

# The Equality Bill 2009

## What is it about?



EasyRead

## **Before you start**

This booklet has some ideas which are hard to understand. You might want to have someone to support you to read it.

## **Important notice**

This booklet gives information about the Bill. It is not a part of the Bill.

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# Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equally



Not only will each person's life be better but different people will work together more happily and easily.



Our country will be better off because businesses would have a good mix of different workers.



A good mix of workers means a good mix of different skills and what people know.



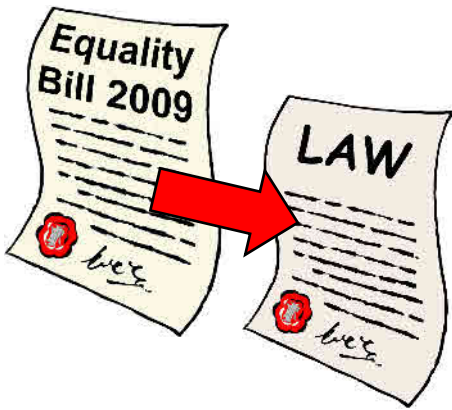
This will help us get through the bad times much better together.



To work well, our laws must be clear, strong and easy to follow.

**This is why we have written the Equality Bill 2009.**

# What is the Equality Bill?



A **bill** is a plan for a new law.

A bill can be to change the old law or to make a brand new law.



When Parliament agrees to a bill, it then becomes law.



The Equality Bill is a plan to make the laws we have about equality and discrimination better.

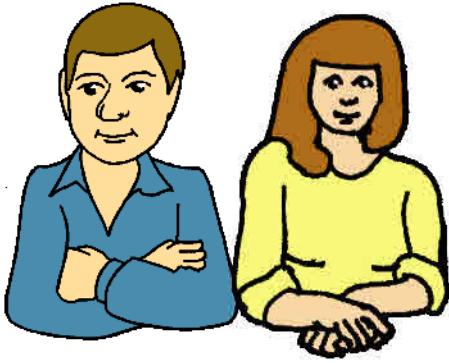


**Equality** means giving everyone the same chances no matter how different they are.



It also means sometimes giving some people extra help.

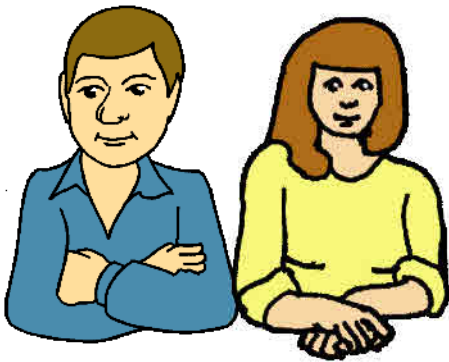
**Discrimination** is treating you worse because:



- you are a woman or a man



- you are married or a civil partner



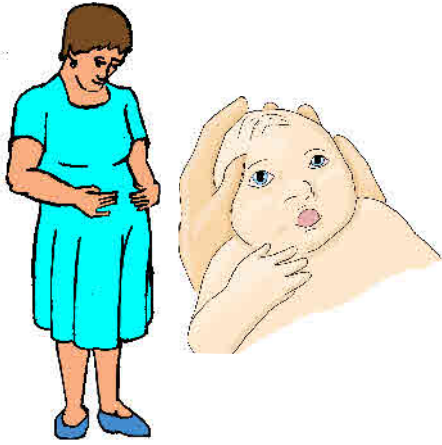
- you are transsexual



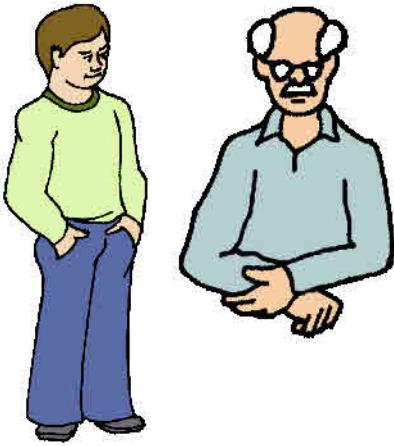
- you have a disability



- you are straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual



- you are pregnant or have just had a baby



- of your age



- of your race



- of your religion or belief.

# Why do we need a new law?



**Our discrimination laws need to be stronger.**

For example:



- It is the law that men and women should be paid the same for doing the same job. But women are still being paid less.



- Disabled people and people from minority ethnic communities still find it harder to get jobs.



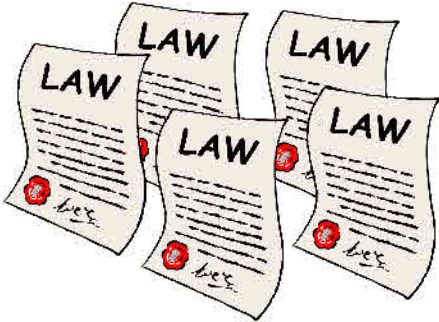
- Some older people are turned down for jobs just because bosses think they are too old.



- Many young lesbian and gay people are bullied at school. Some of them feel very unhappy because of this.



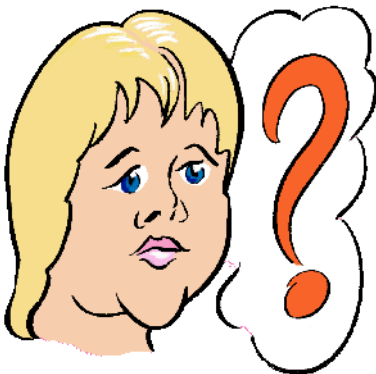
**Our discrimination laws need to be simpler.**



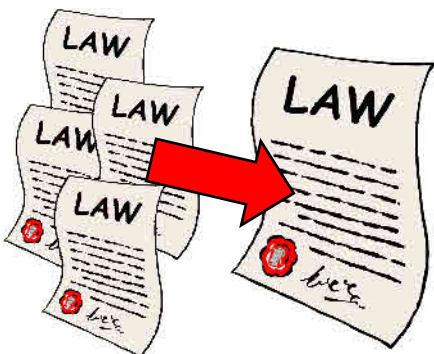
Our equality and discrimination laws are made up of lots of different laws.



They have helped to make our country fairer for lots of different people.

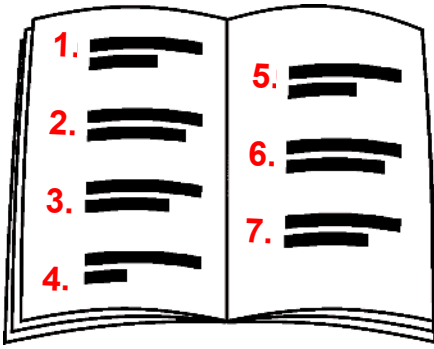


They have now become complicated and hard to understand.



We want to bring all of these laws together into one place so that it is easier to follow.





# What will the Equality Bill do?

It will make the laws stronger in 7 main ways:

## 1. New duties on public bodies

**Public bodies** are things like Government departments, local councils, NHS hospitals and social services.

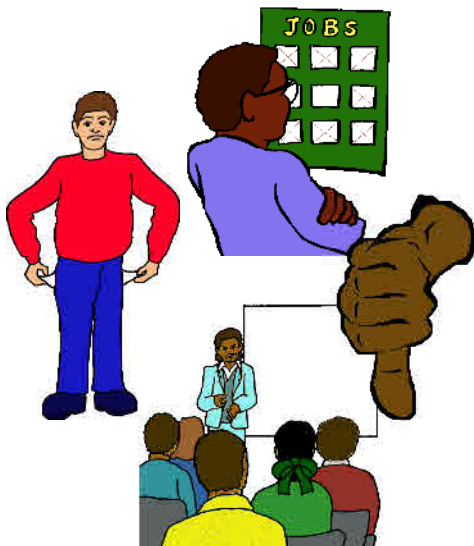


A **duty** is what the law says they must do.

We have made 2 new duties for them:

### a) Socio-economic duty

This new duty is about your family background and how much money you have.



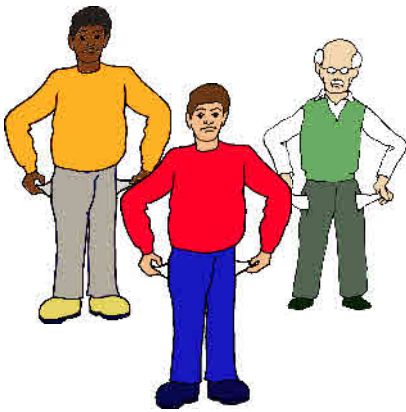
For example, people who come from poor families may find it harder to get a job or to get on a training scheme.



We want public bodies, like councils, to think about making things fairer and more equal for them.



Some public bodies will need to think about this when they plan and set up services.



**An example of how this might work:**

A lot of people living in an area are poor.



Because of this, they get sick a lot.



To help them, their local health service gives them more health checks.

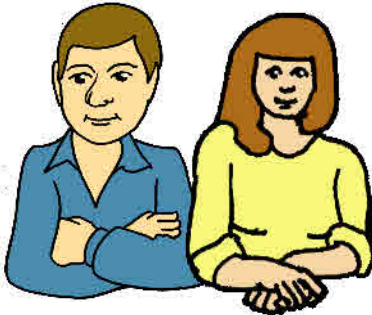
This will help stop them from getting sick.

## b) New equality duty

Public bodies already need to think about treating these people fairly and equally:



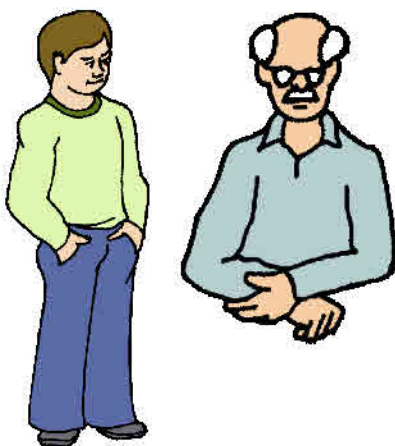
- people of different races



- men and women



- disabled people.

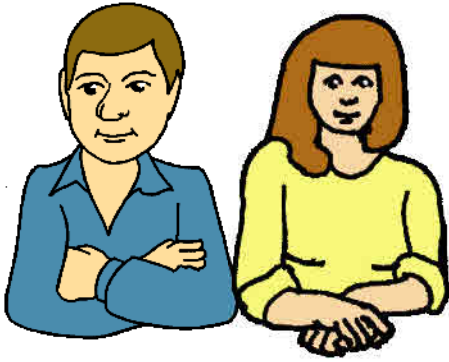


The new duty will now include these people as well:

- people of different ages



- gay, lesbian and bisexual people



- transsexual people



- people of different religions or belief

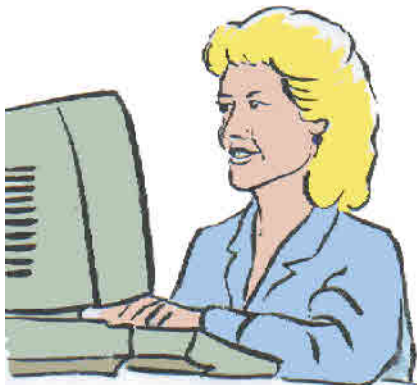


- pregnant women



- mothers who have just had a baby.

**An example of how this might work:**



A library might give computer classes for older people.

## 2. Respecting the rights of older people



We already have a law that says bosses cannot turn you down for a job or not give you training because they think you are too old or too young.

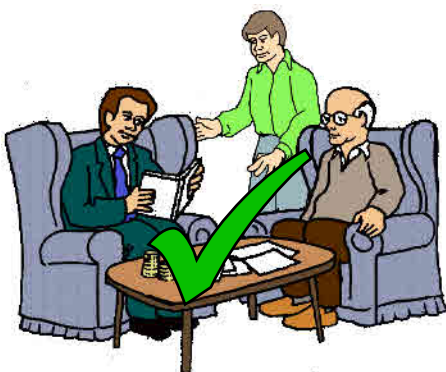


But older people are being discriminated against in other places.

Some older people find it harder to get help for their mental health than younger people.



Some businesses will not sell a service to an older person.



Some will only do it if a younger person is there to make sure the older person understands what they are buying.



The Bill will make sure that public bodies and businesses will no longer be able to treat you worse just because you are older.

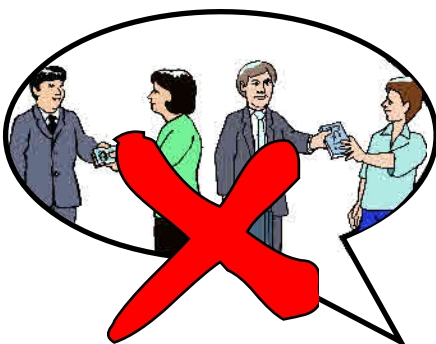


It will not affect services for older people like free bus passes.

### 3. Making sure women and men get equal pay



**Equal pay** means that women and men must be paid the same for doing the same job.



Right now, organisations do not have to tell anyone the difference between how much their female and male staff are being paid.



To make sure that women and men are being treated fairly, the Bill will allow the Government to make big businesses tell us about this.



Public bodies that have a lot of staff will also need to do this.



The Bill will also stop businesses from banning their staff from talking to each other about their pay.

It does not mean that you have to tell people what you are paid. It just means that you can if you want to.

#### **4. Spreading equality through buying services**



Public bodies buy lots of services from private companies.



The Bill will allow the Government to make public bodies take action about equality when they buy from businesses.

## 5. Positive action

Positive action is a way employers and other businesses can help people have the same chances.



For example, if a company has a lot more men than women. The company can try to get more women to come and work for them.



They could do things like advertise jobs in women's magazines or on TV shows watched by a lot of women.

The Bill will allow businesses and organisations to take more positive action.

For example, a school that has a lot more women teachers than men teachers. The school needs a new teacher, and a man and a woman apply.



Both of them can do the job equally well. The Bill will allow the school to pick the man.

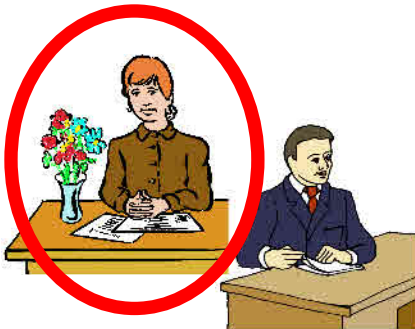


## An example of how this might work:



A company wants to hire a new manager.

Tom and Emma have applied for the job.  
Both of them can do the job equally well.



All the managers in this company are men.  
The company will be allowed to choose  
Emma to help make their company more  
equal.

## 6. Protecting carers, family and friends



The law now says that you cannot treat  
someone worse because they go around  
with someone from a different race or  
someone who is gay.

This is called **discrimination by  
association**.



But sometimes you might be treated worse  
because you are a carer of an older person  
or a disabled person.



You could also be treated worse because your friend or a person you live with is disabled, transsexual or is an older person.



The Bill will make it against the law to do this.

### **An example of how this might work:**



A company is looking for staff.

Carla, who has a disabled daughter, applies for a job.

The company must not turn Carla down just because they think she will take too much time off work to care for her daughter.

## 7. Protecting disabled people better



The law now says that you cannot discriminate against someone because they have a disability or because of things to do with their disability.

For example:



Lisa, who has learning disabilities, goes to a restaurant to have dinner. Because of her learning disability, Lisa makes a mess when she is eating.



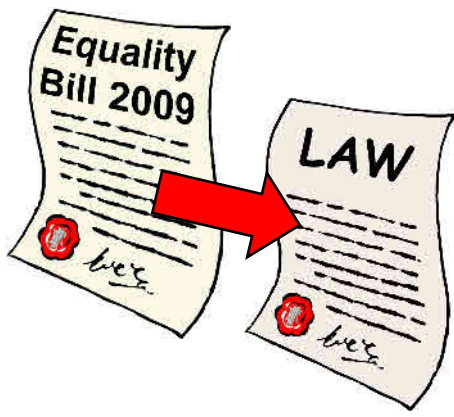
The waiter asks her to leave because she is making a mess. He guesses she is disabled, but asks her to leave anyway.

He does not have another good reason for asking her to leave.

This is called **discrimination arising from disability**.

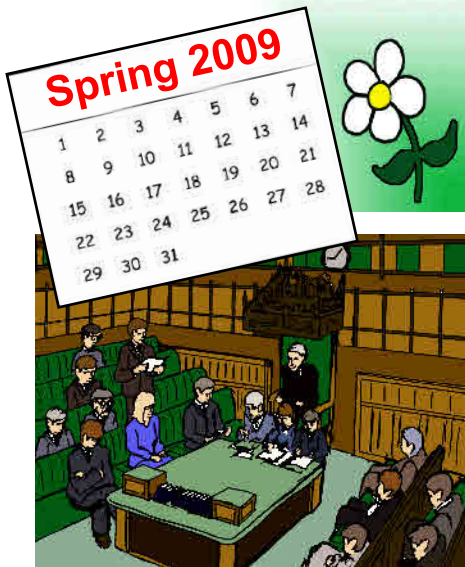


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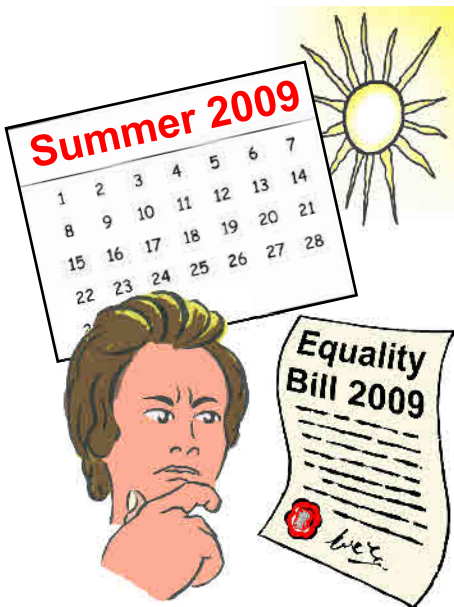
# Making the Equality Bill into law

Making a law will take some time. These are the steps we will take:



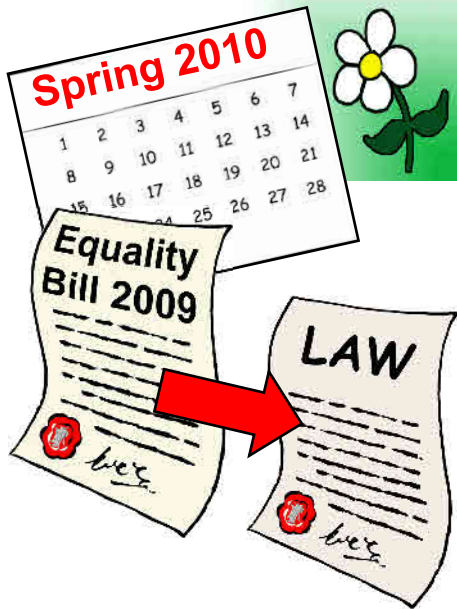
## Spring 2009

Parliament will start talking about the Bill.



## Summer 2009

We will be asking people to tell us what they think about things in the Bill.



## Spring 2010

This is when we hope that the Bill will become law.

# This paper was written by:



- the Government Equalities Office



- the Department for Work and Pensions



- the Department for Children, Schools and Families

Department for  
**Innovation,  
Universities &  
Skills**

- the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

*Department for*  
**Transport**

- the Department for Transport

**BERR**

- the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform



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