



The Equality Act 2010: a guide for political parties

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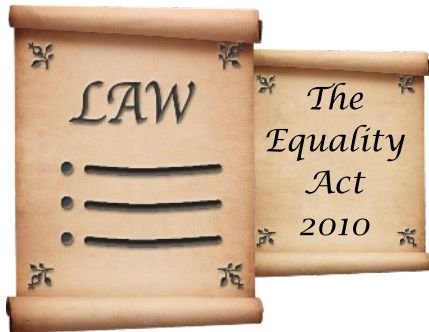
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What this guide is about



This guide is about what the Equality Act 2010 means for political parties and their members.



The Equality Act 2010 is a law that has made rules about how different groups of people should be treated. It has made it against the law to treat different groups of people badly when they are:



- members of clubs or political parties



- at work, school, college or university



- using public and private services



- renting or selling a house or flat.



There are nine characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010. These are:

1. age



2. race



3. disability



4. being a woman or a man



5. changing the sex you were born with



6. marriage and civil partnership



7. who you are attracted to



8. religion or belief



9. pregnancy or being a new mum.

These are called **protected characteristics**.



This guide tells you how political parties can get more groups of people with **protected characteristics** involved in their work.



It tells you how members of political parties, or people who want to be members, should be treated.



It has information about equality law in England, Scotland and Wales.

Introduction



Getting involved in politics is important. It lets you have your say about how you live and the way the country is run.



You can get involved by:

- joining a political party
- supporting and taking part in things the party does
- being chosen by the party to stand for election.



An election is when people choose who will speak for them in the local council or in Parliament. Local councils and Parliament make important decisions and laws.



But women, people from a different race or culture, young people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and disabled people do not get involved in politics as much as other people.



The Equality Act 2010 can help political parties get more people from these groups involved in politics. This is a good idea as political parties need to include everyone.



The Equality Act 2010 says that everyone should be treated fairly and have the same opportunities.



It is against the law to treat people badly due to having a protected characteristic.



People with protected characteristics may need extra support to get the same opportunities.



There are lots of ways disabled people are stopped from being able to do the same things as non-disabled people. The Equality Act 2010 says disabled people should be treated fairly.



It tells organisations to think about different or special ways to make sure disabled people have the same opportunities as non-disabled people. When political parties can do things differently to make sure disabled people have the same opportunities as other people then they must do this.

How political parties can get different groups of people involved in politics



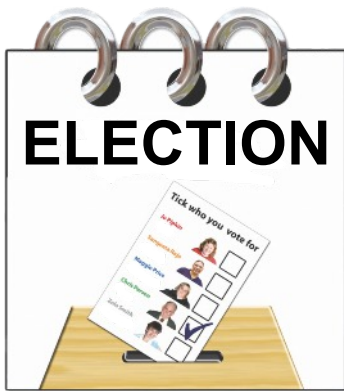
There are some groups of people with protected characteristics who are not involved in politics.



For example: there are not many women, people from different races or cultures, disabled people or transgender people who are politicians. We call this under-representation.

Tick who you vote for		
Jo Pipkin Labour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Sangeeta Raja Lib Dem		<input type="checkbox"/>
Maggie Price Conservative		<input type="checkbox"/>
Chris Parson Green		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Zola Smith Independent		<input type="checkbox"/>

Political parties can help people who are under-represented in politics to get involved by knowing about what they need and how to support them. They can support party members and people wanting to get elected to be a Member of Parliament or a Councillor. They can encourage them to get involved, make it easier for them to take part and give them help to try to get elected.



Political parties choose people to put forward for election to councils and parliaments. They can pick people who have one of the protected characteristics to put forward for election if there are not many people with the same protected characteristic in the:



- UK Parliament



- Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

- National Assembly for Wales



- Local councils.



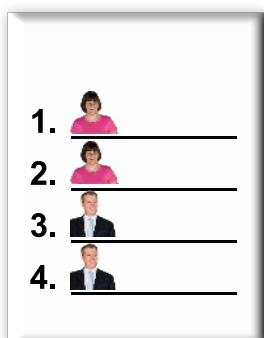
The political party must be sure that when they help people with one protected characteristic to get elected they are not making it harder for someone else from an under-represented group of people to get elected.



If someone wants to be picked by their party to stand for election to Parliament or a council they can ask to be put on a list of people who want to try to win this election. This is called a candidate shortlist. The members of the party will decide who on the list they want to put forward for election by the general public.

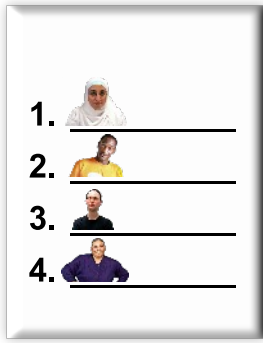


If there are groups of people with a protected characteristic who are under-represented in one of our parliaments or councils, political parties can give a fixed number of places on their list to people who share this protected characteristic.



They could have:

- the same number of women and men on a list



- one person from each under-represented group on the list.



If there are not many people from an under-represented group, political parties are allowed to draw up lists of candidates with that protected characteristic.



They can have:

- one candidate from each under-represented group



- an equal number of people from an under-represented group



- a certain amount of people from each under-represented group.



But political parties cannot have a list with candidates from only one protected characteristic group unless it is sex or disability.

Sex:



Political parties can have lists made up of only women or men if this will help get more people of that sex in Parliament or Council.



Disability:

Political parties can have lists made up of only disabled people. They cannot say which type of disability.



The Equality Act 2010 says that, if they wanted to, MPs could ask political parties to tell them the protected characteristics of all their members standing for elections.



This has not happened but it would show how good a political party was in including as many people as they could.

How political parties should treat their members and people wanting to join the party



People who are members of a political party and people wanting to be members must not be treated unfairly because they have a protected characteristic. This does not apply to marriage or civil partnership.



To make sure they do not treat anyone unfairly political parties can:

- make sure their rules on how to join their party are fair



- ask people with protected characteristics what they think about their plans and ideas



- provide training for party members



- take any complaints seriously



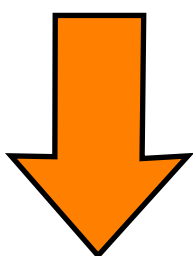
- look for anything that might make disabled people be treated unfairly and change things so this does not happen.



Political parties must give people with protected characteristics the same opportunities as other people to join the party.



A political party can not be unfair to people wanting to become members. It can not just have members who share one protected characteristic. It can not get rid of a member because of a protected characteristic.



It must not give someone a lower type of membership because of a protected characteristic.



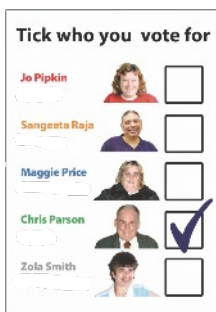
A political party must make sure all members can get party benefits and all the party has to offer. The party must make sure that everyone can take part in:



- local and national meetings, committees, conferences and events



- party elections



- being chosen to be a candidate in an election.



Parties must also make sure that all members can have copies of the party rules and policies, newsletters and online groups.



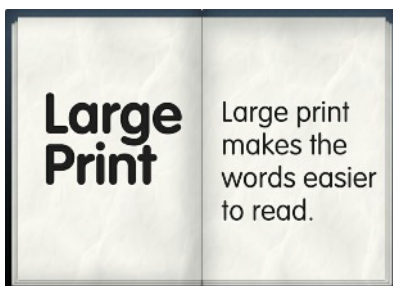
The Equality Act 2010 says that political parties must make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled members.



Reasonable adjustments are a way of changing something to make sure disabled people can take part.



Political parties need to make the reasonable adjustments they think disabled people may need, so that disabled people can have the same rights and benefits as all members.



This might mean providing free extra equipment and services or providing information in large print.



A party member with a protected characteristic who thinks they have been treated unfairly should tell the party. The member can make a claim in court.

Extra money to help disabled candidates



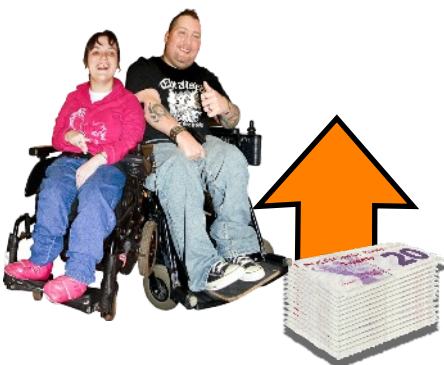
The law decides how much money a political party or candidate can spend when they are standing for election to a parliament or council. It is against the law to spend more money than is allowed.



If a candidate is disabled, they can be allowed to spend extra money on themselves if it is due to their disability.



The Scottish Government gives disabled people standing for council elections extra money, if they need it because of their disability. This money cannot be spent on anything else.



There will also be extra money for disabled candidates standing for the next Scottish Parliament election.



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