

Age discrimination and ageing well

Age discrimination (also called ageism) can have a huge impact on people's lives. Being discriminated against because of your age, can mean you get lower quality treatment, information or services. There are many areas of life in which people can experience age-related discrimination, including employment, health care and consumer services.

Ageing well is the idea that adults of all ages can continue to be a connected and valued part of their communities. Age friendly means places and practices where people feel supported and aren't discriminated because of their age.

Types of age discrimination

Age discrimination can take many forms but is broadly defined as when someone is 'treated less favourably on the basis of age'. There are four defined types of discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination** – openly treating someone less favourably because of their age.
 - **Indirect discrimination** – having a policy or practice which puts people at a disadvantage compared with other people because of their age. For example, having a policy that restricts recruitment of new employees to 'recent university graduates'.
 - **Harassment** – when a person feels intimidated, humiliated or offended by another person's because of their age. For example, someone makes jokes about a person's age, which they find offensive in the workplace.
 - **Victimisation** – being treated unfairly as a result of making a complaint of age discrimination, or for giving evidence when somebody else complains of age discrimination.
-

The Equality Act

The Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Equality Act is a law which protects you from discrimination. It aims to prevent people from being treated differently or unfairly on the basis of specific characteristics including

- age,
- race
- sex
- gender reassignment
- disability
- religion or belief

- sexual orientation
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
-

Age discrimination in the workplace

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), you are protected from age discrimination in your employment including:

- recruitment
- employment terms and conditions
- promotions and transfers
- training
- dismissals

Most employers are not allowed to tell you when you must retire (known as a default retirement age). It is illegal for your employer to do this (known as a 'forced retirement notice') under the Equality Act.

The Equality Act allows age discrimination in some situations. This is called 'objectively justified' age discrimination and is when the employer can prove they have a good reason. For example, an employer may have an age limit on a job set by another law because very high levels of physical fitness are needed.

If you feel like you have experienced discrimination in the workplace, you should first follow your employer's grievance procedure. If this isn't successful, you may want to submit a claim to the [employment tribunal](#), however this must be done within three months of the incident.

Age Friendly Workplaces

[Centre for Ageing Better](#) has an [Age Friendly Employer pledge](#)

[Work/Redefined](#) offer training and accreditation to businesses and organisations to gain [Age-Inclusive Accreditation](#)

[WorkingWise](#) offer an age inclusive [Top Employer Charter](#). Employers can sign up for free and commit to taking age inclusive actions for current and future staff.

Age discrimination in health and social care

Health and social care professionals can make decisions about the care and treatment that you may get based on your age, in some cases this will be appropriate.

The Equality Act means that all people, regardless of their age, should receive a personal, fair and diverse service, based on their individual needs, not their age.

Examples of discrimination within a healthcare setting might include:

- making assumptions about whether an older or younger patient should be referred for treatment based only on their age, rather than on the individual need and fitness level
- not referring retired people for a treatment that is normally for working age adults
- not considering the wellbeing or dignity of older or younger people

The **[Patient Advice and Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#)** provide support and information to patients, their families and carers if they have any concerns about the care they receive from any health care service.

[Read more on InformationNOW about complaining about health services](#)

[Read more on InformationNOW about complaining about Adult Social Care](#)

Age discrimination in consumer products and services

Age discrimination can happen in consumer services such as supermarkets, restaurants, banks and other businesses. For example:

- seeing a leaflet or advert that discriminates against older people
- being treated badly and talked to using ageist language in a shop
- refused by an insurance company because of your age.

The Equality Act covers providers of goods and services, including shops, hotels, and insurers. This means you should not be treated unfairly because of your age. However there are some examples where it is ok to use positive age discrimination for consumer services.

Some examples include:

- age-related holidays offered for people aged over 50 or 18-30 year olds only
- discounts in shops for people aged over 65
- social or leisure clubs for people of specific ages only.

These examples are all lawful because age-related concessions and age-specific services can be exempt under the Equality Act.

There is also an exemption for financial services. This means that insurers can take age into account for calculating a premium, or a bank could refuse a financial product to a customer because of their age. However, their decision must be based on reliable and relevant information, rather than just making a general assumption based on age.

How to complain about a consumer product or service

If you feel you have been discriminated against and would like to complain about an advertisement, contact the **[Advertising Standards Authority \(ASA\)](#)** regarding adverts in the press, direct mail, posters, and leaflets.

To complain about television or radio adverts, contact **[Ofcom](#)**.

To report a local business to Trading Standards, you should contact **[Citizens Advice Newcastle](#)**.

Complaints about financial organisations, insurers and banks can be taken to the [Financial Ombudsman](#), which can investigate complaints that haven't been resolved. You can only go to the Ombudsman when you have first tried to resolve the matter through the organisation's complaints process first.

Read our article on [Your Consumer Rights](#) for more information.

Other Useful Information

Centre For Ageing Better have an [age positive image library](#) to help you use age positive photos in your resources.

Read our article on [Advocacy](#) for information on help with getting your voice heard.

[Acas \(Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service\)](#) helpline offers 24 hour free advice and guidance on rights at work and employment law

[Equally Ours](#) contains information about voluntary, statutory or umbrella organisations working on equality and human rights issues

[Civil Legal Advice](#) offers specialist advice to those on a lower income or benefits.

[GROW-Good Recruitment for Older Workers](#) guide co-created by Recruitment and Employment Confederation, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Centre for Ageing Better

[Age without Limits](#) have [resources to help challenge ageism in every day situations and conversations](#)

The information on this website is for general guidance on your rights and responsibilities and is not legal advice. If you need more details on your rights, or legal advice about what action to take, please contact an adviser or solicitor.

Last updated: February 19, 2025

Useful Organisations

Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN)

Email: citycab@newcastlecab.org.uk

Website: <http://citizensadvice-newcastle.org.uk>

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: 4th Floor, City Library, NE1 8AX

Connected Voice Advocacy

Email: advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk

Website: <http://www.connectedvoice.org.uk/services/advocacy>

Telephone: 0191 235 7013

Address: One Strawberry Lane, NE1 4BX

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Email: pals@nhct.nhs.uk

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/what-is-pals-patient-advice-and-liaison-service/>

Telephone: 0800 032 0202

Address: Freepost PALS,

Ofcom

Website: www.ofcom.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

Address: Riverside House, SE1 9HA

ACAS North East

Website: www.acas.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

Address: Acas - Newcastle City Council, NE1 8QH

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

Email: enquiries@asa.org.uk

Website: www.asa.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7492 2222

Address: Mid City Place, WC1V 6QT

Civil Legal Advice

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice>

Telephone: 020 7492 2222

Citizens Advice

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Citizens Advice, EC1A 4HD

Equally Ours

Email: info@equallyours.org.uk

Website: <https://www.equallyours.org.uk/>

Telephone: 020 303 31454

Address: Tavis House,, WC1H 9NA

Age Friendly Newcastle

Website: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/uk-network-age-friendly-communities>

Telephone: 020 303 31454

Related Articles

[Where to get legal advice](#)

[Looking for a job or work](#)

[Problems at Work](#)

[Redundancy](#)

[Retirement](#)

[Flexible working](#)

[Starting your own business or self employment](#)

[Advocacy support to get your voice heard](#)