



Equality Act 2010

2010 CHAPTER 15

PART 2

EQUALITY: KEY CONCEPTS

CHAPTER 2

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Discrimination

13 Direct discrimination

- (1) A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if, because of a protected characteristic, A treats B less favourably than A treats or would treat others.
- (2) If the protected characteristic is age, A does not discriminate against B if A can show A's treatment of B to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- (3) If the protected characteristic is disability, and B is not a disabled person, A does not discriminate against B only because A treats or would treat disabled persons more favourably than A treats B.
- (4) If the protected characteristic is marriage and civil partnership, this section applies to a contravention of Part 5 (work) only if the treatment is because it is B who is married or a civil partner.
- (5) If the protected characteristic is race, less favourable treatment includes segregating B from others.
- (6) If the protected characteristic is sex—
 - (a) less favourable treatment of a woman includes less favourable treatment of her because she is breast-feeding;

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2024. This version of this cross heading contains provisions that are prospective.

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- (b) in a case where B is a man, no account is to be taken of special treatment afforded to a woman in connection with pregnancy [^{F1}, childbirth or maternity].

^{F2}(7)

- (8) This section is subject to sections 17(6) and 18(7).

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 13(6)(b) substituted (1.1.2024) by [The Equality Act 2010 \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/1425\)](#), regs. 1(2), **2(2)(a)**
- F2** S. 13(7) omitted (1.1.2024) by virtue of [The Equality Act 2010 \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/1425\)](#), regs. 1(2), **2(2)(b)**

PROSPECTIVE

14 Combined discrimination: dual characteristics

- (1) A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if, because of a combination of two relevant protected characteristics, A treats B less favourably than A treats or would treat a person who does not share either of those characteristics.
- (2) The relevant protected characteristics are—
- age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - race
 - religion or belief;
 - sex;
 - sexual orientation.
- (3) For the purposes of establishing a contravention of this Act by virtue of subsection (1), B need not show that A's treatment of B is direct discrimination because of each of the characteristics in the combination (taken separately).
- (4) But B cannot establish a contravention of this Act by virtue of subsection (1) if, in reliance on another provision of this Act or any other enactment, A shows that A's treatment of B is not direct discrimination because of either or both of the characteristics in the combination.
- (5) Subsection (1) does not apply to a combination of characteristics that includes disability in circumstances where, if a claim of direct discrimination because of disability were to be brought, it would come within section 116 (special educational needs).
- (6) A Minister of the Crown may by order amend this section so as to—
- make further provision about circumstances in which B can, or in which B cannot, establish a contravention of this Act by virtue of subsection (1);
 - specify other circumstances in which subsection (1) does not apply.

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- (7) The references to direct discrimination are to a contravention of this Act by virtue of section 13.

15 Discrimination arising from disability

- (1) A person (A) discriminates against a disabled person (B) if—
- (a) A treats B unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of B's disability, and
 - (b) A cannot show that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply if A shows that A did not know, and could not reasonably have been expected to know, that B had the disability.

16 Gender reassignment discrimination: cases of absence from work

- (1) This section has effect for the purposes of the application of Part 5 (work) to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.
- (2) A person (A) discriminates against a transsexual person (B) if, in relation to an absence of B's that is because of gender reassignment, A treats B less favourably than A would treat B if—
- (a) B's absence was because of sickness or injury, or
 - (b) B's absence was for some other reason and it is not reasonable for B to be treated less favourably.
- (3) A person's absence is because of gender reassignment if it is because the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone the process (or part of the process) mentioned in section 7(1).

17 Pregnancy and maternity discrimination: non-work cases

- (1) This section has effect for the purposes of the application to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity of—
- (a) Part 3 (services and public functions);
 - (b) Part 4 (premises);
 - (c) Part 6 (education);
 - (d) Part 7 (associations).
- (2) A person (A) discriminates against a woman if A treats her unfavourably because of a pregnancy of hers.
- (3) A person (A) discriminates against a woman if, in the period of 26 weeks beginning with the day on which she gives birth, A treats her unfavourably because she has given birth.
- (4) The reference in subsection (3) to treating a woman unfavourably because she has given birth includes, in particular, a reference to treating her unfavourably because she is breast-feeding.
- (5) For the purposes of this section, the day on which a woman gives birth is the day on which—

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- (a) she gives birth to a living child, or
 - (b) she gives birth to a dead child (more than 24 weeks of the pregnancy having passed).
- (6) Section 13, so far as relating to sex discrimination, does not apply to anything done in relation to a woman in so far as—
- (a) it is for the reason mentioned in subsection (2), or
 - (b) it is in the period, and for the reason, mentioned in subsection (3).

18 Pregnancy and maternity discrimination: work cases

- (1) This section has effect for the purposes of the application of Part 5 (work) to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity.
- (2) A person (A) discriminates against a woman if, in [^{F3}or after] the protected period in relation to a pregnancy of hers, A treats her unfavourably —
- (a) because of the pregnancy, or
 - (b) because of illness suffered by her [^{F4}in that protected period as a result of the pregnancy].
- (3) A person (A) discriminates against a woman if A treats her unfavourably because she is on compulsory maternity leave [^{F5}or on equivalent compulsory maternity leave].
- (4) A person (A) discriminates against a woman if A treats her unfavourably because she is exercising or seeking to exercise, or has exercised or sought to exercise, the right to ordinary or additional maternity leave [^{F6}or a right to equivalent maternity leave].
- ^{F7}(5)
- (6) The protected period, in relation to a woman's pregnancy, begins when the pregnancy begins, and ends—
- (a) if she has the right to ordinary and additional maternity leave, at the end of the additional maternity leave period or (if earlier) when she returns to work after the pregnancy;
 - [^{F8}(aa) if she does not have that right, but has a right to equivalent maternity leave, at the end of that leave period, or (if earlier) when she returns to work after the pregnancy;]
 - (b) if she does not have [^{F9}a right as described in paragraph (a) or (aa)], at the end of the period of 2 weeks beginning with the end of the pregnancy.

[^{F10}(6A) For the purposes of this section—

“equivalent compulsory maternity leave” means a period of leave—

- (a) which is of a substantially similar nature (regardless of its length) to compulsory maternity leave, and
- (b) which is provided for under a statutory or contractual scheme;

“equivalent maternity leave” means a period of leave—

- (a) which is of a substantially similar nature (regardless of its length) to ordinary or additional maternity leave or both, and
- (b) which is provided for under a statutory or contractual scheme.]

- (7) Section 13, so far as relating to sex discrimination, does not apply to treatment of a woman in so far as—

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- (a) it is in [F11 or after] the protected period in relation to her and is for a reason mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (2), or
- (b) it is for a reason mentioned in subsection (3) or (4).

Textual Amendments

- F3** Words in s. 18(2) inserted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(4)(a)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F4** Words in s. 18(2)(b) substituted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(4)(b)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F5** Words in s. 18(3) inserted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(5)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F6** Words in s. 18(4) inserted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(6)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F7** S. 18(5) omitted (1.1.2024) by virtue of The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(7)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F8** S. 18(6)(aa) inserted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(8)(a)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F9** Words in s. 18(6)(b) substituted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(8)(b)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F10** S. 18(6A) inserted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(9)** (with reg. 2(11))
- F11** Words in s. 18(7)(a) inserted (1.1.2024) by The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1425), regs. 1(2), **2(10)** (with reg. 2(11))

19 Indirect discrimination

- (1) A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if A applies to B a provision, criterion or practice which is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic of B's.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), a provision, criterion or practice is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic of B's if—
 - (a) A applies, or would apply, it to persons with whom B does not share the characteristic,
 - (b) it puts, or would put, persons with whom B shares the characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with persons with whom B does not share it,
 - (c) it puts, or would put, B at that disadvantage, and
 - (d) A cannot show it to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- (3) The relevant protected characteristics are—
 - age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - marriage and civil partnership;
 - race;
 - religion or belief;
 - sex;
 - sexual orientation.

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[^{F12}19A Indirect discrimination: same disadvantage

- (1) A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if—
- (a) A applies to B a provision, criterion or practice,
 - (b) A also applies, or would apply, the provision, criterion or practice to—
 - (i) persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, and
 - (ii) persons who do not share that relevant protected characteristic,
 - (c) B does not share that relevant protected characteristic,
 - (d) the provision, criterion or practice puts, or would put, persons with the relevant protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with persons who do not share the relevant protected characteristic,
 - (e) the provision, criterion or practice puts, or would put, B at substantively the same disadvantage as persons who do share the relevant protected characteristic, and
 - (f) A cannot show that the provision, criterion or practice is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- (2) The relevant protected characteristics for the purposes of this section are—
- age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - marriage and civil partnership;
 - race;
 - religion or belief;
 - sex;
 - sexual orientation.]

Textual Amendments

F12 S. 19A inserted (1.1.2024) by [The Equality Act 2010 \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/1425\)](#), regs. 1(2), **3(2)**

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