

# face equality

## POLICY AND LAW



### Public attitudes towards disfigurement

There are hundreds of people in every ward and constituency in the UK who have unusual looks. One in every 111 has a significant disfigurement to their face. Disfigurement can affect anyone at any time across age, ethnicity and class.

*Changing Faces* receives many anecdotal reports from people with disfigurements that suggest they experience facial prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination which put them at a disadvantage in education, employment and in their personal and social lives.

In January 2008, *Changing Faces* commissioned Cog Research to undertake a public attitude survey to gauge public attitudes towards disfigurement. An online nationally representative survey of 1,000 people was undertaken with people over 16 years old.

The method used compared answers to conventional survey questions with an Implicit Attitude Test (IAT) to unearth attitudes people may not be aware that they have or be willing to report.

The results of the IAT test revealed that 90% of the public found it extremely difficult to associate positive qualities with people with disfigurements regarding the quality of their lives, their attractiveness, their sociability and their life prospects.

The scale of the bias against people with disfigurements in the UK survey was stronger than that found in similar surveys conducted in the USA on other issues such as race, sexuality, age and gender.

However, the key point is that the interviewees said that they did not have (or did not want to have) negative views about people with disfigurements. Much of the prejudice and discrimination that people with disfigurements face is therefore likely to be unintentional.

## A new social justice campaign

A nationwide shift in public attitudes, beliefs and perception is needed.

People who have disfigurements can and do lead successful and fulfilled lives – but public attitudes, assumptions and discrimination make it extremely hard for them to do so.

The Face Equality campaign is a long-term campaign aimed at bringing about change to combat prejudice and discrimination in education, employment, in the media, film and advertising, and to transform the delivery of health and social care services.

It will aim to raise awareness and familiarity with disfigurement and transform negative attitudes.

But such efforts need to be supported by effective policies and legislation.

Politicians and policy-makers across all levels of Government need to be effectively engaged to tackle the prejudice and discrimination around disfigurement – which the leading Professor of Plastic Surgery, Gus McGrouther, once described as ‘the last bastion of discrimination in our society.’

For further information go to

[www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

## What you can do

### Stand out. Show your support for face equality

*Changing Faces* calls on politicians and policy-makers to ensure that facial prejudice and discrimination are effectively outlawed by improving anti-discrimination law and promoting best practice.

In particular, we call on

- The Department of Health, and those departments at devolved and local levels, to develop policies and guidelines to ensure that the social and psychological needs of their patients are given as much consideration as their medical/surgical needs.
- The Department of Children, Schools and Families, and those departments at devolved and local levels, to develop policies and guidelines to ensure that schools, colleges and other educational institutions are equipped to create a culture of inclusion for children with disfigurements in education.
- The Department of Work and Pensions, and those departments at devolved and local levels, to develop policies and guidelines to ensure that facial discrimination against people with disfigurements is outlawed in employment.
- The Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and those departments at devolved and local levels, to develop policies and guidelines to ensure fairer, broader and more factual reporting and portrayals of disfigurement in media, film and advertising.
- Governments in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to strengthen existing anti-discrimination legislation (the Disability Discrimination Act (2005)) to ensure that it outlaws facial discrimination towards people with disfigurements.

**Changing** faces  
the way you face  
disfigurement

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