



Further Information and Advice Continued

Christians in Contact

Gramophone House, Station Rd, Cullercoats
North Shields, Tyne and Wear NE30 4PQ
Telephone: 0191 2519001

Mormon

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Lds Chapel, Hauxley Drive
Fawdon Lane, Fawdon, Newcastle, NE3 2SR
www.mormon.org

Quaker

The Religious Society of Friends
1, Archbold Terrace,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1DB
Tel: 0191 2812924

The Salvation Army Northern Division

Balliol Business Park West
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE12 8EW
Tel: 0191 238 1800
Email: northern@salvationarmy.org.uk
www.salvationarmy.org.uk

Evangelicals

Gateshead Evangelical Church
Derwentwater Rd, Gateshead,
Tyne and Wear NE8 2XX
Tel: 0191 4774303

HINDUISM

Hindu Temple

172, West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9QB
Tel: 0191 2733364

Hindu Forum of Britain

Unit 3, 861 Coronation Road, Park Royal
London NW10 6PT
Tel: 020 8965 0671
Email: info@hinduforum.org
www.hinduforum.org

ISLAM

Muslim Welfare House

6 North Terrace, Spital Tongues
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4AD
Tel: 0191 2323055

Islamic Society

King George VI Building, Newcastle University
Claremont Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU
Tel: 0191 2326889

The Muslim Council of Britain

Suite 5, Boardman House, 64 Broadway
Stratford, London E15 1NT
Tel: 0208 432 0585/6
Email: admin@mcb.org.uk
www.mcb.org.uk

JUDAISM

North East Jewish Community Services

Lionel Jacobson House, Graham Park Road
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 4BM
Tel: 0191 2851968
www.jewish.co.uk

SIKHISM

Shir Guru - Nanak Gurdwara and Sikh Community Centre

31a Allensway, Thornaby
Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland TS17 9HA
Tel: 01642 760634

Gurwara Sikh Temple

20, Howard St, Middlesbrough
Cleveland TS1 5RA
Tel: 01642 250125

Copyright in this publication is held by the TUC unless otherwise stated. For further copies of this item contact Northern TUC on 0191 232 3175 or hlogan@tuc.org.uk. This text may also be made available, on request, in accessible formats such as braille, audio tape and large print, at no extra cost

Northern TUC

Commercial Union House
5th Floor, 39 Pilgrim Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QE
Telephone : 0191 232 3175
or email : hlogan@tuc.org.uk

www.tuc.org.uk/northern



The guide to
**Religion &
Belief**

The guide to
**Religion &
Belief**

Equality | north east **TUC**



Introduction

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations came into force on 2nd December 2003. The regulations make it unlawful to discriminate against workers on the basis of their religion or similar belief.

Legislation already exists to protect people against discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability and gender reassignment. On 1st December 2003, separate legislation was introduced to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and in October 2006 it will be illegal to discriminate according to age.

Trade union reps play a vital role in representing the interests of all workers. This guide is intended as a tool to help reps understand the recent changes in equalities law in relation to religion or belief.

The briefing provides an overview of the legislation, as well as identifying the benefits from implementing effective equality and diversity practices in the workplace. It also answers some frequently asked questions, and provides useful contacts from which to obtain further sources of information and advice.

The Legislation

Employment Equality Legislation 2003, Religion or Belief

The regulations apply to vocational training and all facets of employment – including recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training.

The Equality Act 2006 extends the scope of legislation to outlaw discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in providing goods, facilities or services, education or rented accommodation.

The regulations make it unlawful on the grounds of religion or belief to:

- Discriminate directly against any individual. That is, to treat them less favourably than others because of their religion or belief;
- Discriminate indirectly against any individual. That is, to apply a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular religion or belief unless it can be objectively justified;
- Subject someone to harassment. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment having regard to all the circumstances and the perception of the victim;

- Victimise someone because they have made or intend to make a complaint or allegation or have given or intend to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief;
- Discriminate or harass someone in certain circumstances after the working relationship has ended.
- Exceptions may be made in very limited circumstances if there is a genuine occupational requirement for the worker to be of a particular religion or belief in order to do the job or to comply with the religious or belief ethos of the organisation.
- Religion or belief is defined as being any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. This does not include any philosophical or political belief unless it is similar to religious belief. It will be for an Employment Tribunal or other court to decide whether particular circumstances are covered by the regulations.

Religious Festivals Continued

Muslim / Islam: - Sufism

February	Eid-ul-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) • Al-Hijra (New Years Day)
March	Ashura
May	The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (20th August 570 CE)
September	The Prophet's Journey to Jerusalem and Ascension
October	Lailat-ul-Barh'h (Night of Forgiveness) • Ramadan
November	Lailat-ul-Qadr • Eid-ul-Fitr

Roman Catholic

January	Epiphany
March	St Patrick's Day (Ireland)
May	Ascension
June	Corpus Christie • St Peter and St Paul
August	The Assumption
November	All Saints
December	Immaculate Conception (Ireland) • Christmas Day • St Stephen's Day

Further Information and Advice

BUDDHISM

Atisha Buddhist Centre Ltd
9 Milton St, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 4ET
Telephone: 01325 365265

Buddhist Centre
3rd Floor, New House, 12 Pilgrim Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QG
Telephone: 0191 2611722

The Buddhist Society
58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH
Telephone: 020 7834 5858
E-mail: info@thebuddhistsociety.org
www.thebuddhistsociety.org

BAHÁ'Í

Baha'I Faith
30d Victoria Square, Newcastle upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear NE2 4DE
Telephone: 0191 2401836

Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom
27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PD
Telephone: 020-7584-2566
E-mail: nsa@bahai.org.uk
www.bahai.org.uk

CHRISTIANITY

Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St. Mary
www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/
REcatholic.htm

Catholic Parliamentary Office
3rd Floor, 5 St Vincent Place, Glasgow G1 2DH
Telephone: 0141 222 2182
info@rcpolitics.org.uk
www.rcpolitics.org

Church of England
Bishop of Durham's Office, Auckland Castle
Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 7NR
Telephone: 01388 602576



Religious Festivals Continued

Hinduism

January	Makar Sankrant (Lohri) • Vasanta Panchami / Saraswati Puja
February	Maha Shivrati
March	Birthday of Sri Rama Krishna • Holi • Varsha-Pratipada (Chaitra) • Rama Navami
April	Hanuman Jayanti
June	Ratha Yatra
August	Raksha Bandhan • Shri Krishnan Janmashtmi
September	Ganesh-Chaturthi • Navaratri / Durga Puja / Dusserah
November	Diwali • New Year

Judaism

January	Tu B'Shevat
March	Purim
April	Passover (1st day) • Yom Ha-Shoah • Yom Ha'atzma'ut
May	Lag B'omer
June	Shavuot (Pentecost) 1st day
July	Tisha B'av
September	Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) • Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) Succot (Tabernacles)
October	Simchat Torah
December	Hanukah (1st day)

Sikhism

January	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Ji Basant
March	Hola Mahalla
April	Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)
June	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji
September	Asu Da Mela
November	Diwali • Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

The Legislation Continued

An employer that falls foul of the new legislation may be taken to an Employment Tribunal. An employer is liable for any compensation awarded unless they can show they have taken reasonable steps to prevent discrimination. There is no upper limit to the amount of compensation that can be awarded.

However, the 'business case' for equality and diversity is not simply about the law. Employers with good policies and practices, and who work towards eliminating discrimination tend to find that:

- Staff are happier, more motivated and productive
- Retention rates are higher

- The company or organisation has a positive image with the local community
- It is easier to recruit the best staff
- They are able to offer a better service to a diverse range of customers

In summary, a genuine commitment to equality and diversity is good for business, good for workers and good for society as a whole!

For advice on good recruitment and retention practices see the 'best practice' section of the Equality North East or ACAS websites.

Questions and Answers

Q Do the new regulations cover all religions and belief?

A It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of religion, religious belief, perceived religion or religious belief, or similar philosophical belief.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against a person for not holding a particular, or any, religion or belief.

Q Do these regulations apply to all workers?

A The regulations apply to all workers, including office holders, police, barristers, partners in a business and members of the armed forces. They also cover related areas such as membership of trade unions, employment agencies and vocational training providers, including further and higher education institutions.

The regulations cover anyone who applies for work, or who already works for an organisation whether they are directly employed or work under some other kind of contract.

Q Should an employer ask me about my religion or belief at an interview?

A No. Interviews are about finding out whether someone has the right skills for the job. Personal questions about an individual's beliefs should not be asked unless they are relevant to the job.

It should be made clear to candidates what type of work the organisation does and what duties the job involves so they can consider whether there is any chance it might conflict with their religion or belief. An employer does not have to employ people whose beliefs mean they are unable to carry out essential parts of the job.

Q Is an employer allowed to ask an employee or potential employee about his or her religious beliefs for data collecting purposes?

A The regulations do not require the collection of such data but it may help organisations to provide appropriate facilities and to understand employees' needs.



If an employer does collect data they should ensure the staff are aware why it is needed and all information should be confidential and anonymous.

Q No one in my organisation has ever complained of discrimination or harassment so we don't need to do anything new, do we?

A Not having complaints does not mean the organisation is free from discrimination and harassment. It is not always easy to complain, especially in a small organisation.

All staff should have training to raise awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Part of this training should be to raise awareness of the kinds of behaviour, which constitute discrimination and harassment and what to do if victimised.

Q Is it best to refrain from discussing religion or belief in the workplace in case you cause offence?

A If harassment has been explained to staff they should be able to distinguish between reasonable discussion and offensive behaviour. Staff should be aware that if their discussions cause offence then this may be considered to be harassment and therefore unlawful. A ban on discussions about religion or belief may create more bad feeling amongst staff and cause more problems than it solves.

Q Do organisations have to provide a prayer room?

A The regulations do not say that organisations have to provide a prayer room. However, if employees request access to a quiet place in which to meet their religious obligations and such a place is available, without it having any adverse impact on the business or other staff, then employers may be acting in a discriminatory way if they refuse such a request.

Q Do organisations have to release staff for prayer outside normal rest/break periods or religious festivals?

A Organisations do not have to release staff for prayer outside normal rest breaks or holiday periods (breaks and holidays as stipulated under the Working Time Regulations 1998). Employers may be justified in refusing such a request if it conflicted with legitimate business needs. However, if they are unable to justify their refusal, this may be discrimination.

It would be good practice to be flexible about breaks and holiday periods when it would not cause unreasonable disruption to the organisations activities. Staff should understand that they have a responsibility to be reasonable to their employer and colleagues when asking for time off.

Q My organisation has rules on personal appearance and dress. Are we in breach of the legislation?

A If the company rules are in place for health and safety reasons or to protect an image with customers, they may be lawful. Otherwise, it is important that a company examines its rules to ensure that they do not indirectly discriminate against staff holding a particular religion or belief.

Organisations should be flexible enough to enable staff to dress in accordance with their beliefs, but still meet the organisations requirements.

For example, some religions require their women to dress modestly and organisations should consider whether this requirement is contravened by their dress code.

Q Can a person, on the grounds of their religion, refuse to work with someone because of their sexual orientation?

A Some religions do have strong views concerning sexual orientation. However, everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. This should be the overriding premise in an Equality and Diversity Policy. Staff should be aware of this, and of the consequences of not adhering to the policy. Workers do not have to be friends but you can insist they treat each other professionally.

Religious Festivals

Buddhist & Zen Buddhism

January	Nirvana Day • Shinran Memorial Day • Honen Memorial Day
February	Parinivana
March	Losar • Magha Puja
April	Hanamatsuri
May/June	Saga Dawa
June	Versakha Puja Wesak/Buddha Day
July	Asalah Puja • Dharma Day
July/August	Chokhor
October	Parvarna • Sangha Day
Oct/Nov	Kathina Day
December	Bohdi Day

Christianity (Unitarianism and Mormon Similar)

January	Epiphany • Week of prayer for Unity
February	Shrove Tuesday • Ash Wednesday • Lent • Quadragesima
March	Mothering Sunday • Passion Sunday
April	Palm Sunday • Holy Week • Maunday Thursday • Good Friday Holy Saturday • Easter Day
May	Christian Aid Week • Ascension • Whit Sunday • Trinity Sunday
June	Pentecost • Trinity Sunday • Corpus Christie
Sept/Oct	Harvest Festival
October	Inter-Faith Week of Prayer for World Peace
November	All Saint's Day • All Soul's Day • Remembrance Sunday • Advent Sunday
December	Christmas Day • St Stephen's Day



Kachhaheera – Knee length cotton underwear. A symbol of readiness, modesty and moral restraint.

Kirpan – Short sword or dagger. A symbol of readiness to defend oneself and protect the weak

Other Religions/Beliefs

Atheism

Atheism refers to the ideas of individuals who do not believe in a God or a 'Supreme Being'. One of the youngest of the world's major religions. The Bahá'í faith is the second most widespread of the world's religions, with 5 million followers in 235 countries and territories worldwide. There are around 6,000 Bahá'ís in the UK. Bahá'ís believe that humanity is a single race with a common destiny. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh, the faith's founder, "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

Confucianism

Confucianism is often characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion. However, Confucianism was built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society.

Daoism/Taoism

Daoism / Taoism is an ancient Chinese philosophy, which promotes living simply and in harmony with nature. Ancient Taoists believed that by following the natural world, pursuing a strict diet and meditation regime and not struggling with their lot, they could achieve an inner calm, improved health and great martial power.

Jainism

Jainism is nature in the purest and truest form. Jainism is as old as nature, which has neither

beginning nor end. The mission of Jainism is the mission of nature, which is to work for the welfare of one and all, to rise from the pitfall of ignorance and inaction to the spiritual climax of infinite bliss and perfect knowledge, i.e. absolute freedom.

Paganism

Paganism describes a group of contemporary religions based on a reverence for nature. These faiths draw on the traditional religions of indigenous peoples throughout the world. Paganism encompasses a diverse community with some groups concentrating on specific traditions, practices or elements such as ecology, witchcraft, Celtic traditions or certain gods.

Rastafarianism

The Rastafarian religion originated in Africa. It is often associated with the poorer black population of Jamaica. It is not simply a religion, but a way of life. Rastafarians speak out against: poverty; oppression and inequality; not just religious ideas but global problems. Rastafarians use the Holy Piby, the Kebra Nagast and the Bible (interpreted with a Rasta soul) for guidance.

Shinto

Shinto has no known founder or single sacred scripture. It is a Japanese indigenous religion of central importance in Japanese culture and history from the earliest times. Intimately bound up with its associated national character as, for example, Hinduism is with Indian identity; Shinto exists only in Japan, and forms part of the basic structures of family and social life of the country.

Q Is positive discrimination lawful?

A It is against the law to positively discriminate. However, staff can be recruited on the basis of their religion or belief where this is a genuine requirement for the job.

When considering if it is a genuine occupational requirement (GOR), employers must look at each job individually and the context within which it is carried out. It should also be

considered whether there are any alternatives to applying a GOR. For instance, if only a small part of the job needs someone from a particular religion, then it may be possible to redistribute work or reorganise job content to avoid applying a religious requirement to a role. Organisations can reasonably expect their staff to keep to their organisational values and culture but should bear in mind that it might be possible to maintain those values and culture without actually belonging to that particular religion or belief.

The Most Common Religions or Beliefs

Buddhism

As a religion, Buddhism is 2,500 years old. There are 350 million Buddhists worldwide and about 130,000 in the UK.

Buddhism focuses on each individual seeking to attain enlightenment. Nirvana (enlightenment) can be reached by following the Eightfold Path of:

- Right understanding
- Right thinking
- Right speaking
- Right acting
- Right lifestyle
- Right endeavouring
- Right mindfulness
- Right contemplation

Buddhism has no unique creed, no single authority and no single sacred book. There are many schools and practices of Buddhism.

Diet:

Tend to be vegetarian due to wanting to avoid killing another living thing intentionally.

Greeting:

Hands are put together in the style of prayer and bow. The shaking of hands, as in western tradition, is acceptable.

Dress:

No religious dress but it is usual for the dress code to be modest, discreet and unobtrusive.

Christianity

Christianity is practised widely all over the world. There are 6 million active Christians in the UK, but over 30 million regard themselves as nominally Christian.

Christians believe that sin is removed by the sacrifice of Jesus who died on the Cross and that God's spirit is active in the lives of Christians. The 'Church' is the community of Christian followers who have a mission to spread the message of Jesus Christ. Christians follow the teachings from the Christian scriptures, The Bible.

There are many different variations or 'denominations' of Christianity including Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestantism.

Diet:

Generally there are no particular dietary requirements or dress code.

Though some Christians do not eat meat on Friday and some take no food or drink before Holy Communion. During Lent, which lasts 40 days, some Christians fast from certain foods.

Dress:

Some men remove their headwear when entering a place of worship and some women cover their heads with a hat or scarf.



Hinduism

There are 750 million Hindus in the world, and most live in India. In the UK, there are 400,000 Hindus, 160,000 of whom are active in their faith.

Hinduism is the name given to a family of religions and cultures that began in India over 3000 years ago. It is not a single unified religion and has no founder, single teacher, nor prophet. Hindus believe in a universal soul or God called Brahman.

Most Hindus worship at home, where they tend to have a shrine. Hindu temples are the focus of religious life, but there is not a strong tradition of corporate congregational worship.

Diet:

Hindus avoid certain foods at certain times. The more orthodox are vegetarians and abstain from meat, fish and eggs. However, some Hindu's who live in the west eat meat but not beef.

Greeting:

Traditionally Hindus don't shake hands but some do not mind this practice.

Dress:

Men are covered from the waist to knee but many will wear western dress for work. Hindu women must have their legs covered.

Islam

Islam is the world's second most followed religion.

The origins of Islam can be traced 1,400 years ago to what is now Saudi Arabia. It swiftly became a world faith, and now has around 1,200 million adherents.

Individuals who follow Islam are known as Muslims. There are approximately 1.6 million Muslims in the UK, of whom 600,000 are active in the faith. However, those who are not active still regard being a Muslim as an important part of their identity.

Islam has seven main Beliefs:

- Belief in Allah, the one and only God
- Belief in angels
- Belief in the holy books
- Belief in prophets
- Belief in predestination
- Belief in resurrection
- Belief in the day of judgement.

The Holy Qur'an is the book believed to be the divine revelation of Allah, the final testament and source of guidance for mankind.

Diet:

Alcohol, pork and meat from animals not killed in the ritual way are forbidden, as is animal fat and gelatine.

Halal (meat which is slaughtered with the pronouncement of God's name) is allowed.

Vegetarian food is more acceptable.

Greeting:

Physical forms of greeting are discouraged between the opposite sexes. On entering the home, shoes should be removed.

Dress:

The dress code is governed by modesty, women may cover their heads with a hijab and wear loose clothes and some may cover their face. Men may grow beards and some will cover their head.

Judaism

Judaism is the oldest of the world's four monotheistic religions. It is also the smallest, with approximately 12 million followers around the world.

There are 285,000 Jews living in the UK. Only 85,000 are active in their faith, but the overwhelming majority still regard being Jewish as a vital part of their identity.

Judaism does not seek converts. Those who convert to Judaism must undertake the observance of Torah (Jewish Law), including, if they are men, circumcision.

The fundamental beliefs of Judaism are:

- There is a single, all-powerful God, who created the universe and everything in it.
- God has a special relationship with the Jewish people, cemented by the covenant that God made with Moses on Mount Sinai, 3500 years ago.
- The Jewish place of worship is called a Synagogue.

Holy Books:

The Torah or Hebrew Bible (which Christians call the Old Testament), and particularly the first five books. At least one copy of the Torah, in Hebrew, is kept in each synagogue in the form of a hand-written parchment scroll. The Talmud, a compendium of law and commentary on the Torah applying it to later life and changed circumstances. The symbol of Judaism is the Magen (shield) of David, which is often called the Star of David. Many people regard themselves as being Jewish without taking part in religious practices, or even accepting the core beliefs of Judaism, because they identify themselves with Jewish people and follow the general customs of Jewish life.

Diet:

Food regulations are known as kashrut (fitness). The food is either kosher (permitted) or treif (forbidden).

Examples of 'kosher' food:

Animals with split hooves and chew cud, such as sheep and cows. Domesticated birds (not birds of prey). Eggs - if they come from kosher birds. Fish with both fins and scales. Fruit & vegetables (as long as they are free from insects)

Kosher meat (must be humanely slaughtered by a shochet (qualified slaughterer) under supervision on the Beth Din (religious court).

Greeting:

Jews do not expect excessive physical displays of affection for the opposite sex. Some individuals will not touch any other women except their wife and immediate family.

Dress:

Some Orthodox Jews will have their head covered at all times and all men will do this

in a synagogue. Orthodox women wear a wig or will have their hair covered when outside the home. Reform & Liberal Jews have no dress code, but may wear the Star of David or some other Jewish symbol.

Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in India, in the 15th Century by Guru Nanak. There are 20 million Sikhs worldwide, with most living in India. There are approximately half a million Sikhs living in the UK.

Sikhism believes in one God and in many cycles of rebirth. They respect equality of all people, regardless of colour, culture or sex, therefore emphasising social and sexual equality.

The Sikh temple is called a Gurdwara and is a place for public worship. Prayers are read five times a day.

Diet:

Sikhs do not eat Halal meat. Many are vegetarians and many do not eat fish or eggs or products made/containing them. Those who are not vegetarian will not eat beef and some will not eat pork.

Greeting:

Sikhs will greet the eldest first by putting their hands together and bowing. Though they have no objection to handshaking, some may hug people from the same gender. When entering the house of a Sikh it is courteous to remove your shoes.

Dress:

Practising male Sikhs must observe the '5K's' of the faith:

- Kesh – Uncut hair. A symbol of identity and commitment. Men may tie their hair up in a turban.
- Kangha – Small wooden comb. A symbol of order. Usually worn in the hair.
- Kara – Steel bracelet or ring. A symbol of allegiance to the brotherhood and the Guru. Usually worn on the wrist.