**The Equality Act 2010 and it’s key elements**

Here is a quick summary of 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 with because of particular characteristics. The Act brings together all previous equality laws, making them simpler, more effective, and easier to understand. As a volunteer, you will be representing a voluntary organisation so it is important you are aware of this Act.

**Who is protected?**

The Equality Act 2010 makes sure that people with particular characteristics are protected from discrimination. There are nine protected characteristics:

* age
* disability
* gender reassignment
* marriage and civil partnership
* pregnancy and maternity
* race
* religion or belief
* sex
* sexual orientation

<https://youtu.be/VXLtKlmtrvM>

**Discrimination** is treating someone unfairly because of their characteristics.

The Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination (whether direct or indirect) against people who possess one of the protected characteristics listed above. It also prohibits the harassment and victimisation of such people and places obligations on the public sector to advance equality.

**Direct discrimination**

This means treating one person worse than another person because of a protected characteristic. For example, a promotion comes up at work. The employer believes that people’s memories get worse as they get older so doesn’t tell one of his older employees about it, because he thinks the employee wouldn’t be able to do the job.

**Indirect discrimination**

This can happen when an organisation puts a rule or a policy or a way of doing things in place which has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one. For example, a residents’ association holds its meetings a Friday. The area has a significant Muslim population who cannot attend as the meeting time is when they are attending mosque.

**Harassment**

This means people cannot treat you in a way that violates your dignity, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

For example, a man with Down’s syndrome is visiting a pub with friends. The bar staff make derogatory and offensive comments about him, which upset and offend him.

Harassment based on disability, race, religion, transgender identity or sexual orientation is considered by the law to be hate crime and can be reported to the police.

**Victimisation**

This means people cannot treat you unfairly if you are taking action under the Equality Act (like making a complaint of discrimination), or if you are supporting someone else who is doing so.

For example, an employee makes a complaint of sexual harassment at work and is dismissed as a consequence.

**Public Sector Equality Duty**

This means people cannot treat you unfairly if you are taking action under the Equality Act (like making a complaint of discrimination), or if you are supporting someone else who is doing so.

For example, a father who cares for your young children wants to attend the local parents’ support group provided by your local health authority, but feels it’s not welcoming to fathers as it’s mostly women who go there. There are other fathers who would also like to attend these groups but feel the same. Under the public sector equality duty, the health authority should consider whether there's a need to meet the needs of men who care for their children. This could lead the authority to create a specific father's group.

**If you think you are being treated unfairly:**

You can visit the [Citizens Advice](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/) website for general information.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/>

If you are concerned about your treatment at work, you can visit [ACAS](http://www.acas.org.uk/) for advice