

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS, OWN YOUR LIFE



Rights exist to protect and guide people. When we know how and when to use them, we gain the clarity to make decisions with confidence and the strength to act when it matters.

Knowing our rights can change our lives. It gives us the tools to make decisions that define our future.

EQUALITY ACT 2010

What You Need to Know and How It Can Help You

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OVERVIEW

The Equality Act 2010 is the main law protecting people from discrimination in England, Scotland and Wales.

It brings together previous anti-discrimination laws into one framework and sets out who is protected, in what situations, and what public bodies, employers, schools, and service providers must do to ensure fairness.

The Act protects people from unfair treatment based on specific protected characteristics and applies in areas including employment, education, housing, and access to services.

These are legal duties and enforceable rights - not guidance or best practice.

GUIDANCE FOR PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

This section summarises the protections and rights available under the Act.

1. Protected Characteristics

The Act protects people from discrimination based on:

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender reassignment**
- **Marriage and civil partnership**
- **Pregnancy and maternity**
- **Race**
- **Religion or belief**
- **Sex**
- **Sexual orientation**

Protection applies in different ways depending on the situation (for example, some protections apply only in employment).

2. Types of Discrimination

The Act defines several forms of unlawful discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination – treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic**
- **Indirect discrimination – rules or policies that disadvantage certain groups**
- **Discrimination arising from disability**
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments (disability)**
- **Harassment**
- **Victimisation**

People are also protected from discrimination by association and perception.

3. Employment

The Act makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate in:

- **Recruitment and selection**
- **Terms and conditions**
- **Promotion and training**
- **Dismissal**
- **Redundancy**

Employers must make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and applicants.

4. Education

Schools, colleges, and universities must not discriminate in:

- **Admissions**
- **Provision of education**
- **Exclusions**
- **Access to benefits, facilities, or services**

Schools must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

5. Access to Services and Public Functions

Service providers (including healthcare providers, local authorities, transport operators, and businesses) must not discriminate when providing goods, facilities, or services.

Public authorities must ensure their services are accessible and make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

6. Housing and Accommodation

Landlords, housing providers, and managing agents must not discriminate in:

- Letting property
- Terms of tenancy
- Eviction
- Access to housing services

Some limited exceptions apply (for example, certain small premises).

7. Harassment and Victimisation

The Act protects people from unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

It also protects people who raise discrimination concerns or support someone else in doing so.

This is how knowing our rights can change lives.

When families and young people understand what support they're entitled to, they can make informed choices, access the right services, and create new possibilities for their future. One inspiring example is William, who had spent many years feeling distressed, followed by behaviours of concern. Today, with the right support, a co-produced plan developed by his parents and the UCS's care team, he is able to live in his own home, rediscover calm and purpose, and make meaningful progress in his daily life.

MORE



OBLIGATIONS & DUTIES FOR COMMISSIONERS / PUBLIC BODIES / EMPLOYERS

1. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Public authorities must:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups

This duty must be considered when making policies, commissioning services, and delivering public functions.

2. Reasonable Adjustments

Organisations must take reasonable steps to remove barriers for disabled people.

This may include:

- **Adjusting policies**
- **Providing auxiliary aids**
- **Changing physical features**
- **Offering alternative formats**

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is unlawful.

3. Employment Responsibilities

Employers must:

- **Prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation**
- **Ensure equal pay compliance**
- **Consider flexible policies fairly**
- **Provide adjustments where required**

4. Service Provider Duties

Organisations delivering services must ensure policies and practices do not disadvantage protected groups without lawful justification.

They must anticipate the needs of disabled people - not wait for complaints.

5. Enforcement and Accountability

Individuals can bring claims to:

- **Employment Tribunals (employment matters)**
- **County Court (services and housing)**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has powers to investigate and enforce compliance.

Limitations and Scope

The Act applies across Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales). Northern Ireland operates under separate equality legislation.

Some exemptions and exceptions exist (for example, occupational requirements in limited circumstances).

Original Source:

**The information in this summary is based on the legislation published at:
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Full text available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>