Disability Law, policy and practice.

Equality Act 2010.

This Act replaces the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and combines much other equality legislation.

* **Protected characteristics.** It introduces the concept of “protected characteristics”: age, gender, disability etc.
* **Disability.** Areas to note regarding disabled people are the more specific requirements for reasonable adjustments in providing information in alternative formats and the restrictions on asking about health, sickness record, disability etc during work recruitment processes (with some exceptions).
* **Public sector.** The Act also makes changes for public sector organisations: Race, gender and Disability Equality Schemes are replaced by more generic requirements to publish information about people with protected characteristics affected by the organisation and objectives to resolve any issues.
* **Public procurement.** The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has also published guidance on public sector procurement from which we have extracted the headlines.

There is much more in this complex legislation – we can help de-mystify it.

**Market segmentation.**

**Understanding your audience, whether as** a business looking for new markets or a Government Department wanting improved public compliance, may be a stronger driver than the law. Socio-economic groupings are a starting point but equality and diversity demographics add more sophistication. For example, knowing that disabled people make up about 20% of the population with annual spending power of about £80bn. But relying on single channel IT communications or “civil-servant speak” will miss most of them. Our reviews of major publicly-funded services changed contracts and our analysis re-focused local organisations –improving market penetration.

Disability Dynamics model.

“Equality impact assessments” are out of favour but our model of the main disability issues also relates to other protected characteristics and discrimination risks. For example, Policies might include:

* **Attitudes:** HR policies requiring disability awareness training for staff to improve customer service and reduce risk of direct discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Recruitment policies and practices that reflect the Equality Act changes, Access To Work funding for disabled employees plus training interviewers. See our guide to disability etiquette.
* **Communications:** Policies about internal and external communications that cover reasonable adjustments, alternative formats, adaptive technology and more.
* **Environment:** Policies for internal staff and the public that cover reasonable adjustments, accessibility, adaptive technology and more. See our guide on accessible events.

None of this is rocket-science.

Social Value Act 2013.

This Act requires public sector organisations to measure social, economic and environmental impact when they procure services (xx insert link). Disabled (and other people with protected characteristics) are likely to be significant under the first two headings. Organisations bidding for such public sector contracts may be more successful when they can evidence the social value they will contribute.

