



Equality and diversity in the workplace – a time to reflect

[‘Bourne Free’](#) Pride Festival took place between 12th and 14th July this year, with thousands of people coming together in Dorset to paint a positive stance against discrimination.

Lester Aldridge joined in with various initiatives throughout the week; one of which included a training session I led to share knowledge and tools so our employees have a better understanding about discrimination laws which apply to LGBTQ+ employees and how we can support one another at work.

This gave an opportunity to reflect on discrimination in the context of the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment under the Equality Act 2010, as well as about wider discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, sex and religion/belief.

It’s evident that many businesses in Dorset promote equality and diversity but I suggest that we could do more.

Our protected characteristics shouldn’t usually have any impact on the employment relationship. For example, whether or not I am attracted to people of the opposite sex has no bearing on my job. However, it’s a sad fact that protected characteristics are sometimes used against employees in a discriminatory way. There’s many forms such as:

- Treating someone less favourably by reason of their protected characteristic or because of their association with, or a perception that they have, a particular characteristic.
- Engaging in unwanted conduct towards someone with a particular protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating that person’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

It’s important to highlight that some protected characteristics may have an impact on the employment relationship, e.g. in the context of capability for a disabled person or a flexible working arrangement that can’t be agreed owing to business need. If handled properly, there will be no discrimination notwithstanding the person’s protected characteristic and so employers should be confident to address matters in an appropriate way.

Please contact a member of LA's [Employment](#) Team if you would like advice and assistance on equality and diversity, including discrimination, policies and procedures, family-friendly rights, gender pay-gap reporting, E&D audits and training.