

THE NEW DUTY – THE SINGLE EQUALITY DUTY

EQUALITY ACT 2010

Introduces the **Single Equality Duty** which covers all eight strands, namely **race, disability, sex, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, religion/belief, age** and **sexual orientation** and which came into force on 06 April 2011.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty states

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

(2) – A person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions must, in the exercise of those functions, have due regard to the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) – Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

(4) – The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(5) – Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –

- (a) tackle prejudice, and
- (b) promote understanding.

(6) – Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

(7) – The relevant protected characteristics are – age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

(8) – A reference to conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act includes a reference to –

- (a) a breach of an equality clause or rule;
- (b) a breach of a non-discrimination rule.

THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES SCHEME 2010-2013 AND DELIVERY PLAN

The Council's current Equality Scheme includes the three existing equality duties, namely race, disability and gender as well as the additional equality strands, namely religion or belief, age and sexual orientation, introduced by the Equality Act 2006, The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 and The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007.

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

Types of discrimination by way of an overview only include

- direct discrimination that is when someone (falling within one or more of the equality strands) is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances
- indirect discrimination is when a provision, criterion or practice is applied to all but which puts a person (falling within one or more of the equality strands) at a disadvantage
- victimisation is when a person (falling within one or more of the equality strands) is treated less favourably than others having complained about discrimination in some way whether by way of proceedings or providing information or the making of allegations
- harassment is where there is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the person's (falling within one or more of the equality strands) dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

FOR INFORMATION

STATUTORY CODES OF PRACTICE

These are statutory codes relevant to each of the duties and whilst a breach of the code does not of itself make a person liable in any proceedings it will be taken into account by a court in certain types of proceedings. This means that they are admissible in evidence and if any provision of one of the codes appears to a court or a tribunal to be relevant to any question arising in the proceedings it has to be taken into account.

The existing codes continue to have effect until revoked by the Secretary of State at the request of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Commission has the power to issue new codes.

The draft code of practice on the Public Sector Equality Duty is scheduled to be laid before Parliament in Summer 2011.

GUIDANCE

The Commission has also produced non statutory guidance which includes the guidance on how to complete the assessments