

DISABILITY MENTORING SCHEME LAUNCHED TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY TO LEGAL PROFESSION IN THE UK

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Firm news

Herbert Smith Freehills has teamed up with Aspiring Solicitors, a leading UK diversity talent development organisation, to launch a new first-of-its-kind disability mentoring scheme.

Developed to improve diversity across the legal profession by engaging undergraduate students with a disability, the mentoring scheme is the latest initiative unveiled as part of a [partnership](#) forged two years ago. Herbert Smith Freehills has previously partnered with the organisation on a Black Mentoring Programme, which has seen two of the mentees being offered training contracts this year.

This new disability mentoring programme will run from September 2020, for three months. Up to ten students will be matched to volunteer mentors within Herbert Smith Freehills who will provide guidance about the nature of work within a law firm.

Students on the programme will also attend three bespoke workshops in which they will receive guidance about how to navigate the graduate application process in the legal sector and how to succeed in interviews. They will also have the opportunity to improve their written skills through a legal drafting session and explore the details of a recent case to gain a better understanding of the role lawyers play.

On top of the programme, Herbert Smith Freehills is partnering with the new legal charity 'Aspiring Solicitors Foundation' to provide £1,000 to disabled applicants from low income backgrounds who apply to the charity for a grant for laptops, workwear and more to access the legal profession. Herbert Smith Freehills will also mentor the recipient of the Disability Scholarship through their disability champions at the firm.

Herbert Smith Freehills CEO Justin D'Agostino, said: *"Our commitment to building a diverse and inclusive environment remains steadfast. We are delighted to continue working alongside Aspiring Solicitors to ensure that students interested in pursuing a legal career are supported as individuals to achieve their potential and explore opportunities. At Herbert Smith Freehills we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to strive towards personal and professional goals. While there remains more work to do across the profession, this is a strategic focus for the firm I am delighted that this partnership continues to enable us to deliver."*

Mentees on the scheme will also have access to - and employability sessions with - graduate recruitment specialists alongside coaching sessions from the expert Aspiring Solicitors coaching and mentoring team.

Chris White, founder and CEO of [Aspiring Solicitors](#), comments: *"Aspiring Solicitors are thrilled to launch the Disability Mentoring Scheme for aspiring solicitors with Herbert Smith Freehills. In the current legal climate, it has never been more important to continue to drive recruitment of the best aspiring solicitors with the most potential. The Disability Mentoring Scheme will ensure that Herbert Smith Freehills encourages disabled candidates to apply more than ever as the firm recognises the wealth of talented disabled candidates in the market."*

Students eligible to apply to the scheme will be contacted in the coming days by Aspiring Solicitors.

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