

Protected Characteristics and Forms of Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 protects people in nine protected characteristic groups from discrimination in the use of services and employment.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage, same-sex Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race- this includes ethnic or national origins, or nationality
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Different types of discrimination

Direct discrimination – when a service or organisation treats an individual with a protected characteristic in a worse manner than they would treat an individual to whom that difference would not apply.

Indirect discrimination – when a service or organisation is designed or monitored in a way that delivers an inferior service to some people more than others.

Discrimination arising from a person having a protected characteristic – e.g. access to a building for a wheelchair user, lack of a hearing loop, easy read versions not available, literature not available in other languages, clinics for pregnant mums at school pick up time, etc.

Discrimination by association – when a person receives worse treatment because of a family member or someone they know or support.

Discrimination by perception – when a service organisation treats someone unfairly because they ‘think’ they are from a protected characteristic group, or are acting on hearsay without checking the facts.

Victimisation – when a service or organisation treats someone unfairly because they have complained, spoken up about an issue.

Harassment – picking on someone or upsetting them on purpose. Targeting the individual for specific unfair treatment is considered harassment.

Reasonable adjustment – changes that individuals and organisations must make to give a person who is at a disadvantage the same chance of success/access as anyone else using the service. The same outcome for all is the purpose of this process.

Reasonable – something that is fair to the person and that an organisation or service is able to do.