

NCFE Level 2

# Certificate in Equality and Diversity

HARASSMENT

STEREOTYPE

SOCIETY

DISCRIMINATION

WORKPLACE

IDENTITIES

COMMUNITY

Workbook

SAMPLE

## Section 1: Equality and diversity in society

In this section, we are going to look at equality and diversity in society. We will consider:

- definitions of terms used
- equality and inequality in society
- diversity in society, and respecting people's differences
- stereotyping and labelling
- prejudice and discrimination, and their effects on people
- characteristics, identities and groups

### Introduction to equality and diversity

In the UK, there have been serious efforts over many years to reduce discrimination and prejudice, and the phrase 'equality and diversity' is quite widespread now. The Equality Act was passed in 2010 and it brought together various pieces of anti-discrimination legislation. The Act forms the legal framework to help reduce discrimination in many parts of our lives to protect people:

- in the workplace during recruitment and employment – e.g. in care homes, offices, retail or voluntary workplaces
- in education – e.g. schools, colleges or training companies
- as consumers – e.g. in shops, on the Internet, in cafes and restaurants, or when buying or renting property
- when using public services – e.g. healthcare, libraries, transport, councils or civil service
- in clubs with more than 25 members – although the law does not stop clubs for people who share a protected characteristic – e.g. men-only or women-only clubs, or social clubs for Turkish people

There are several sources of useful information about equality and diversity, for example:

- **Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)** – dealing with all aspects of employment, disputes and equality law – [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- **EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission)** – an independent statutory body that helps to eliminate discrimination and reduce inequality – [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)
- **Stonewall** – a charity working for equality and justice for the LGBT community – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people – [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

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## Definitions of the terms

Please read the following as it will help you to answer questions 1, 2 and 3.

### Equality

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**Dictionary meaning:** the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Equality is the 'state of being equal'. It is even, balanced and fair.

Equality is about making certain that people are treated fairly and are given fair chances. However, equality is not about treating everyone in exactly the same way. It is about recognising the importance of treating each person as an individual, and making sure that their needs are met in a variety of ways.

Equality is based on the principles of:

- **fairness** – working and living in ways that do not discriminate against anyone
- **respect** – encouraging a culture where everyone receives respect and can express their views and be heard
- **honesty** – ensuring that policies and practices are transparent (clear) and open to scrutiny
- **providing opportunities** – working and living in a culture where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential

### Diversity

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**Dictionary meaning:** variety, assortment, range, mixture.

Diversity refers to the wide range of attributes, backgrounds and skills that are in our society. In the UK, we have people of many races, religions, abilities, ages and so on. They bring a diverse and colourful range of cultures, traditions, ceremonies, skills, languages, backgrounds, experience and other attributes to our society.

A diverse approach aims to recognise, harness and manage differences, so that everyone can contribute to society and realise their full potential. Diversity challenges us to recognise and value all sorts of differences in order to make society more inclusive, fair and comfortable for everyone.

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## Discrimination

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**Dictionary meaning:** treating less favourably due to prejudice, unfairness, intolerance, favouritism, bigotry.

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person in the same situation because of their race, gender, disability, religious beliefs etc. For example, in the past, sex discrimination was tolerated and it was legal to pay men and women at different rates for the same job. This only became illegal in the UK in 1970.

Discrimination can be seen in many forms, such as:

- excluding people – e.g. from jobs, promotion, education or other opportunities
- making assumptions – e.g. about different abilities
- physical assault
- verbal and non-verbal abuse
- avoiding people – e.g. refusing to mix with people from different races or religious backgrounds

## Prejudice

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**Dictionary meaning:** preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

Prejudice is based on preconceived and unfounded opinions, where someone does not know all of the facts about a person, group or situation. It is the act of prejudging someone or something, usually judging them to be of less worth or value.

It can lead to dislike, hostility or unjust behaviour.

Examples of prejudice include:

- **racial prejudice (racism)** – e.g. when individuals or groups direct prejudice, discrimination or antagonism against someone of a different race, based on the belief that their own race is superior
- **sexual prejudice (sexism)** – e.g. prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination, often against women, on the basis of their gender

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## Stereotyping

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**Dictionary meaning:** an oversimplified or generalised image or idea about a particular type of person, group or thing.

A stereotype is usually based on limited or incomplete knowledge about the person, group or thing. It is often based on an exaggeration of characteristics, and can relate to, for example, race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

For example, the stereotype of a person who receives a pension might include descriptions such as: grey hair, inactive, dependent, bad-tempered, slow and not very mobile. However, the diversity of characteristics of people who receive pensions is as broad as for any other group – e.g. any hair colour, all levels of fitness and activity, and so on.

The terms ‘stereotyping’ and ‘prejudice’ are often thought to mean the same thing. However, there is a difference:

- **stereotypes** are based on simplified or generalised (often incorrect) information about a group of people with whom there is some familiarity
- **prejudices** are preconceived (usually negative) judgements about a group of people, made without knowledge or familiarity

## Labelling

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Labelling is when we identify individuals as members of particular groups (based on a stereotype) and categorise them in society. The individuals are then expected to conform to the behaviour associated with the stereotype with which they have been labelled.

Word labels in our culture represent specific aspects of a person’s life, such as religious affiliation, race, gender, age or education levels. For example, if you are labelled by your religious beliefs, you might be called Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Sikh.

Labelling can be positive or negative, but both shape the way people perceive themselves and others. Negative labels can often build barriers between people who are actually very similar to each other, by highlighting differences rather than similarities. Positive labels can help a group to bond and feel valued and included, such as a football team’s supporters who all wear the team’s kit and colours to a match.



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## Protected characteristics

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The Equality Act 2010 means that all people are now protected from discrimination due to their:

- **age** – everyone over 18 is protected at work and in training
- **disability or impairment** – organisations must make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to accommodate staff, customers and visitors with disabilities
- **gender** – equal pay, training and opportunity for males and females
- **gender reassignment** – people changing from male to female, or female to male
- **marriage or civil partnership** – preventing discrimination on the grounds of being married or in a civil partnership at work and in training
- **pregnancy or maternity (including breastfeeding)** – only reasons of safety are not covered – e.g. equality may not be possible for pregnant women in some circumstances if the activity could harm them or the baby
- **race** – wherever they were born, their parents’ and their own race and ethnicity are protected
- **religion or beliefs** – any religion, lack of religion or personal belief is protected
- **sexual orientation** – heterosexual, gay, lesbian and bisexual people are covered

Under the Act, these are called **protected characteristics**. These characteristics are protected in most circumstances, and organisations need to have sound operational reasons for discrimination.

The protected characteristic, disability and impairment, for example, cover many people including those who have:

- **physical disabilities** – e.g. unable to walk due to a problem from birth, a degenerative disease or following an accident
- **mental health issues** – e.g. problems since birth, following a mental breakdown or behavioural problems
- **learning disabilities** – e.g. behavioural issues, lack of literacy, numeracy or communication skills for whatever reason
- **progressive conditions** – e.g. cancer or multiple sclerosis
- **visual impairments** – e.g. complete blindness, partial blindness, poor eyesight due to age, degeneration or accident
- **hearing impairments** – e.g. complete deafness, partial deafness, poor hearing due to age, degeneration or accident

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Anyone can experience a disability or impairment at some point in their lives. Just think of the number of people who break a bone, have surgery, experience panic attacks or have debilitating cancer treatment, and nearly everyone has to deal with age-related impairments eventually. As a caring society, it is important to make allowances and provide assistance where we can – it may well be our turn one day.

## Equal opportunity

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Equal opportunity means the right to be treated without discrimination, especially on the grounds of someone's gender, race, age or other protected characteristic. It means treating people who have different skills and abilities as individuals, and not making judgements based on stereotypes. For example, men and women of any age or race have an equal opportunity to be considered for a job if they have the necessary skills, experience and knowledge. The best person for the job should be selected, regardless of their gender, disability etc.

Equal opportunity policies and practices of organisations and the public sector make sure that everyone is entitled to freedom from discrimination, and that they all have equal access to opportunities – e.g. in education or employment.

## Positive action

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Positive action is where an organisation provides support or encouragement to a particular group. It is only allowed where a specific group suffers a disadvantage connected to a shared protected characteristic, or if their participation in an activity is disproportionately low.

Examples of positive action by an employer can include:

- encouraging applications from under-represented groups – e.g. through targeted advertising
- offering pre-application training to particular groups where this meets a need – e.g. updating people's skills ahead of the recruitment process
- offering work shadowing opportunities to people from a particular group, to encourage individuals from this group to apply for the job
- holding open days or 'taster days' which are held exclusively for the targeted group



The Equality Act 2010 makes it easier for employers and service providers to take positive action. The Act allows employers, on a case-by-case basis, to recruit or promote employees because of their protected characteristic, if they are as qualified as other candidates.

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