

News story: Seeking disability sector champions for 2019



Are you a business leader? Are you passionate about accessibility? Do you want to encourage culture change within UK business? If your answer to these questions is yes, you could be one of the next disability sector champions.

There are currently 14 sector champions who use their influential status as leaders in their sectors to drive improvements to the accessibility, and quality, of services and facilities in their sector.

These champions have all made great progress in their sectors but there is much more to do to ensure disabled people are fully included across the whole of society.

So we are issuing a call for business people to become sector champions initially for one year, in each of the following sectors:

- countryside and heritage
- fashion
- food and drink
- product design
- retail
- technology
- website accessibility

We need champions who are ambitious, passionate and dynamic, with strong networks and the ability to reach out to a wide range of organisations and to create momentum for change.

Express your interest

If you are ready for this challenge, and welcome the opportunity to work within your sector and beyond to deliver on these goals, please download and complete the application form:

ODT, 10.5KB

This file is in an [OpenDocument](#) format

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. [Request an accessible format.](#)

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email accessible.formats@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Email the form to odi.contactus@dwp.gsi.gov.uk (Office for Disability Issues)

Further information is available in the candidate information pack:

ODT, 1.57MB

This file is in an [OpenDocument](#) format

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. [Request an accessible format.](#)

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email accessible.formats@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

If you have any enquiries please contact us at the email address above.

The closing date for applications is midnight on 20 January 2019.

Published 3 December 2018

Last updated 15 January 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 15 January 2019 Changed closing date to 20 January 2019 from 13 January 2019 after an extension by the Minister for Disabled People.
2. 3 December 2018 First published.

[News story: New guidance to help parents avoid unsafe out-of-school](#)

settings

New guidance to help parents choose safe, high quality out-of-school settings – such as clubs and tuition centres – for their children has been [published today](#).

The document, now open for consultation to ensure it meets parents' needs, sets out ten key questions parents may want to ask providers – as well as the answers they should expect – to help them assure themselves that their children are playing and learning in a safe environment.

Questions include checking whether staff and volunteers have had appropriate training (such as health, safety and child protection), and clarifying whether adults who aren't staff or teachers will be present.

It also sets out a number of red flags parents should look out for, like providers not being aware of how to spot or report concerns of harm, or whether the building looks unsafe or poorly maintained with loose wires and damp present.

The guidance was developed as part of the Integrated Communities Strategy published earlier this year.

School Systems Minister, Lord Agnew, said:

The overwhelming majority of out-of-school settings, from Scouts to dance classes to holiday clubs, offer strong provision in a safe environment. For young people involved it can broaden their experiences and unlock their potential.

I remain concerned, however, about the small minority of settings that may be putting children at risk of harm, or encouraging views that are extremist or dangerous. I hope this guidance will help parents and provide reassurance about the places they are sending their children. It will also help the settings themselves understand what good practice looks like.

A new voluntary safeguarding code of practice is also being consulted on, designed to help providers understand how they can make their setting a safe environment for the children attending it. The voluntary code provides guidance for settings in relation to a wide range of issues, including safeguarding, online safety and suitability of staff.

The consultation follows the announcement earlier this year that the government is investing £3million to boost local authorities' capacity to improve oversight of out-of-school settings of concern. The work, taking place in pilot areas across the country, is encouraging collaboration between local authorities and relevant agencies, and will be used to identify settings and show how existing legal powers can be most effective in

addressing safeguarding and welfare concerns.

The consultation on a code of practice for out-of-school settings and guidance for parents will run for 12 weeks until Sunday 24 February.

[News story: Automation to provide better advice to people: apply for funding](#)

The [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) website has more than 3,500 pages of content. The process of scanning legislation and other sources for updates is currently done manually, taking a lot of time and leaving it open to human bias and error.

Working in partnership with Innovate UK, the organisation has up to £150,000 to invest in projects that look at automating updating to thousands of pages of information and advice for the public.

A further £300,000 could be available in a second phase to develop and test up to 2 of the best ideas.

Funding is provided by the [CAN DO Innovation Challenge Fund](#) and is under the SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative) programme.

Objective advice in plain English

This competition is looking for solutions that would automatically scan for future legislation, pull content from trusted sources and create first drafts of changes to existing content.

These should support improvement over time through machine learning and use natural language techniques.

Projects should:

- scan future UK and Scottish legislation and recognise trusted sources
- schedule changes to content and automatically produce accurate, objective advice in plain English
- be quicker than the manual alternative, while allowing for manual intervention
- track content sources to provide an audit trail
- integrate with a content management system

Competition information

- the competition opens on 10 December 2018, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 30 January 2019
 - it is open to organisations of any size
 - we expect phase 1 project costs to be up to £30,000 and for projects to last up to 6 months. Phase 2 projects costs can be up to £250,000 and last up to 12 months
 - projects will be 100% funded
 - a [briefing event](#) will be held in Edinburgh on 9 January 2019 with more information about the competition and how to make a quality application
-

[News story: Professor Piers Forster joins Committee on Climate Change](#)

Professor Piers Forster has been appointed to the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) by the Minister for Energy and Clean Growth, Claire Perry MP, and the devolved administrations.

Professor Forster is Director of the [Priestley International Centre for Climate](#) and Professor of Physical Climate Change at the University of Leeds. He takes up the post of climate scientist on the Committee for a 5 year term.

Piers has played a significant role authoring Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, and currently has a coordinating lead author role for the [IPCC sixth assessment report](#). As well as his research career, he established the forest protection and research charity, the [United Bank of Carbon](#) and has a number of roles advising industry, including membership of the [Rolls Royce Environment Advisory Board](#).

Professor Forster replaces founding Committee member, Sir Brian Hoskins, who recently stood down after 10 years of service.

Commenting on his appointment, Professor Forster said:

Sir Brian taught me as a PhD student and is someone I have huge respect for. I am humbled to be following in his footsteps. I am thrilled to be taking up this post on the 10th anniversary of the UK's Climate Change Act. The Act and the Committee have done a great job in helping the UK establish itself as a world leader in reducing emissions. However, the challenging 'teenage years' are just around the corner and the Committee has some important work to do on long-term targets and evidence based solutions that, if we get it right, will help the transition to a zero-carbon UK.

Although climate change is a global problem, many of its solutions need to be implemented at a local level, and I am keen to learn best practice from the cities, rural communities and businesses of the UK. I can't wait to roll up my sleeves and get started!

Chairman of the Committee on Climate Change, Lord Deben, said:

I am absolutely delighted to welcome Professor Piers Forster to the Committee. His long-standing experience in climate research and analysis – including at the very highest levels of the IPCC – will be extremely valuable, particularly as we prepare to deliver a major report to Government reassessing the UK's long-term climate change targets.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Sir Brian Hoskins for his dedicated and exemplary service. For over a decade, Sir Brian has ensured the CCC's recommendations to government are firmly rooted in the latest scientific research and evidence. Brian's knowledge and insight have been pivotal to the Committee's success since it began work 10 years ago.

[Speech: Digital Court Reform](#) [Conference: David Gauke speech](#)

It's a real pleasure to be here today at this first international forum on online court services.

It's really energising to have the key players from around the world together in one place to spark off one another. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank both HM Courts & Tribunals Service and the Society for Computers and Law for organising the forum and DLA Piper for hosting us in this fantastic setting. I know this is going to be a really successful event and I hope – as the world continues to change so rapidly – that it is just the beginning of a collaborative approach on this in the future.

As technology revolutionises our lives, it is imperative not just that our justice systems keep pace – but that they actively seek to make the most of opportunities to build on the enduring principles of justice, using new ways of doing things which can be better than what has gone before at putting people first, and building the system around them.

Here in Britain with our world-renowned court system and world-class judiciary, we realise that responding to the rapid changes taking place

globally will be crucial to maintaining that reputation for excellence. That's why we are undertaking a 6-year programme of reform to our courts and tribunals – one that utilises the new technology available to us and modern ways of working.

One of the great strengths of the English system of common law is that it can change and adapt with the times. Our system is steeped in history and tradition; but we know that the law needs to keep pace with the society it serves.

However, changing the law through gradual accretion can make it more and more complex; and we have laid those layers on a fundamental system that hasn't changed very much at all. Our court practices and procedures are complex, with civil rules that run to thousands of pages. And we rely too much on lengthy paper-based processes and face-to-face hearings even for simple matters. The system can often look like a secret garden designed by experts. Of course, all that complexity is not very efficient. But there is a much more powerful reason to do things differently.

Complexity – and that sense of the system as a secret garden – puts people off from pursuing justice through our courts. The court system should be a leveller; a mechanism by which everyone – regardless of their wealth or status – can enforce their rights against another party. We need to recognise the transformation that can be brought about by thinking first about how we can simplify, streamline, and put the citizen in the driving seat. Technology – never an end in itself – is a means to that end.

This will allow us to open up our justice system, make it more accessible, and put power back into the hands of the people using it...

... including simpler, faster routes to resolving disputes that are clear and easy to use – recognising that people often want their problem solved rapidly and satisfactorily more than they want their 'day in court';

... removing the unnecessary costs of complexity, duplication, error and waste – so that people are not priced out of justice; and – for example – that lawyers are paid and used for their legal advice and skill, not simply to navigate the system;

... and with easily accessible data and information – so that everyone can make informed decisions, and we can harness the power of big data in support of justice.

Transforming the justice system in this way doesn't just mean better outcomes for individuals. It can also create a society that is inherently fairer – building trust to assure people that the system protects them and works in their interests; making it worth sorting and settling even small wrongs; and in turn, discouraging those who might otherwise prey on the people who are at present least likely to know how to exercise and enforce their rights.

In building its digital services, some of which Richard touched on earlier during his presentation, the UK has drawn on the experience of our global

partners, many of whom are in the room today. This can be seen in our development of online small claims, in which we have been able to create a new online court for the resolution of civil, family, and tribunal cases. We have used the experience of our counterparts to create a user-centred system that offers quick but fair outcomes to disputes and new routes to justice.

This means fewer hearings, more mediation, simpler processes and a lot less paperwork – making it much less daunting for individuals and much more difficult to manipulate for those with enhanced financial resources. And we are already seeing encouraging evidence of high take up of online court services and more engaged users.

One example of this is users now being able to challenge rogue traders or businesses over shoddy workmanship or defective products via our online civil money claims system simply by clicking a button. Though in its early stages of rollout, the feedback we have received on this system shows that users overwhelmingly find it quick and easy to navigate.

Over the coming 18 months we will continue learning from many of you here today – so that we can not only expand the service but add to it.

Before concluding I will briefly touch on our legal services sector and the huge contribution that legal professionals make to our nation. The UK legal services sector is worth an estimated £24 billion every year and its wider impact in facilitating trade and giving confidence to businesses is probably inestimable.

However, if our legal services sector is to meet the expectations of consumers, it can't stand still. It needs to continue to change and embrace the technological revolution to respond to the way people expect to be able to access legal services.

That's why we are working to foster innovation in the sector and create an environment that enables the UK's fledgling LawTech industry to thrive. The use of automation tools, early stage artificial intelligence systems and smart contracts is enabling firms to reduce their costs, scale economies and use their workforces more efficiently. This means they can spend more time doing what they do best – giving their clients top-quality legal advice.

The government is already helping UK firms to take better advantage of technology – in funding specific projects such as the Next Generation Services Fund, which recently awarded approximately £2 million for research on how the legal sector can adopt new technologies and artificial intelligence to boost productivity.

We have also established a government supported, sector-led LawTech Delivery Panel, which brings together professionals with the expertise and experience to drive LawTech innovation forward and support it to reach its true potential.

Our ambition is to create an environment where innovation in the legal sector is the norm – so that LawTech can thrive much the way that FinTech has

radically transformed the financial sector to meet consumers heightened expectations.

Ultimately, all of us here today have made the same realisation – that our jurisdictions must move with the times if they are going to, not just survive, but thrive in the digital age, while at the same time opening up justice so that it works better for everyone.

We all know that the technological revolution is a global one and our future success will hinge on how we respond to it.

By continuing to work together and sharing our experiences, we can pool our collective expertise to our mutual benefit and, in doing so, we can ensure all our justice systems flourish.

I know my team of officials here at the conference are keen to learn from you and I hope each and every one of you is able to take something away from it. What's more, I hope that this event is the first step towards a much more deliberate and determined collaborative enterprise globally on the way justice is done in the future. Thank you.