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ARTICLE

New ban on age discrimination

Government is planning to consult on proposals to extend legal protection from age discrimination to goods, facilities and services.

Age discrimination in the workplace is already unlawful, but there is no equivalent legal responsibility on those providing public and private services such as health care, retail or financial services.

The law was changed in Great Britain in 2010 to cover these areas, but not in Northern Ireland, so we have fallen behind the rest of the UK in protection against age discrimination.



What changes could a new law bring?

“The new law, which could apply to health and social care and other services, such as finance, retail or transport provision or services provided by a local council, will prevent older people being unfairly denied treatment or accessing services because of their age”, says the Equality Commission.

This might mean that an older person would be able to challenge a decision to refuse medical treatment or withdraw a service if that decision was unfairly made on the basis of age alone.

What's the issue?

- Have you been treated with disrespect or receive a poor standard of service in a shop or restaurant because of your age ?
- Has your travel, health or motor insurance been unfairly withdrawn or made excessively expensive because you have reached a certain age?
- Have you been unfairly refused medical treatment because of your age?

It may also mean, for example, that decisions on the medical treatment of a patient should be based on clinical need and individual assessment rather than simply because of a patient's age. The new law may also mean that older people can not be treated in a humiliating or offensive way because of their age by those who provide day to day services, such as shops, restaurants or banks.



It will not always be unlawful to treat people differently because of their age. There will be exceptions to the law and it is likely that, for example, age limits will still apply to the buying of alcohol and cigarettes and older people will continue to receive age-related concessions .

Interested in taking part in our research?

The Equality Commission is carrying out research to highlight the 'real life' experiences of age discrimination. We will use the research to advise government on the type of protection that older people need under the new law. (delete below picture)

If you are an older person and feel that you have been treated less favourably because of your age, we would love to hear your story. Please contact the Equality Commission in confidence: phone Claire McKeown (Policy Officer) on (0)28 9089 0851 or e-mail: **cmckeown @equalityni.org**