

THE COLOUR OF YOUR MONEY

A guide to new protections for gay people

Your money is as good as anyone else's, whether it's your hard-earned cash or your tax pounds...

And if someone else can buy it or claim it or order it then so can you, whether it's a double room in a hotel, a service from the NHS, or a romantic dinner.

It's a funny old thing when people in business turn down good money – like the pink pound - just because they're prejudiced against the person handing that money over.

But more than funny it's rude, upsetting, unfair and now – at last! – illegal.

New laws – **The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007**, if you want the full title – aim to outlaw this sort of discrimination meaning that if something is offered, you can have it.

Whatever the colour of your money.

Two women decide they'll have their civil partnership reception in a local restaurant...

It has a lovely garden and they've been to a couple of really nice wedding receptions there.

"Oh, I'm sorry," says the restaurant manager when they go in to confirm the booking and decide on the menu. "I thought it was a wedding reception."

"Well, it's a Civil Partnership reception," says one of the women.
"Same thing."

"I'm afraid this is a family restaurant," says the manager. "We don't do that sort of thing."

"Erm, I don't know if you've heard about these new laws..."

Two men go into a country hotel...

It's a weekend break for them and someone recommended this place. It's lovely.

"Can you make sure it's a double bed?" says one of the men to the receptionist checking them in. Not in a cheeky way, it's just that this is supposed to be a romantic weekend.

"I'm sorry, we don't actually do that here," says the receptionist.
"We don't allow two men to share a double bed. You can have twin beds or I can recommend another hotel if you like..."

"Erm, I don't know if you've heard about these new laws..."

Two women go along to their very first ante-natal clinic...

This is their first child and they are very excited and want to do everything by the book.

"These classes are actually for pregnant women and their partners," says someone checking names off a list. "Not friends."

"Oh, that's alright," says the pregnant woman, "this isn't a friend, it's my partner. We're having this baby together."

"By 'partner' we mean male partner," says the nurse with the list.
"As in 'father'. If we start letting all sorts in..."

“Erm, I don’t know if you’ve heard about these new laws...”

These are some of the ways in which the new legislation could change your life...

KEY AREAS

Education

Gay pupils can no longer be refused admission to a school because someone has a problem with them – or their parents – being gay. And they can’t be treated differently when they’re in there either!

Health

GPs can no longer turn you away for being gay – some did before! – or refuse you treatments they would offer to anyone else.

Hotels

Double beds for everyone!
Well, if they want them.

Council services

Some councils would refuse to recognise homophobic bullying as a good reason to re-house a person (or evict their neighbours). Now they have to act.

Restaurants

'Holding hands with your girlfriend across a table? Carry on, madam.' It's not just about the money – now you don't have to tolerate being treated differently to anyone else.

Travel companies

Those couples-only resorts are now open to all sorts of couples. Gay people need honeymoons too!

Adoption

Agencies have to judge your suitability as a couple on, well, your suitability as a couple. Not on your sexuality.

Housing

If a house or flat is for sale or rent, the owner or landlord can't turn you down just because you're gay.

Banking

Some banks used to deny joint bank accounts to same-sex couples. They can't anymore.

True or false

Some popular myths about what the new regulations will mean and why

all businesses – gay and straight – will be a whole lot better off.

It means that gay clubs will have to let in straight people.

True. But most gay clubs do anyway. Obviously management can reserve the right not to admit anyone they suspect might be trouble, just as they do now.

Gay and lesbian support services will also be open to everyone.

False. If support services are aimed at a certain part of the population then they'll still be targeted like that. So if someone has set up a sports club so isolated lesbians can meet each other, that won't be affected by the new regulations.

You can no longer have something like a gay man's clinic.

False. Yes, you can. Just like there are health services directed specifically at women or children or the elderly, health services can be directed at gay men. Or lesbians for that matter. Everyone's needs are specific.

If you're a religious organisation you don't have to comply with these rules.

False. Oh, yes you do!

Services like weddings and baptisms may not be covered by the new regulations, but it has been decided that no religious organisation should have an automatic opt-out as far as anything else is concerned.

Even if they break this law, there's not much you can do about it.

False. Of course you can.

If you're discriminated against under the terms of the regulations, in the first place you should tell the person involved about the new laws. As a last resort, you can bring court proceedings and maybe even get compensation.

New sexual orientation legislation is designed to protect you – and your money – against discrimination from people in business and public services. It's the law. Use it!

Further info at www.stonewall.org.uk

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