

Glossary on the Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010

The language and terms used in equality to describe people are constantly evolving and there are a significant number of words, phrases and acronyms (a word formed from the first letters of each of the words in a phrase or name which creates another word, for example BAME = Black Asian and minority ethnic) that are used.

This glossary identifies the language used in the Equality Act to describe people. We will use this same language in the Council.

The Equality Act 2010 specifically covers nine protected characteristics which are explained briefly below.

1. **Age:** Where this is referred to, it refers to a person being of a particular age (e.g. 32-year-olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30-year-olds). Terms such 'older people' are used instead of 'the elderly'.
2. **Disability:** A person who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their normal day-to-day activities is classed as a disability. This may be physical or include conditions such as dyslexia or diabetes. Terms such as 'disabled people', 'people with disabilities', and 'people with visual, hearing and other sensory impairments' are commonly used. Some people do not identify themselves as 'disabled', but do identify as having a disability, so the way of describing disability can be complex.
3. **Race:** This includes race, ethnicity, colour and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins. The Council commonly uses the term **ethnic** or **ethnicity**, to describe this characteristic which is within Government guidelines. In the UK population, terms such as 'minority ethnic', 'ethnic minority groups' are acceptable, as are Asian, Black, African Caribbean. The term BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) has been increasingly criticised by some sections in the community as they do not describe an individual identity and groups all minority ethnic groups together. Use of the term BAME may be more appropriate when grouping data for comparisons.
4. **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** Both are routes to legal relationships between two people where both parties have rights and responsibilities.
5. **Pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption and breastfeeding:** Parental rights relating to having or adopting children.
6. **Sex:** A man or a woman.

7. **Sexual orientation:** Whether a person's sexual or romantic attraction is towards their own sex, a different sex or other genders. The term LGBTQ+ for example is used to describe people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer plus other sexual orientations.
8. **Religion and Belief:** Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition belief, faith or no belief.
9. **Gender reassignment:** When someone undergoes a process for redefining their gender. Gender reassignment is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. Commonly used terms are Trans, Trans man, Trans woman.

Other commonly used equality terms:

10. **Direct discrimination:** This refers to less favourable treatment against an individual because of that person's protected characteristic.
11. **Indirect discrimination:** When a provision, criterion or practice applied to everyone has a disproportionate disadvantage for a specific protected characteristic group.
12. **Harassment:** Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic where a person's dignity is violated or where an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment is created.
13. **Public authority:** Organisations and individuals that carry out public functions – this would include government departments, local authorities, health authorities and hospitals, schools, prisons, and police for example.
14. **Public sector equality duty:** The duty on a public authority when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity.