



The Equality Act 2010

For more than 40 years successive Governments have introduced anti-discrimination laws both to create and to respond to changes in society, to promote civil rights and equality. From the first Race Relations Acts back in the 1960s, through legislation on race and gender equality in the 1970s and disability rights in the 1990s, to more recent new laws on religion or belief, sexual orientation and age, Great Britain has a strong framework of equality legislation. Great progress has been made in making Britain a fairer and more confident nation, but inequality and discrimination persist today.

The Equality Act 2010 replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with it. It provides a framework for simpler, smarter and more streamlined processes. It also strengthens the law in important ways to help us tackle the discrimination and inequalities which still exist in our society.

The new Act is not the end of the story. We now need to set to work implementing and enforcing it, to make sure it is effective in helping us continue to work towards a fairer and more equal society.



What the Equality Act 2010 does

The Equality Act makes our equality law simpler and stronger.

Simpler law

Less complex and unwieldy law, through:

- Replacing nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 other instruments with a single Act.
- Harmonised definitions and exceptions so there are common approaches, where appropriate.

Clear and consistent protection, through:

- Levelling up protection for people discriminated against because they are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, so providing new protection for people like carers;
- Clearer protection for breastfeeding mothers;
- Levelling up protection from discrimination in private members' clubs;
- Extending the scope to use positive action.

Giving people better access to their rights, through:

- Simpler, clearer law and guidance so that employers and service providers are clear what they need to do to comply;
- Giving employment tribunals powers to make recommendations in more cases, to help employers improve their practices and their compliance;
- Protecting people from dual discrimination – direct discrimination because of a combination of two protected characteristics.



Stronger law

Better, more inclusive public services which help people achieve their potential, through:

- A new duty on strategic public bodies to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities;
- A new integrated Equality Duty on public bodies;
- Using public procurement to improve equality.

Fairer services for older people, through:

- Banning age discrimination in service and public functions.

More transparency, through:

- A power to require gender pay and employment equality publishing by public bodies;
- Encouraging businesses to publish their gender pay gap, with a power to require this if insufficient progress is made voluntarily;
- Stopping employers using pay secrecy clauses to prevent employees discussing their own pay.

More rights for disabled people, through:

- A new right for disabled people who live in leased homes to have reasonable adjustments made to communal areas like entrances and hallways, provided they meet the cost;
- Requiring schools to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils, for example special equipment and large-print books, where reasonable;
- Preventing employers asking job applicants questions about disability or health before making a job offer, except in specified circumstances;
- Increasing the number of wheelchair-accessible taxis.



What happens next?

The Equality Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 8 April 2010.

The provisions in the Equality Act will come into force at different times to allow time for the people and organisations affected by the new laws to carefully prepare for them.

We will be consulting over the coming months on some of the detailed secondary legislation which will be needed to implement some of the new measure – for example, the integrated public sector Equality Duty and the ban on age discrimination in services and public functions.

We are working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and with the public, private and voluntary sectors to make sure people understand how the law is changing and how it will affect them. We will ensure that appropriate help, advice, guidance and support is made available so that people know what they need to do differently, and so that the Act is implemented in an effective and proportionate way.

More information

For more information on the work of the Government Equalities Office visit:
www.equalities.gov.uk

Alternatively, contact our general enquiries line on 030 3444 0000
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