

HUMAN RESOURCES

Employment Rights and Equal Opportunities

Discrimination

If a man is chosen rather than a woman for a job the business has discriminated in favour of the man and against the woman. Some discrimination is legal and may be considered reasonable. For example a business may chose a man for a particular job because he has experience in that particular job whereas the other candidate is a school leaver. However if both candidates were of the same in terms of ability and experience and one did not get the job because she was a woman, or from an ethnic minority then this is illegal.

Can you think of two other groups that are discriminated against?

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B

Equal Opportunities

All workers have certain rights. Equal Opportunities mean that everyone has the same chance. In other words, an employee is not discriminated against because of their sex, sexuality or race.

Equal Opportunities Commission

This is the government body that enforces equal opportunities laws.

Equal Pay Act 1970

This law states that an employee doing the same or 'broadly similar' work as a member of staff of the opposite sex is entitled to equal rates of pay and conditions.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975

This law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the grounds of sex or whether he or she is married. You cannot place in an advertisement for a job, which could be done by a man or a woman, the following clause 'women need not apply'

Can you give an example of a job where the Sex Discrimination Act does not apply?

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Discrimination occurs because of unproven ideas or stereotypes. For example, women should not work because:

Their place is in the home or with children, women don't want to take too much responsibility at work because of home commitments; women who are married are less likely to want to be relocated; women with children will be less reliable than men because their main responsibility is to their children.

Can you think of one other reason why a firm may not want to employ a woman?

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The Race Relations Acts 1968 and 1976

These laws make it unlawful to discriminate at the workplace against any person on grounds of colour, ethnic origin or national origin. It is also unlawful to select someone for dismissal on these grounds.

Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 1958 and 1980

The current Home Secretary, one of the most important jobs in government, is held by Mr David Blunkett. Mr Blunkett is blind. This handicap has not held him back.

Doctor Tom Shakespeare is a very famous university professor. Doctor Shakespeare is just over 1.3 metres high. This handicap has not held him back.

Both these men are well educated and so their handicap was not an issue.

It is true however that some less educated handicapped people tended to find difficulty in getting employment. Now every employer of more than 20 people has to employ sufficient disabled people to make up 3 per cent of their total workforce.

Why did you think that the first Disabled Persons Employment) Act was passed in 1944?

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European Union (EU) Legislation

The European Union was formed in the aftermath of the Second World War and currently consists of 15 European countries. There were several reasons for the EU being formed, two being

1. To bring the governments of the member countries closer together so that no country would have anything to gain by going to war with another member country.
2. To make it easier to trade with member countries.

The EU is run by a Council of Ministers, which has representatives from each country's government.

EU employment laws can overrule UK employment laws.

How many countries are in the EU?

Make a list of all those countries you think are in the EU.