. This policy covers all employees of Chambers, barristers, clerks, pupils, mini-pupils and visitors.

### Who this policy supports

2. In this policy, the starting point for the definition of disability follows that set out in the Equality Act 2010 s.6. A person therefore has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
3. Under the Equality Act 2010, “substantial” means more than minor or trivial and “long term” means “12 months or more”. For Four Brick Court, this definition expands to all disabilities, such as neurodivergence, mental health conditions and physical conditions, including chronic illnesses.

### Considerations for reasonable adjustments

4. When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, the current guidance is for Chambers to consider:
  - Chambers’ resources and size;
  - how effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage the disabled person would otherwise experience;
  - its practicality;
  - the cost;
  - the availability of financial support;
  - any suggestion by the disabled person as to what adjustment(s) ought to be made;
  - any medical information supplied by the disabled person as to their disability and its effects.

### Examples of reasonable adjustments

5. Four Brick Court takes a person-centred approach. This means that Chambers encourages individuals to speak to Chambers about any reasonable adjustments they need or may need to meet their full potential.
6. This policy does not list the reasonable adjustments that Chambers will make for staff, barristers, pupils or visitors but the list provided below provides examples of the types of adjustments that Chambers can provide:
  - a. Provision of information in alternative formats (e.g., large print, Braille etc)
  - b. Provision of auxiliary aids (e.g., induction loops)
  - c. Provision of accessible conference room facilities, where possible
  - d. Priority for a quiet working space
  - e. Accommodating individuals’ readers or interpreters
  - f. Allowing reasonable time off or setting aside time in a member’s diary for medical appointments
  - g. Reasonable adjustments to working practice, for example, helping to facilitate part-time remote working or incorporating a need for breaks or reading time into a barrister’s diary or a member of staff’s working day
  - h. Accommodating individuals’ personal assistants within Chambers

- i. Additional time when undertaking tasks, assessments, and during interviews.

#### Staff, Barristers and Others in Chambers

7. Chambers understands that discussing disabilities and any reasonable adjustments is a sensitive and personal topic. Chambers will safeguard the confidentiality of anyone wishing to discuss their disability but may need to ask questions to help identify appropriate adjustments.
8. A disabled person working for or at Chambers may make a request for reasonable adjustments at any time.
9. Staff, pupils, or barristers with specific requirements should make requests to Sophie Crampton or Brónach Gordon, Equality and Diversity Officers, for reasonable adjustment decisions.
10. All requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered case-by-case with the advice and assistance of Chambers' Equality and Diversity Officer. If it is not possible to make the adjustment requested, viable alternatives will be discussed with the applicant. This provision is to be interpreted positively and purposefully, with requests for reasonable adjustments being granted unless there is a compelling reason why this is not possible. Reasonable adjustment requests will also be accommodated, where possible, in relation to social events.
11. Head of Chambers and the Operations and Finance Manager are responsible for considering whether staff, barristers or pupils with disabilities require assistance during an emergency evacuation and if so, whether or not a personal emergency evacuation plan is required for the individual/s concerned. If required, the plan will be developed in partnership with the individual concerned to ensure that adjustments to the emergency evacuation procedure may be made.

#### Visitors to Chambers

12. Barristers are responsible for considering reasonable adjustment requests from their visitors and anticipating any likely reasonable adjustments that will need to be made for visitors that they know are likely to require assistance. Visitor requests for specific reasonable adjustments may be made by contacting Clive Barrett, Operations and Finance Manager.
13. Reasonable adjustment requests for mini-pupils should be discussed with Lauren Bovington, who will (with the mini-pupil's consent) also raise this with any members of Chambers that the mini-pupil is due to shadow.
14. Chambers will publish accessibility information on their website once this is available. Chambers is not currently wheelchair accessible but Chambers is liaising with Middle Temple to address this issue.

#### Cost of making reasonable adjustments

15. Four Brick Court will pay for any reasonable adjustments. Chambers' budget will reflect likely reasonable adjustment costs for all employees of Chambers, barristers, clerks, pupils, mini-pupils and visitors to Chambers.

#### Monitoring and review

16. This policy is reviewed by Chambers' Equality and Diversity Officer at least every two years. This policy will next be reviewed on 15 June 2025.

## Flexible working

### For members and pupils

1. Members wishing to work part-time or reduced hours should raise this in writing with the Management Committee to ensure the recruitment needs of Chambers can be monitored.
2. This policy recognises that, as self-employed individuals, members have the discretion to work flexibly in line with their own needs and caring commitments. Working hours should be discussed with the practice team so that it is clear when a member is or isn't available for work. This includes where a member needs to change their working pattern for a fixed period, such as religious observance.
3. No members will be forced by the practice team or any person to work at times when they do not wish to do.
4. No members will be penalised for working flexible hours or part-time. Work will be allocated fairly to part-time or flexible working members as it is for full-time members, reflecting the hours and days that these members are available to work.
5. Members must ensure that they have a current practising certificate, Bar Mutual insurance, and comply with the Bar Council CPD regulations.
6. The Management Committee will consider any applications for a pro-rata payment of rent for part or all of the period that any member wishes to work part-time or at reduced hours. This is on a discretionary basis.
7. Requests for flexible working hours during pupillage will be considered by the Pupillage and Tenancy Committee at the time of the pupillage application. If agreed, pupils must ensure the Bar Standards Board is aware of this arrangement and comply with all the required regulatory obligations.

### For staff

8. Current staff members or clerks who wish to move to part-time or flexible working must make an application for this in accordance with the procedure set out in Employee Handbook. Please see the section on Flexible Working at page 135 of the Employee Handbook.
9. Chambers will consider requests for flexible and part-time working for any new staff members or clerks applying to join Chambers. Chambers will seriously consider whether these requests can be accommodated, taking into account Chambers' business needs.

## Leave for parents and carers

### For members

#### *Parental leave for Primary Carers*

All primary carers for children under 18 are treated equally whether they are taking leave after the birth of a child, an adoption, or placement under kinship caring arrangements. A primary carer is defined as the person carrying out most of the child care. There may be two primary carers if the shared care is equal.

1. Every member is entitled to return to Chambers within a period of one year after giving birth, adopting, or becoming kinship carer of a child for whom they are the primary carer.
2. A member of Chambers taking a period of parental leave is automatically entitled to up to 12 months free of Chambers fixed rent (not percentage). A member may make an application to the Management Committee to use its discretion to suspend the percentage on fees. The criteria includes financial hardship.
3. If a member wishes to take longer than 12 months' leave, this should be proposed to the Management Committee together with, if appropriate in the circumstances, an application for a career break or Door Tenancy. The Management Committee is obliged to construe this provision positively and purposefully. On any application for an extension of the rent free period, the default position is that the application will be successful unless there are compelling reasons why it should fail.
4. Members of Chambers are required to notify Chambers' management and the clerks of their intention to take a period of parental or adoption leave at least 2 months before the start of the period of leave stating the estimated commencement date and likely date of return.
5. If a member of Chambers is absent from Chambers for more than 12 months without agreeing an extension with the Management Committee or by being made a Door Tenant their automatic right to return to Chambers ceases unless such absence is due to consecutive births within the prescribed timeframes.
6. When membership ceases by virtue of the paragraph above, a member can re-apply to Chambers in the usual way.
7. Any member that informs Chambers of their pending parental leave will be informed by the Treasurer(s) of their 'rights' under this policy.

#### *Parental leave: when a member is not the primary carer*

All non-primary carers for children under 18 are treated equally whether they are taking leave after the birth of a child, an adoption, or placement under kinship caring arrangements.

8. A member of Chambers may wish to take leave to support their partner. They can take up to 4 weeks' leave to spend with their partner and new child and the member is entitled to 4

weeks free of the fixed Chambers rent. A member may make an application to the Management Committee to use its discretion to suspend the percentage on fees.

9. If a member of Chambers wishes to take more leave and requests financial arrangements accordingly, this request will be made to the Management Committee.

#### Leave for carers of disabled dependents

10. Members who are primary carers of a dependent with disabilities may request a period of leave to care for that dependent. This request will be made to the Management Committee. The length of leave depends on the specific need of the member concerned and will be free of rent.

#### Arrangements during leave

11. All members of Chambers are valued. A member on parental, adoption, or kinship carer leave is encouraged to maintain contact with Chambers and attend Chambers' social, training and marketing events.
12. The Head of Chambers will ensure that the member is:
  - i. Offered opportunities to conduct appropriate work if this is requested;
  - ii. Invited to training events, social events, markets events and Chambers meetings;
  - iii. Is consulted on any significant issues affecting Chambers;
  - iv. Receives assistance with the re-establishment of their practice on return to work,
  - v. Offered a practice meeting with the senior clerk, and lead clerk, within 2 weeks before the member returns to work

#### Undertaking work during leave

13. If a member wishes to carry out work during their period of leave, they should establish the financial arrangements for this with the Management Committee. Such notice can be given at the time the application for leave under this policy is made but will be no later than four weeks before any work commences. This ensures that Chambers is aware of the work they intend to do, and is satisfied that the level of work being undertaken does not constitute a return to practice.

#### Consideration of flexible working on return from leave

14. If a member who has taken a parental leave wishes to have a period in which they can adjust to their return and work reduced hours, they should raise this at the earliest opportunity in writing with the Management Committee and Practice team. Please refer to the flexible working policy for more information.

#### For staff

15. All employees of Chambers are entitled to parental leave, as covered by the relevant legislation. Please refer to the Employee Handbook on maternity leave, parental leave, kinship care and adoption leave entitlements.
16. Requests for leave to care for dependents with disabilities will be seriously considered and such requests should be made to your manager or the Head of Chambers, as applicable.

## Other leave

For members

Medical leave

1. Members who require a period of medical leave may request a period of leave. This request will be made to the Management Committee. The length of leave depends on the specific need of the member concerned and will be free of rent. A member may make an application to the Management Committee to use its discretion to suspend the percentage on fees.
2. Consideration will be given to members who wish to work flexibly on their return (see flexible working policy) or become a door tenant temporarily or permanent. Chambers will make reasonable adjustment for returning members as explained in the reasonable adjustment policy.

Transition leave

Members

1. Members who require a period of leave to transition may request a period of leave. This request will be made to the Management Committee.
2. The length of leave depends on the specific need of the member concerned and will be free of rent. A member may make an application to the Management Committee to use its discretion to suspend the percentage on fees.

For staff

3. Requests for leave for medical conditions or to transition will be seriously considered and such requests should be made to your manager or the Head of Chambers, as applicable.

## Harassment Policy

1. This policy covers all those working in Chambers, visiting Chambers and providing services to Chambers.
2. As part of Four Brick Court's overall commitment to equality of opportunity, it is fully committed to promoting a fair and harmonious working environment in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity and in which no individual feels bullied, threatened or intimidated.
3. The aim of this policy is to prevent harassment and bullying in Chambers which includes harassment and bullying by staff, clerks, members of Chambers or by third parties you encounter while doing your job. Harassment or bullying at work in any form is unacceptable behaviour and will not be permitted or condoned.

### What is harassment and bullying?

4. Harassment and bullying detract from a productive working environment and can impact on the health, confidence, morale and performance of those affected by it, including anyone who witnesses or knows of the unwanted or unacceptable behaviour.

### Definition of harassment

5. Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct based on sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, religion or belief, age, race or disability which affects the dignity of anyone at work or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. A single incident of unwanted or offensive behaviour can amount to harassment.
6. Some examples are given below, but many forms of behaviour can constitute harassment. These examples are:
  - physical conduct, ranging from touching, pushing or grabbing to punching or serious assault
  - verbal or written harassment through jokes, offensive language, defamatory remarks, gossip, threats or letters
  - unwelcome sexual behaviour, including unwanted suggestions, propositions or advances
  - the sending or displaying of material that is pornographic or obscene, including emails, text messages, video clips, photographs, posters, emblems or any other offensive material
  - inappropriate posts or comments on or via social media commonly known as "cyber bullying"
  - isolation, non-co-operation at work or exclusion from social activities
  - coercion, including pressure for sexual favours
  - inappropriate personal contact, including intrusion by pestering or spying
7. It is the effect of the behaviour that is relevant and not solely the motive or intent behind it.

### Definition of bullying

8. Bullying is persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour, which, through the abuse of power, makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable. Bullying can be a form of harassment and can undermine an individual's self-confidence and self-esteem and cause them to suffer stress.
9. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. As with harassment, there are many examples of bullying, which can include:
  - shouting at or humiliating others
  - high-handed or oppressive levels of supervision
  - unjustified, offensive or insulting remarks about performance
  - exclusion from meetings, events or communications without good cause
  - physical or emotional threats
10. Bullying can occur in the workplace and outside the workplace at events connected to the workplace, such as social functions or business trips.
11. Harassment is unlawful under s26 of the Equality Act 2010. In addition to the above unwanted conduct, it can arise where a person engages in any kind of unwanted sexual behaviour (or gender reassignment or sex related behaviour).
12. Complaints of harassment may be raised informally in the first instance with Sophie Crampton or Brónach Gordon, Equality and Diversity Officers, the Head of Chambers or Deputy Head of Chambers who will agree an appropriate response. Formal complaints should be made under the Four Brick Court's grievance procedure.
13. Bullying or Harassment is misconduct for employees or a breach of the Bar Code of Conduct for barristers. Allegations of harassment or bullying will be dealt with under the Four Brick Court's disciplinary procedure.
14. Chambers seeks to ensure that no one who alleges harassment or bullying in good faith should face any detriment as a result. Any victimisation of a complainant, witness or anyone else involved in the investigation of a complaint will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.
15. A copy of this policy is provided to all those for whom Chambers constitutes a working environment, including members of Chambers, pupils, squatters, clerks and other employees, temporary workers, those who provide services to Chambers such as contract cleaners, accountants and IT consultants, and mini-pupils and work experience students.
16. Any conduct amounting to harassment should be reported to Sophie Crampton or Brónach Gordon, Equality and Diversity Officers, and will be dealt with under the grievance procedure in the Chambers' constitution or Employee Handbook.
17. This policy was adopted on 15 March 2024 and will be reviewed on 15 March 2026.