

The Equality Act 2010 Fact Sheet

Walking for Health schemes

From October 2010 the Equality Act brings together and replaces 9 big equality laws and about 100 smaller laws including the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It will replace and extend the protection of people with disabilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The act covers the same groups that were protected by previous equality legislation and are now called “protective characteristics” (PC)

- Disability
- Age
- Gender (including gender reassignment)
- Religion and Belief
- Race and Ethnicity
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage or Civil Partnerships
- Pregnancy and Maternity

The Equality Act takes a proactive approach and focus on taking active steps to tackle discrimination and promote equality. The Act requires public bodies or organisations carrying out a public function to act proactively on equality issues and tackle institutional equality-related discrimination.

The Equality Act focus on the following duties:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Promote equality of opportunity
 - Remove disadvantage
 - Meet diverse needs
 - Encourage participation
- Promote good relations
 - Tackle prejudice
 - Promote understanding
- Strategic duty for public bodies to address socioeconomic disadvantage.

Walking for Health Disability Inclusion Training 2011.

How is this important to running walks or managing a scheme?

The Equality Act 2010 restores and clarifies the legal protection for people. It also goes further in protecting people and extends indirect discrimination to disabled people as well as protects people from being discriminated against as a result of being associated with a disabled person. This means that carers have improved protection in both employment and in access to facilities and services.

Reasonable adjustments

Both employers and service providers such as a walking scheme are required to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled people. Reasonable adjustments may take the form of changes to policy, processes, the built environment or to providing auxiliary aids or services.

Reasonable adjustments are required wherever disabled people would otherwise be at a substantial (non-trivial) disadvantage compared with non-disabled people.

What is 'reasonable' will depend upon consideration of all the circumstances, including the cost of the adjustment, the effectiveness and potential benefit it might bring to the individual and to others, the organisation's resources and the practicality of the changes.

For example if a disabled person comes to a walk that the walk leader or scheme coordinator perceives as not suitable it would be advisable to:

- a**, describe the route as well as possible including any possible barriers to enable the disabled person to make the decision if it is a suitable route,
- b**, if the route is deemed unsuitable by the leader and the participant the leader should if possible have an alternative route to offer,
- c**, if no alternative route is possible at the participant should be offered an alternative route at a different occasion that is suitable to them,

It would be advisable that any walking scheme have a number of risk assessed and accessibility assessed routes on offer that are advertised with route descriptions to enable individuals to make an informed decision about the walk they want to attend.

It is important that walk leaders and scheme coordinators are as precise as is possible about the routes as well as taking care not to make any assumptions regarding people's ability.

For more information please go to the Equality and Diversity section on the Paths for All website www.pathsforall.org.uk, to EHRC's website www.equalityhumanrights.com or the Acas website www.acas.org.uk