

## **Religious Observance in the Workplace**

*It is considered best practice to provide on request an appropriate quiet place (or prayer room) for employees to undertake their religious observance.*

Many religious beliefs have special festival or spiritual observance days. An employee may request to take annual leave in order to celebrate festivals or attend ceremonies. This should be granted if the employee has sufficient annual leave entitlement. While it may be practical for one or a small number to be absent it might be difficult if several such requests are made. In these circumstances, a discussion should take place with the employees involved and appropriate TUS representatives, with the aim of balancing the needs of the business and those of other employees with those of the employees making the request.

Employees should give as much notice as possible when requesting leave, and in doing so should also consider that there may be a number of their colleagues who would like leave at the same time. Discussion and flexibility between employees and Line Managers will usually result in a mutually acceptable compromise.

Some religions or beliefs have special dietary requirements. If staff bring food into the workplace they may need to store and heat food separately from other food, for example Muslims will wish to ensure their food is not in contact with pork. It is good practice to consult individuals on such issues and find a mutually acceptable solution to any dietary problems.

## **Further Information**

*If you would like any further information on the SPS Religion and Belief Equality Policy Statement, you may wish to contact any of the following for advice or guidance on any of the issues related to this policy statement:*

**Confidential SPS Employee Assistance Programme:**

**Freephone: 0800 854 562**

**SPS Equality and Diversity Team:**

**Tel: 0131 244 8594**

*You may also wish to contact your local HR Department or a Trade Union Representative.*



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# **SPS RELIGION OR BELIEF EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT**

## **Statement of Policy**

*The Scottish Prison Service is committed to a policy of equality in the area of religion or belief and to the elimination of discrimination in all aspects of its work. It is opposed to any display within any part of the SPS of prejudice on the grounds of religion or belief, either by word or conduct, by any person in his or her dealings with any other person.*

Religion or belief is defined as meaning any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.

Equality in the area of religion or belief concerns everyone in the Scottish Prison Service. It is the responsibility of every member of staff to ensure that the Service's policy is carried out throughout the SPS estate. This also extends to social occasions and out-housed training courses etc.

Everyone shall be treated equally, fairly, and impartially, with humanity, respect and dignity without discrimination on grounds of their religion or belief. Insulting, abusive or derogatory language or actions towards any person are unacceptable. No group from one particular religion or belief shall be allowed to dominate any activity in any part of the SPS to the exclusion of others.

Everyone shall have equal access to all facilities provided and opportunities, including jobs, offered by the Scottish Prison Service regardless of their religion or belief.

Members of all religious groups have the same right to practice their faith. Arrangements shall be made to give each group the same opportunities to do so.

The Scottish Prison Service Religion or Belief Equality Policy Statement will be monitored and evaluated regularly and will be amended as necessary in line with alterations to the terms of the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.

**The overarching principles, which this policy statement reflects, are contained within the booklet, "How to Challenge and Change Unacceptable Behaviour in the SPS", available from your Local HR Department.**



## ***Challenging and Changing Religion or Belief Discrimination in the SPS***

*By challenging discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the SPS, we will be improving the integrity, diversity, openness and fairness of the Service, thereby contributing more effectively to our Mission Statement.*

***We aim to achieve a Service in which we all:***

- **Promote the values of the SPS with regard to religion or belief equality;**
- **Respect the beliefs, religious views and practices of everyone within the Service;**
- **Value the benefits that a diverse workforce brings to the Service;**
- **Commit ourselves to our mission; and**
- **Work together to achieve our goals.**



## ***Types of Unacceptable Behaviour***

*There are types of behaviour that are forms of, or which may lead to, discrimination, victimisation, harassment, bullying or sectarianism.*

***Discrimination*** - being treated differently on the basis of religion or belief.

***Victimisation*** - being treated differently or unfairly because of a previous complaint of discrimination or having given evidence for another employee in a discrimination case. Victimisation is also often the label put on behaviour the recipient feels when they are being singled out or picked on.

***Harassment*** - being regularly or persistently subjected to:

- **Derogatory name-calling, mockery or stereotypical jokes.**
- **Unwarranted, intrusive or persistent questioning about a person's religion or belief.**

***Bullying*** - being subjected to persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, which amounts to an abuse which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable.

***Sectarianism*** - is a form of religious intolerance which is reportedly too common in Scotland and amounts to discrimination and harassment. Sectarianism in all its forms is to be deplored and is unacceptable within the Scottish Prison Service. Types of unacceptable behaviour include the display of sectarian material and making sectarian comments.

## ***What to do if you think you have suffered discrimination or harassment***

*If you think you are being harassed or discriminated against you should make it clear to the person who is harassing you that their behaviour is unwelcome and that you want it to stop. However, you do not have to do this, particularly if you are feeling bullied or intimidated. Individuals may find it helpful to ask a friend, colleague or trade union representative to be with them when they speak to the person in question.*

***You are strongly advised to keep a diary of events detailing the following:***

- **Date of every separate incident.**
- **Time of every separate incident.**
- **Place of every separate incident.**
- **A full description of every separate incident.**
- **A list of everyone who was involved in the incident.**
- **All witnesses to the incident, and statements from them whenever possible for every separate incident.**

You can also contact your local HR Manager, Line Manager or Trade Union Representative for advice and support. Alternatively, you can contact the Equality and Diversity Team at Headquarters or the confidential Employee Assistance Provider, Focus.

You may wish to consider mediation as this could resolve the matter quickly and informally. It is often the case that discriminatory behaviour can be based on a lack of awareness by the perpetrator. Mediation can be a successful tool in helping perpetrators of inappropriate behaviour become aware of the impact of their actions on others. Details of this service are available in the ***"SPS Guide to Mediation"*** booklet available from your HR department.

If use of informal actions listed above have not been effective then you may wish to consider making a formal complaint. Full details of this procedure are explained in ***"How to Challenge and Change Unacceptable Behaviour in the SPS"***, Booklets are available from your HR department.

As indicated throughout the procedure within the policy ***"How to Challenge and Change Unacceptable Behaviour in the SPS"***, there are certain types of behaviour and treatment, which as a single one-off incident, or as a systemic and persistent pattern, are wholly unacceptable and represent a serious breach of the SPS Values and Standards of Behaviour. ***These will be serious enough to warrant direct and immediate entry into the Employee Code of Conduct.***

