

RELIGION OR BELIEF IN THE WORKPLACE

EFCB MEMBER SURVEY 2009

This paper summarises the responses of 35 members of the EFCB to a survey requesting information on various topics relating to policies, practices and experiences in relation to religion or belief in the workplace. Of the 35 respondent employers, which represent just under half of the EFCB's current membership, 20 were in the public sector and 15 in the private sector.

The highlights of the survey were:

- 83% of members have an equality policies that specifically mention religion or belief; of those: 72% have agreed this policy with a recognised trade union or employee representative, 52% communicate the policy to suppliers and customers and 17% of the policies deal with customer preference (e.g. where a customer refuses to deal with a female member of staff on religious grounds).
- 49% of members provide training on religion or belief; all of those making such provision do so for all staff, normally as part of more general diversity training.
- 23% of members have a religion or belief champion.
- 74% have a quiet room/prayer space; this is almost always a multi-faith facility, but two members have rooms exclusively for Muslim staff.
- 43% of members have faith networks; these have formal terms of reference in 80% of cases and two thirds have the function of advising on issues and policies relating to faith at work.
- 54% monitor their staff on religion or belief; this is most commonly done (89%) in recruitment, but also applies to disciplinary action (58%), grievances and dismissal (both 47%) and terms and conditions affecting religious observances (26%).
- 51% of members have a uniform or dress policy and two thirds of these make provision for religious dress requirements.
- 51% have had to deal with an issue in the workforce that relates to religion or belief.
- 86% of members acknowledge or celebrate religious festivals and events.
- 29% of members allow employees preference in taking leave to observe religious festivals.
- 63% of members allow changes to shift patterns or hours of work to enable employees to observe their religion.
- 49% of members avoid scheduling important work events, such as training, at times of significant religious festivals.

Members cover a wide range of operating environments, but it is interesting to note that

<i>Public sector employers are more likely to have:</i>	<i>Private sector employers are more likely to have:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a religion or belief champion • quiet room spaces • a faith network • Monitoring on religion and belief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a formal dress or uniform policy (making provision for religious dress requirements) • policies allowing employees to either schedule or change hours of work to observe their religion

Many of these detailed results are consistent with those reported in a similarly structured survey of employers conducted by *Equal Opportunities Review* earlier this year, but EFB members are much more advanced in:

- Providing a quiet room/prayer space (74% here compared with 58% in the EOR survey)
- Operating a faith network (43% v 22%)
- Acknowledging or celebrating religious festivals and events (86% v 43%)

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