**Equality Act 2010**

Much of this new law came in to force on 1 October 2010. It replaces most previous anti-discrimination laws. This should make it easier because, on the whole, the same principles apply to everyone. So the meaning of “prohibited conduct” such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation become standard. Hence people covered by the new law will generally see that they have similar protection.

The Act is clearer and more consistent about the people it covers. It replaces the previous “diversity strands” with nine “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Act is very wide-ranging covering many aspects of life: work, housing and premises, education, contracts, services and more. Each of these areas is extensive so, for example, “services” cover those providing services, goods or facilities to some or all of the public, whether or not they are paid. So this can range from banks and charities to shops and theatres.

Examples of other people and organisations that need to be aware of their responsibilities include:

* **Work.** Employers, partnerships, those with contract workers, those offering employment services, those making public appointments, those conferring qualifications, trade organisations and more.
* **Premises.** Those who dispose of or manage premises and more.
* **Education.** Local Authorities, Boards of Governors or proprietors of schools, Governing Bodies or Management Boards of HE and FE institutions, qualification bodies and more.

Others are also covered by the law including those who run various sorts of associations including private members’ clubs, those who have contractual relationships, those who provide transport and need to take account of disabled people and more.

There is also increased clarity about reasonable adjustments for disabled people: who has the duty and what that duty means. This is covered in different Schedules relating to the various topics contained in each Part of the Act.

