

Gender reassignment discrimination

What the law says

Gender reassignment is one of 9 'protected characteristics' covered by discrimination law (Equality Act 2010).

Gender reassignment discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Discrimination can happen in any aspect of work. It can result from decisions made at work or from how people behave towards each other.

It could be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It can happen in the workplace, at work social events or when people are working remotely.

Terms used around gender reassignment

The law uses 'transsexual' to describe people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Many people consider this term outdated and prefer to use 'transgender' or 'trans'.

In this advice, we use 'transgender' and 'trans'.

What gender reassignment means

Gender reassignment describes a process of reassigning someone's sex. This is usually referred to as transition.

The law (Equality Act 2010) describes it as 'changing physiological or other attributes of sex'.

By law, someone has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they:

- are proposing to transition or partly transition
- are transitioning
- have transitioned or partly transitioned

Someone has the protected characteristic as soon as they propose to transition, even if they go no further.

They do not need to:

- have any medical treatment or surgery
- complete a transition process
- apply for or get a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)

Gender Recognition Certificates

Important: In April 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that sex in the Equality Act 2010 refers to 'biological sex'. This will usually mean the sex recorded on someone's original birth certificate. We'll update this section of our advice when the legal position is clearer.

A Gender Recognition Certificate is a document that changes a person's sex for legal purposes. Many transgender people do not have one.

An employer should not ask to see an employee's Gender Recognition Certificate. An employer must not disclose that someone has a Gender Recognition Certificate or is applying for one.

[Find out more about Gender Recognition Certificates on GOV.UK](#)

Who is protected by law

At work, the law protects the following people against discrimination:

- employees and workers
- contractors and self-employed people hired to personally do the work
- job applicants
- former employees

Non-binary people and people with variations in sex characteristics

Depending on the circumstances, the law on gender reassignment discrimination might protect:

- non-binary people – a non-binary person is someone who does not see themselves as exclusively a man or a woman
- people with variations in sex characteristics (VSC) – some people use the terms differences in sex development (DSD) or intersex

Someone might not know if they're protected by law. They can still raise any issues with their employer. Find out more about [making and handling complaints about gender reassignment discrimination](#).

Gender reassignment and sexual orientation

Being transgender is not related to a person's sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is about emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

Sexual orientation is a different protected characteristic covered by discrimination law.

[Find out more about sexual orientation discrimination](#)

Understanding more about discrimination

[Find out about the different types of gender reassignment discrimination](#)

If you need more general discrimination advice, you can read [discrimination and the Equality Act 2010](#). This includes advice on employer responsibilities and on other protected characteristics.

Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about gender reassignment discrimination, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).