

Equality Act 2010 - Glossary on Protected Characteristics

In sections 4 – 12 of the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against people who belong to the following nine protected characteristics:

Age: refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year-olds) or being within an age group (e.g. 18-30 year-olds).) This includes all ages, including children & young people.

Disability: a person has a disability if s/he has a physical, sensory or mental health disability, learning disability or difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender/sex to another.

Marriage & Civil Partnership: marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman. Civil partnership is the legal recognition of same-sex couple's relationships, which must be treated the same as married couples on a range of legal matters.

Marriage and civil partnership only applies to the first aim of the general duty (i.e. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment & victimisation), not to the others.

Pregnancy & Maternity: pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity is the period after the birth.

Race: is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief: includes any religion, including a reference to a lack of religion. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex: a man or a woman.

Sexual orientation: is whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

(NB: The above protected characteristics are also referred to as protected groups)