

The Equality Act (2010)

The 2010 Equality Act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws such as The Sex Discrimination Act, The Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act bringing them into a single act of parliament.

This new act made both direct and indirect discrimination unlawful

Direct Discrimination is treating a person differently, in a negative manner based on personal characteristics (e.g. refusing to promote a female employee as she is pregnant).

Indirect Discrimination does not treat a person badly based on personal characteristics, but has rules or practices that put certain people at a disadvantage (e.g. a factory insisting that successful applicants for jobs must be able to move heavy stock without lifting equipment).

It also outlawed victimisation and harassment neither of which have to be reported by the victim. So anybody witnessing harassment or victimisation can make a complaint even if it was not directed at them.

The Equality Act has a list of "protected characteristics", these are key areas where it is unlawful to discriminate against someone. These are

Age

Disability

Gender Reassignment

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Pregnancy and Maternity

Race

Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)

Gender (sex)

Sexual Orientation

The Act also makes Associative Discrimination unlawful. That is direct discrimination against a person who associates with another with a protective characteristic.

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