

SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

February 2012
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LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Background

The requirements of the Equality Act have been introduced incrementally since October 2010. In April 2011 the general public sector duty came into force and in April 2012 schools had the specific duty to publish information and the specific duty to publish objectives.

The primary purpose of the legislation is to bring together existing equalities legislation. Primarily these are the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act of 1976, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and three major statutory instruments of recent years protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. It also builds on the 2006 Equality Act which instigated the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The 2010 Act imposes equality duties in respect of each of the equality strands (now called protected characteristics).

The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Public authorities are also required to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status.

The Equality Act has a single equality duty of positively combating inequality. It brings all existing provisions broadly into line with one another and extends beyond race, gender and disability to now include the characteristics of age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. The Act also identifies other characteristics such as marital status,

pregnancy, having caring responsibilities or maternity. The definition of equality is therefore wider than it has been before. Additionally, requirements that in the past have been seen as good practice are now legally enforceable. For example, the law now requires that as part of their procurement processes, public bodies should prefer companies that it contracts with to have a positive record on equality matters.

There are also implications for the community cohesion agenda. The existing duty to promote good race relations has been replaced with a generic one to promote good relations. The Equality Act will require all public authorities to take the aspects of interaction, empowerment, personal security and attitudes to others into account. Community cohesion is in sympathy with most, if not all, of the requirements in the legislation and thus there should not be a radical departure in terms of delivery.

As part of Lancashire's continuing commitment to fostering community cohesion, we will work to narrow gaps in outcomes resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. This is in line with Lancashire County Council's priorities on closing the gaps (see 'Narrowing the Gaps: 2010 – 2013, Fairness for All' – Lancashire County Council).

Things to consider

The schools' provision of the act prohibits schools from discriminating against, harassing or victimising:

- Prospective pupils
- Pupils at school
- In some limited circumstances, former pupils

Note: Age and being married or in a civil partnership are not protected characteristics for the schools' provision.

Schools also have obligations under the Equality Act as employers, bodies which carry out public functions and service providers. In this instance all the protected characteristics need to be taken into account.

All schools in Lancashire, irrespective of how they are funded or managed, have obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It is the responsible body for a school that is liable for any breaches of the Equality Act.

In the past there have been exceptions to the discrimination provisions for schools and these are all replicated in the new act – such as the content of the curriculum, collective worship and admissions to single sex schools and schools of a religious character.

Schools are obliged to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This duty establishes, in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, that public authorities are required to pay 'due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation that are prohibited by the Equality Act; and
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are known as the three aims or arms of the '**general equality duty.**'

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

The PSED is supported by specific duties.

The **specific duties** regulations require public bodies to:

- Publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and
- Prepare and publish equality objectives.

The purpose of the specific duties is to support compliance with the general duty to have 'due regard'.

Schools have until 6 April 2012 to publish their initial information and first set of objectives. They will need to update the published information at least annually and to publish objectives at least once every four years. Appendix one contains advice on how to set objectives. |

This document provides guidance on how schools may develop a Single Equalities policy This is a way for schools to demonstrate that they are complying with the PSED. It is a starting point and needs to be tailored to meet the needs of your school and its community. It is important to stress that schools shouldn't simply *adopt* a policy, but rather should ensure true ownership of a document that will be unique to each school.

The Single Equalities policy could replace/cover the following:

- Race Equality Policy and Action Plan
- Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan
- Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan
- Equal Opportunities Policy including:
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age
 - Religion or belief
- A strategy for promoting community relations

This does not replace the Accessibility Plan which schools are still required to produce.

Your school is not required to do anything unreasonable or impractical in preparing the Single Equality Policy and Action Plan. The approach will vary according to a wide variety of factors, eg the size of the school, the diverse nature of the school population, the proximity of other schools (and the potential for links with them), your school premises and the school budget.

It is important when putting together the policy that confidentiality of individuals is maintained. Although there is a statutory duty to share information about the school's single equality policy, care must be taken when sharing or publishing statistics, data or information to ensure that any information published cannot be used to identify individuals. This is particularly the case with regard to sharing information on individuals and on specific incidents.

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Developing a Single Equalities Policy and Action Plan

1 Statement of Principles

This should be a statement demonstrating the school's commitment to the Single Equalities Policy from the school workforce, the governing body and where appropriate, the school council.

For example:

The policy outlines the commitment of the staff, pupils and governors of school to ensure that equality of opportunity is available to all members of the school community. For our school this means not simply treating everybody the same but understanding and tackling the different barriers which could lead to unequal outcomes for different groups of pupils in school, whilst celebrating and valuing the achievements and strengths of all members of the school community. These include:

- Pupils
- Staff
- Parents/carers
- The governing body
- Multi-agency staff linked to the school
- Visitors to school
- Students on placement

We believe that equality at our school should permeate all aspects of school life and is the responsibility of every member of the school and wider community. Every member of the school community should feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth.

At school, equality is a key principle for treating all people fairly and creating a society in which everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential - irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or any other recognised area of discrimination.

You may wish to include a statement from the pupils that has been discussed at school council about what equality means to them.

You should also have relevant statements from your mission/vision statement.

You should also include here any specific comments about the inclusive ethos or community involvement strengths highlighted by Ofsted or judged as a particular strength arising from self-evaluation.

2 School in Context

Highlight here the main characteristics of your school in relation to the characteristics of equality addressed in this policy, the diversity of the school and community make up.

For example:

- Currently how many boys and girls are on the school roll?
- What is the ethnic make-up of the pupils registered at the school?
- Which minority ethnic groups are represented in the school staff and governing body?
- The linguistic profile of the school
- How many pupils with a known disability does the school have on roll?
- Does the school know the number of staff and governors who have a disability?
- Is the school physically accessible? What other adjustments are available?
- Are there particular demographic trends in the local area?
- Are there any Children in Care

You should include information about your own school's local community profile, for example information on the population demographic, religious diversity and languages spoken, and characteristics that are particularly significant to your school such as migrant workers and socio-economic status.

3 Ethos and Atmosphere

Please relate this to your school:

- Atschool, the leadership of the school community will demonstrate mutual respect between all members of the school community
- There is an *openness* of atmosphere which welcomes everyone to the school
- All within the school community will challenge any type of discriminatory and/or bullying behaviour, eg through unwanted attentions (verbal or physical) and unwelcome or offensive remarks or suggestions
- All pupils are encouraged to greet visitors to the school with friendliness and respect
- The displays around the school are of a high quality and reflect diversity across all aspects of equality of opportunity and are frequently monitored
- Provision is made to cater for the spiritual needs of all the children through planning of assemblies, classroom based and externally based activities

4 Policy Development

This policy applies to the whole school community. It has been drawn up as a result of the outcomes of a transparent process and through consultation with:

Description of how the policy was drawn up – include how the school community was consulted and how all stakeholders were involved through full and meaningful engagement.

5 Monitoring and Review

.....is an inclusive school, working towards greater equality in the whole school community. We use the curriculum and teaching to enhance the self-esteem of all those it serves and to provide a learning environment in which each individual is encouraged to fulfil her or his potential.

We collect and analyse a range of equality information for our pupils/students:

Detail here the information you already collect and analyse for pupils/students, some or all of which may be contained within documentation arising out of self-evaluation. Additional information may not be required, but the information you do have needs to be collated by ethnicity, disability and gender. For example, attainment data, attendance data, exclusions, involvement with extended learning opportunities, complaints of bullying or harassment, choice of options selected. Ensure that these are analysed by ethnicity, disability, gender, free school meals (FSM). This analysis can form part of your action plan.

We make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track pupils' progress, as they move through the school. As part of this process, we regularly monitor the performance of different groups, to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the best possible progress. We use this information to adjust future teaching and learning plans, as necessary.

Resources are available to support groups of pupils where the information suggests that progress is not as good as it should be. The governing body receives regular updates on pupil performance information.

School performance information is compared to national data and local authority data, to ensure that pupils are making appropriate progress when compared to all schools, and to schools in similar circumstances.

As well as monitoring pupil performance information, we also regularly monitor a range of other information. This relates to:

- Attendance
- Exclusions and truancy

- Racism, disabilism, sexism, homophobia and all forms of bullying
- Parental involvement
- Participation in Extended Learning Opportunities

Our monitoring activities enable us to identify any differences in pupil performance and provide specific support as required, including pastoral support. This allows us to take appropriate action to meet the needs of specific groups in order to make necessary improvements.

.....School is also committed to providing a working environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation. We aim to recruit an appropriately qualified workforce and establish a governing body that is representative of all sections of the community in order to respect and respond to the diverse needs of our population.

The Employment Duty within the legislation states all schools should collect information on staff in post, and applicants for employment, training and promotion. This is deemed to be best practice in order to identify potentially discriminatory practice.

Detail here the equality information you already collect and analyse for staff and governors. You do not necessarily need to collect additional information, but may need to separate it by race, disability and gender.

We collect and analyse a range of profile information for our staff and governors:

For example, applicants for employment, staff profile, governing body profile, attendance at training events, disciplinary and grievance cases, staff appraisal/performance management, exit interviews.

Put a reminder in here about confidentiality.

We have identified the following issues from the analysis of the data:

List here the priorities you have identified from the analysis of the data you currently collect. Some examples may include, staff data not separated into ethnicity, disability, gender, no governor information collected etc.

Note that these priorities are likely to form or be closely related to the published objectives (see appendix one).

Due regard is given to the promotion of equality in the School Improvement Plan. The person responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy and action plan is

Their role is to:

- Lead discussions, organise training, update staff in staff meetings, support discussions

- Work with the governing body on matters relating to equality
- Support evaluation activities that moderate the impact and success of this policy

6 Developing Best Practice

Learning and Teaching

This section could for example include the following points:

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, teaching and learning will:

- Provide equality of access for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, without stereotyping
- Use materials to promote a positive image of and attitude towards disability and disabled people
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge discriminatory behaviour
- Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and religions and celebrate the diversity of other cultures
- Use a range of sensitive teaching strategies when teaching about different cultural and religious traditions
- Develop pupils advocacy skills so that they can detect bias, challenge discrimination, leading to justice and equality
- Ensure that the whole curriculum covers issues of equality and diversity;
- All subject leaders' departments, where appropriate, promote and celebrate the contribution of different cultures to the subject matter
- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- Provide educational visits and extended learning opportunities that involve all pupil groups
- Take account of the performance of all pupils when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets
- Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of pupils
- Identify resources and training that support staff development

Learning Environment

This section could include the following points:

There is a consistently high expectation of all pupils regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or any other recognised area of discrimination. All pupils are encouraged to improve on their own achievements and not to measure themselves against others. Parents are also encouraged to view their own children's achievements in this light.

- Teacher enthusiasm is a vital factor in achieving a high level of motivation and good results from all pupils
- Adults in the school will provide good, positive role models in their approach to all issues relating to equality of opportunity
- The school should place a very high priority on the provision for special educational needs and disability.
- We will meet all pupils' learning needs including the more able by carefully assessed and administered programmes of work
- The school must provide an environment in which all pupils have equal access to all facilities and resources
- All pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in their own learning
- A range of teaching methods are to be used throughout the school to ensure that effective learning takes place at all stages for all pupils
- Consideration will be given to the physical learning environment – both internal and external, including displays and signage

Curriculum

Please put in examples from your own school

At school, we aim to ensure that:

- Planning reflects our commitment to equality in all subject areas and cross curricular themes promoting positive attitudes to equality and diversity
- Pupils will have opportunities to explore concepts and issues relating to identity and equality
- Steps are taken to ensure that all pupils have access to the mainstream curriculum by taking into account their cultural, backgrounds, linguistic needs and learning styles
- All pupils have access to qualifications which recognise attainment and achievement and promote progression

Resources and Materials

Please relate to your school. You could include a statement saying 'when ordering new resources and materials consider how they show equality'

The provision of good quality resources and materials within school is a high priority. These resources should:

- Reflect the reality of an ethnically, culturally and sexually diverse society
- Reflect a variety of viewpoints
- Show positive images of males and females in society
- Include non-stereotypical images of all groups in a global context
- Be accessible to all members of the school community

Language

We recognise that it is important atschool that all members of the school community use appropriate language which: .

- Does not transmit or confirm stereotypes
- Does not offend
- Creates and enhances positive images of particular groups identified at the beginning of this document
- Creates the conditions for all people to develop their self esteem
- Uses accurate language in referring to particular groups or individuals and challenges in instances where this is not the case

Extended Learning Opportunities

Please relate to your school and think about provision which is inclusive

It is the policy of this school to provide equal access to all activities from an early age.

We undertake responsibility for making contributions to extended learning opportunities and are aware of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity (e.g. sports helpers, coach drivers) by providing them with written guidelines drawn from this policy.

We try to ensure that all such non staff members who have contact with children adhere to these guidelines.

Provision for Bi-lingual Pupils

Make reference to any English as an Additional Language (EAL) policy or New Arrivals policy in school or any other policy which has provision for minority ethnic pupils

We undertake atschool to make appropriate provision for all EAL/bi-

lingual children/groups to ensure access to the whole curriculum. These groups may include:

- Pupils for whom English is an additional language
- Pupils who are new to the United Kingdom
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children
- Advanced bi-lingual learners

Bilingual pupils are encouraged to use their first language effectively for learning.

Personal Development and Pastoral Guidance

- Staff take account of gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or any other recognised area of discrimination and the experience and needs of particular groups such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, refugee and asylum seeker pupils
- All pupils are encouraged to consider the full range of career opportunities available to them with no discriminatory boundaries placed on them due to their disability, gender, race or sexual orientation (whilst acknowledging that a disability may impose some practical boundaries to some career aspirations)
- All pupils/staff/parents/carers are given support, as appropriate, when they experience discrimination
- We recognise that perpetrators may also be victims and require support.
- Positive role models are used throughout the school to ensure that different groups of pupils can see themselves reflected in the school community
- Emphasis is placed on the value that diversity brings to the school community rather than the challenges.

Staffing and Staff Development

We recognise the need for positive role models and distribution of responsibility among staff.

- This must include pupils' access to a balance of male and female staff at all key stages where possible
- We encourage the career development and aspirations of all school staff
- It is our policy to provide staff with training and development, which will increase awareness of the needs of different groups of pupils
- It is our policy to provide staff with training and development, which enables them to confidently carry out their roles and responsibilities in relation to equality as identified in section 7.
- Access to opportunities for professional development is monitored on equality grounds

Staff Recruitment

- All those involved in recruitment and selection are trained and aware of what they should do to avoid discrimination and ensure equality good practice through the recruitment and selection process
- Equalities policies and practices are covered in all staff inductions
- All temporary staff are made aware of policies and practices
- Employment policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to check conformity with legislation and impact

Note:

Under the Equality Act 2010, in very limited circumstances, an employer can claim that a certain religious denomination or belief is considered to be a genuine occupational requirement of that role. An aided school may be able to rely on this for some roles in school, particularly those roles that provide spiritual leadership. However this would not apply for all staff in School.

In addition, there are also instances in which a job will qualify for a genuine occupational requirement on the grounds of gender. However, only in very few instances would this be permissible, for example, where the job is likely to involve physical contact with members of the opposite sex, where matters of decency or privacy are involved.

Partnerships with Parents/Carers/Families and the Wider Community

We will work with parents/carers to help all pupils to achieve their potential.

- All parents/carers are encouraged to participate in the full life of the school.
- Setting up, as part of the schools' commitment to equality and diversity, a group made up of all stakeholders of the school community. This has been/will be developed to support the school with matters related to its equalities duties
- Members of the local community are encouraged to join in school activities
- Exploring the possibility of the school having a role to play in supporting new and settled communities

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Under this section identify who will be responsible for undertaking action in relation to the Policy and Action Plan.

- Our governing body will ensure that the school complies with statutory requirements in respect of this policy and action plan
- The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, and will ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities, that they are given necessary training and support and report progress to the governing body
- The headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of this policy
- Our staff will promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the school, challenge inappropriate language and behaviour, respond appropriately to incidents of discrimination and harassment, ensure appropriate support for children with additional needs and maintain a good level of awareness of equalities issues
- All members of the school community have a responsibility to treat each other with respect, to feel valued, and to speak out if they witness or are subject to any inappropriate language or behaviour
- We will take steps to ensure all visitors to the school adhere to our commitment to equality

8 Commissioning and Procurement

Include information here on how you will ensure contractors and other service providers are briefed on your commitments and expectations to equality. An example is as follows:

..... School will ensure that we buy services from organisations that comply with equality legislation. This will be a significant factor in any tendering process.

9 The Measurement of Impact of the Policy

This policy will be evaluated and monitored for its impact on pupils, staff, parents and carers from the different groups that make up our school. An action plan will be published to enable an impact assessment to be undertaken at the appropriate time within a given timescale.

10 Publicising the Policy and Plan

*Please remember your Policy is a public document that should be made available to any interested stakeholder and should be publicised. **Make the Policy available on your website.** You should state how you intend to publicise your Policy and/or your commitment to equality:*

Examples of publicising your Policy could include school website, staff and parent newsletter, induction booklets, distribute to local community and voluntary groups.

11 Annual Review of Progress

You have been legally required to report annually on your progress and performance in respect of your policy covering ethnicity, disability and gender and to report annually on your progress to improve access for disabled pupils, including access to the curriculum, physical access and access to information. Taking this single equality approach, we will incorporate all requirements into one annual report which meets the requirements of the new legislation and which will formulate the basis for the annual action plan.

12 Equality Impact Analysis

Undertaking equality impact analysis (EIAs) is similar to undertaking health and safety risk assessments. It involves predicting and assessing what the implications of a policy, function or strategy will be on a wide range of people.

EIAs are a way in which we can analyse all of our work (this could be a policy, procedure, project, strategy or service) to ensure it meets the needs of all our service users and that no group (in relation to ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation) is disadvantaged or cannot access our services.

Appendix 1 Setting Objectives

Specific duties - Information and objectives

There are specific duties which schools have to undertake in relation to the Equality Act 2010:

- a) to publish information which shows they have due regard for equalities, as defined by the Act;
- b) to publish at least one equality objective.

The information and objectives have to be published by 6 April 2012 at the latest. In later years the information has to be updated annually and this annual updating is expected to include an indication of progress on achieving the objectives. Objectives have to be prepared and published every four years.

Two guiding principles:

An important principle underlying how schools respond to the specific duties is **proportionality**. This means that, for example, more information may be expected from a large secondary school than from a small primary, and more than one equality objective may be expected.

A second important principle is **flexibility**. This means that each individual school is permitted, and indeed expected, to interpret the legislation in ways which are appropriate to its own context, neighbourhood, history and circumstances.

Setting objectives:

Introductory notes

Equality objectives have to be specific and measurable, and to be outcome-focused, as distinct from being focused primarily on making improvements in provision, crucially important though such improvements are.

This means the vast majority of equality objectives are likely to be about the closing and narrowing of gaps in attainment and take-up, or else about fostering good relations. Some examples of such objectives are cited below.

Further, equality objectives have to be related to matters highlighted in the information which a school publishes to demonstrate compliance with the public sector equality duty (PSED).

The legal requirement is to publish at least one objective. A single objective might well be sufficient in a very small rural primary school. It would probably be difficult or impossible for an urban primary school, or for a secondary school, to claim that a single objective shows it is taking the public sector equality duty (PSED) seriously.

The actual number of objectives which a school adopts is probably less important than the seriousness and rigour with which it undertakes them.

Other things being equal, equality objectives should be part of, or aligned with, the school improvement plan.

Narrowing the gaps

- To narrow the gaps in English at KS3 and KS4 between girls and boys, and between pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils for whom English is the first language.
- To narrow the gap in attendance rates between Gypsy Roma Traveller children and other children throughout the school.
- To narrow the gaps in mathematics and science between children of certain specific minority ethnic backgrounds and other children at key stage 2.
- To narrow the gap in participation in the public life of the school between disabled pupils (including learning-disabled pupils) and other pupils.
- To narrow the gap in mathematics between boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 1.

Fostering good relations

- To reduce the incidence of prejudice-related bullying, hostility and suspicion throughout the school, particularly in relation to homophobia and sexism, and hostile attitudes and behaviour towards people who are disabled.
- To promote and enhance community cohesion and a sense of shared belonging in the school, and in the school's neighbourhood.
- To promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the teaching of English and literacy, with particular reference to issues of equality and diversity.

Questions about each objective which a school adopts

With regard to each objective which a school selects, it will need to consider questions such as those listed below:

1. Background evidence

Why have we chosen this objective? For example, and particularly, what relevant data do we have? Is the rationale for the objective clearly indicated in the published information?

2. Procedure

What in practice are we actually going to do?

3. Responsibility

Who will be responsible for ensuring the objective is pursued and achieved?

4. Measurable success indicators

What will count as relevant and measurable evidence that we are succeeding, or have succeeded?

5. Timings

By when do we expect to see signs of progress or success?

6. Expense

How much are we budgeting, and on what items of expenditure in particular?

7. Resistance

Who may be opposed or lukewarm? How shall we respond to them?

8. Problems

What problems or difficulties may arise, and how shall we deal with them?

9. Learning from others

What plans do we have for finding out what has worked well elsewhere? Do some, or all, staff need extra training?

10. Engagement

Who have we consulted when deciding on this objective?

Note: The information in Appendix 1 is adapted from INSTED - Equalities in Education Resource Folder 2009-11

<http://www.insted.co.uk/equalities.html>

Appendix 2 – for information

Race

The term race includes colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin and citizenship as well as race.

Reporting racist incidents in schools

Schools in Lancashire are required to have in place a procedure for dealing with and reporting racist incidents, which includes providing an annual summary of racist incidents to Lancashire County Council.

Disability

What is a disability?

- Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has an effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That effect must be:
 - substantial (more than minor or trivial)
 - adverse
 - long-term (it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year or for the rest of the life of the person affected).

There is no need for a person to have a specific, medically-diagnosed cause for their impairment – what matters is the effect of the impairment, not the cause.

Examples include hearing or sight impairments, a significant mobility difficulty, mental health conditions or learning difficulties. There are many other types of condition, illness or injury that can result in a person being *disabled* (eg diabetes, asthma, cancer, arthritis, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, heart conditions, facial disfigurement).

GENDER

The term gender includes boys, girls, men and women, and transgender/transsexual people. Sexual orientation is a distinct protected characteristic. (The term transgender refers to a range of people who do not feel comfortable with their birth gender).

What is the difference between sex and gender?

- Sex refers to biological status as male or female. It includes physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia.
- Gender is a term that is often used to refer to ways that people act, interact, or feel about themselves, which are associated with boys/men and girls/women. While aspects of biological sex are the same across different cultures, aspects of gender may not be.

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexism is any prejudice and discrimination against individuals and groups who are lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) or are perceived to be so. It is based on the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Expressions of dislike, contempt or fear based on heterosexism are usually known as **homophobia**, although **lesophobia** and **biphobia** are also coming into use.

Whether through institutional practice or personal behaviour, the prevalence of heterosexism is likely to mean that LGB people feel excluded and unsafe. This effect can be mitigated by an actively welcoming and supportive environment.

Sexual orientation is defined as an individual's sexual orientation towards people of the same sex as her or him (gay or lesbian), people of the opposite sex (heterosexual) or people of both sexes (bisexual).

Transgenderism and gender re-assignment

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex. Gender re-assignment is the process a transgender person goes through to change sex.