



# Equality Scheme

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**What  
Does It  
Mean For  
Me?**



## What is an Equality Scheme?

By law, NHS GGC must produce an Equality Scheme. An Equality Scheme is a document that explains what the organisation will do to promote equality and remove discrimination for people who use our services and for members of staff.

The Equality Scheme is based on laws that protect certain groups of people. These groups are:

Men and women (Gender Equality Legislation)  
Black and Minority Ethnic people (Race Equality Legislation)  
Disabled people (Disability Equality Legislation)

These laws contain a list of things we must do to prove that we

- understand how discrimination can happen
- know what we are doing to stop it
- are achieving our goals

However, it's not just these groups of people that can experience discrimination or unfairness. The amount of money you have and where you live, your age, your sexual orientation or your faith can all lead to unfair treatment. You can find examples of this at [www.equality.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.equality.scot.nhs.uk).

Our Equality Scheme gives the same level of protection to all these groups.



## What does this mean for me?

The equalities laws tell us that it's not good enough to wait until something goes wrong before the problem gets fixed.

Each of us has to be aware that the way we work might make it harder for some people to use our services than others. We then need to do something about it before it impacts on their health or quality of treatment.

This can be challenging, because lots of our services rely on routines that have been established for many years - before equalities laws were in place.

For example, you may manage or work in a service that has always allocated 30 minutes for patient consultations. The 30 minute rule means that everyone gets the same time with a health professional and, on the face of it, appears fair. But could it actually disadvantage some people?

If the patient speaks fluent English, understands the sometimes complex language used by health professionals and feels confident enough to discuss different treatment options, then 30 minutes might be fine. However, if the patient is deaf or has learning difficulties, this rule is suddenly being applied to a totally different set of circumstances.

Unless a system is put in place that takes account of the patient's communication needs, there could be serious consequences for their health and may amount to indirect discrimination.

Discrimination is not just about treating someone negatively. It is important to realise that we may be discriminating by treating everyone the same, because everyone has different needs.

## What changes might I be part of?

The Equality Scheme's Action Plan sets out what needs to be done to bring about the changes in services to ensure that the situation just described doesn't happen. Every member of staff is required to bring about the changes we need. For example:

- >> You may be asked – with training & support - to get more information from patients, like where they live, their ethnic background or sexual orientation. This helps us deliver the best care we can, see who uses our services and do more for those who don't get in touch with us.
- >> You will receive support to ensure that patient information is easier to understand.
- >> You may be asked to take part in an Equality Impact Assessment – a process that helps services understand where there may be gaps or barriers for some people.
- >> You may be asked to help ensure that our buildings are easier to get in and out of and have clear signposting.

You will also see activity which aims to promote equality for staff members. For example:

- >> Staff who may be at high risk of discrimination will be given the opportunity to discuss ways to improve their work experience

## Want more Information?

We all need to understand our roles and responsibilities for ensuring that equalities laws are not broken. You can find more information about the Equality Scheme and how to identify discrimination on our Equalities in Health web site [www.equality.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.equality.scot.nhs.uk) and Staffnet page. You can also contact the Corporate Inequalities Team or the Equality & Diversity Team via both these sites.