



PRESS RELEASE

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University launches Disability Law Hub

The University of Leeds is set to be a leader in the field of disability law with the launch of a Disability Law Hub.

With more than one billion disabled people worldwide* facing possible discrimination and exclusion, the new hub will be dedicated to research on disability law, as well as offering a wide range of teaching expertise at undergraduate, Masters and doctoral levels. Specialist areas include mental health and capacity law, disability equality law, care law, international disability rights law, disabled victims of crime, and the relationship between disability and areas of law such as contracts, torts and intellectual property.

Forming one of the largest groups of disability law scholars in the world, the hub will be headed by Professor Anna Lawson and will comprise nine legal academics and several PhD researchers.

At the launch event at the university on 15 April, Professor Anna Lawson, who is herself blind, said: “I studied law at the University of Leeds in the 1980s because it was the only university that offered a transcription service for blind students. Thirty years later, I am proud that my alma mater has taken a leadership role in recognising disability law as an important area of legal research and scholarship and very excited about working with my wonderful colleagues in this area.”

Professor Sir Alan Langlands, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, said the new hub builds on a strong track record in disability studies at the university. He said: “For many decades the University’s Centre for Disability Studies has challenged socially-created barriers that limit the life chances of disabled people. The new Disability Law Hub houses the country’s leading group of legal experts in this cutting-edge field.”

Two new Professors of Law and Social Justice have recently joined the School of Law and become members of the hub. Luke Clements is an expert on social care law whose Chair is endowed by the charity Cerebra. He is a practicing solicitor who has taken many of the landmark discrimination cases to the European Court of Human Rights.

Oliver Lewis joins the School of Law while retaining his position as Executive Director of an international human rights charity, the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre. He has worked in some 20 countries in Europe and Africa on strategic litigation and advocacy which advances equality, inclusion and justice for people with mental health issues and learning disabilities.

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Lord Colin Low, Chair of the School of Law's Advisory Board has said: "When I taught law at the University of Leeds in the 1970s and early 1980s I did not imagine that the School of Law would one day establish a Disability Law Hub. I am delighted that its scholars have a range and depth of expertise that will be invaluable in closing the gap between the rhetoric of human rights and the lived experiences of disabled people around the world."

Professor Alastair Mullis, Head of the School of Law, added: "I am immensely proud that the new Disability Law Hub will offer undergraduate and postgraduate students an opportunity to engage with legal theory and practice so as to improve access to justice for disabled people, who have languished on the edges of the margins of law for far too long."

For further enquiries/interviews:

Professor Anna Lawson, Professor Luke Clements and Professor Oliver Lewis are available for interview.

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*Source: WHO/World Bank report on disability, 2011

University of Leeds

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We are a top 10 university for research and impact power in the UK, according to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, and positioned as one of the top 100 best universities in the world in the 2015 QS World University Rankings.

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