

Equality Act 2010 Fact Sheet

What is the Equality Act 2010?

The Equality Act 2010 makes it law that every private, public and voluntary organisation must not discriminate against employees and people that use their services because of particular characteristics. The Act brings together all previous equality laws, making them simpler, more effective and easier to understand.

Who is protected?

The Equality Act 2010 makes sure that people with particular characteristic are protected from discrimination. These are the **protected characteristics**:

- 1 Age
- 2 Disability
- 3 Gender Reassignment
- 4 Marriage and civil partnerships
- 5 Pregnancy or maternity
- 6 Race
- 7 Religion or belief
- 8 Sex
- 9 Sexual orientation (Gay, lesbian or bisexual)

How are they protected?

If private, public or voluntary organisations treat people differently because of these characteristics, then they could be acting unlawfully.

What is an example of unlawful discrimination?

“The careers adviser at our sixth form college seems to think that there are still ‘girls’ jobs and boys jobs’. I told her I was interested in becoming a plumber. She wasn’t very helpful and said it was difficult for girls to get taken on as apprentices. She told my best mate Ryan that midwifery was no place for a young guy.” This is likely to be unlawful discrimination because of sex.

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly because of their characteristics.

What action can you take if you are experiencing discrimination?

If you believe you have been discriminated against or treated unfairly then you can start by **complaining** to the private, public or voluntary organisation and they must do something about it. If they don’t, then you could make a claim under the Equality Act 2010. This could result in the organisation being **taken to court** and **sued** for their action.

It is best to **speak to a lawyer** or contact an organisation, like the Equality and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityhumanrights.com), who can offer **advice and help**.

Do children and young people have equal protection?

Children and young people have equal protection for most of the protected characteristics. However, while a child is attending school there is **no protection** against **age discrimination**. However, when a young person is educated in a 6th form college, FE college or a university they are then protected against age discrimination. Also, children in school are **not protected** from discrimination because of **marriage and civil partnership**.

What are Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED)?

The Equality Act 2010 also includes the **Public Sector Equality Duty**. This means public bodies, like the police, schools and hospitals, not only have to take steps to stop discrimination, but also have to **promote equality**.

Public bodies should promote **equality of opportunity**, for example, by ensuring girls and boys have access to the same apprenticeships, or disabled students have access to all the resources and support they need. Plus they should promote **good relations**, for example, schools should have anti-bullying policies and should promote cultural understanding between different ethnic groups.

What is positive action?

The Act also allows **Positive Action** which enables public bodies to provide **additional benefits** to some groups of people to **tackle disadvantage** e.g. providing additional lessons for Gypsies and Travellers.