

Women and Equalities Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

6 September 2018

Submission to Inquiry into the enforcement of the Equality Act 2010

We've written to the Chief Executive of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) requesting reasonable adjustments to provide disabled people with access to the courts to enforce their Equality Act rights. The Committee is encouraged to make courts' accessibility a key area of activity, Equality Act enforcement being largely dependent on individuals bringing their own cases.

Adjustments recommended for consideration by HMCTS include:

- Allowing disabled litigants in person to submit their claims by email if they wish rather than insisting on multiple copies of confusing forms with claims particulars.
- Use of video-link to enable disabled litigants in person to participate in hearings from their homes or other viable locations if they so wish.
- For any ongoing notices or directions in proceedings to be serviced by email where requested and for Easy Read to be adopted in all communications.
- Court staff to be trained to be aware of the needs of disabled litigants and to respond appropriately.
- Judicial awareness of the needs of disabled court users to be increased, perhaps with specialist EA10 judges considered.

These steps can be taken rapidly to improve Equality Act enforcement. In the longer term, we suggest that social security tribunals are given the power to consider Equality Act claims against the DWP in a manner not dissimilar to the special educational needs and disability tribunal and employment tribunal.

We also ask the Committee to consider recommending the establishment of a free Equalities Tribunal to improve access to justice as the County Court rules and costs regime is highly intimidating for many people.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this matter.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kester".

Kester Dean