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The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Published: 28 June 2022

Last updated: 28 June 2022

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The public sector equality duty (PSED) is a legal requirement for public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions.



Public authorities are organisations that work for, or provide services for, the public. For example, local councils, schools and education bodies, health providers, police, fire and transport providers, and government departments.

Organisations carrying out public functions are private businesses or volunteer organisations that are contracted to work on behalf of public authorities.

The purpose of the PSED is to make sure that public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. This means that they must consider, and keep reviewing, how they are promoting equality in:

- decision-making
- internal and external policies
- procuring goods and services
- the services they provide
- recruitment, promotion and performance management of employees



The PSED has two parts:

- the general duty
- specific duties

There are different specific duties for England, Scotland and Wales but the general duty applies in the same way to all three nations.

The general duty

Differences between England, Wales and Scotland

In England and Wales, the general duty has three aims, whereas in Scotland, these are described as three needs. For simplicity, on this

page we will refer to the three aims of the general duty.

The three aims of the general duty are to make sure that public authorities have due regard to the need to:

1. put an end to [unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act 2010](#), including discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
3. foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not



Having due regard means that you have made yourself fully aware of – and understood – what the PSED requires, and that you have put this knowledge into practice. There is no standard legal definition of ‘due regard’, although various court cases have clarified the general duty and what ‘due regard’ means.

Advancing equal opportunities means:

- removing or reducing the disadvantage that people with protected characteristics face
- taking steps to meet the specific needs of people with protected characteristics
- encouraging people with protected characteristic to participate fully in all activities, especially where they are underrepresented

Fostering good relations means you are taking action to reduce prejudice and increase understanding between different groups of people.

The Equality Act protects everyone in Britain because we all have [protected characteristics](#).

Meeting the general duty may mean that you have to treat some people more favourably than others. For example, it is reasonable to treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person by allowing them priority access to accessible transport services.

Your responsibilities under the general duty

Complying with the requirements of the general duty is a legal obligation and we have formal legal powers to enforce compliance. Although we will use these powers when necessary, we aim to build positive, collaborative relationships to encourage and help public authorities to meet the duty.

Our role in promoting and enforcing compliance the PSED is covered later in this guide.

Specific duties

This page has covered the general duty of the PSED, which applies in the same way across England, Scotland and Wales.

There are also specific duties. These are different laws under the PSED that apply in:

- [England and for non-devolved bodies in Scotland and Wales](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

The purpose of the specific duties is to help public authorities improve their performance on the general duties. However, complying with the specific duties does not necessarily mean that you are having due regard to the aims of the general duty in all the work that you do.

Page updates

Published:

28 June 2022

Last updated:

28 June 2022

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Advice and support

If you think you might have been treated unfairly and want further advice, you can contact the [Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#).

The EASS is an independent advice service, not operated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Phone: 0808 800 0082

[Or email using the contact form on the EASS website.](#)

Call the EASS on:
0808 800 0082