

Whittington Hospital NHS Trust

Cultural and Religious Diversity Guidelines (Time Off)

April 2009

Version:	2 of revised current policy
Ratified by:	Jcc and ec
Date ratified:	April 2009
Name of originator/author:	Neil Edgar
Name of responsible committee/individual:	Executive Committee
Date issued:	April 2009
Review date:	April 2011
Target audience:	All staff

Key Words:

Equal opportunities

Time-off

Religious and cultural diversity

Revised April 2009

To be reviewed April 2011

Introduction

The Whittington Hospital values the diversity that its staff bring to the organisation. The UK is increasingly multicultural and in the 2001 census 77% of respondents identified themselves as having a religious affiliation. The five most popular religions in the 2001 census were Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism.

The hospital aims to create an environment where the religious and cultural beliefs of all staff are respected.

The Whittington Hospital recognises that the value it places on diversity in the workplace is essential to its Improving Working Lives commitment and its commitment to equality as outlined in its Single Equality Scheme.

This policy has been agreed by the JCC and relevant hospital management group

The Legal Framework

In 2002, legislation was placed before Parliament to implement the requirements of the Employment Directive as set down in The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. This required - by December 2003 – prohibitions to be introduced against discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief. This makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate directly or indirectly when dealing with issues such as requests for leave for religious observance.

Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief is unlawful and will not be tolerated

The Regulations extend beyond the more well known religions and faiths to include beliefs such as Paganism and Humanism.

The Regulations also cover those without religious or similar beliefs. To find out more about commonly practiced religions or beliefs, visit the BBC's website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>

The following guidelines should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures, such as the equal opportunities policy, Working Time Directive guidelines, flexible working, dress code policy and local annual leave policies.

Reference can also be made to the Department of Health publication *Religion or Belief – a Practical guide for the NHS* January 2009

Approved Absence for Cultural/Religious Festivals

- Sympathetic consideration will be expected from line-managers to requests for leave from employees specifically wishing to participate in their cultural/religious festivals
- Dates for some religious festivals are approximate as they are based on lunar observation and may change from year to year, or according to different doctrines, or local customs. A religious calendar can be found at <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/>
- Sometimes, there are religious obligations in relation to birth, coming of age, marriage and death, which can vary according to religion, culture and position in the family. Again managers should give sympathetic consideration to requests on these grounds
- Time off for religious observance can be planned in advance and, therefore, staff wishing to take time off for cultural/religious festivals should give their manager – as far as is practicable - three months' notice of their leave requests for the year. Managers should refer to the hospital policy on granting of annual leave and should also exercise discretion in granting time off in lieu and, in exceptional circumstances, unpaid leave to facilitate these requests.
- Whilst such requests will not be refused unreasonably, it must be appreciated that the hospital must always ensure the effective delivery of the service
- Where difficulties arise and/or inconsistency of practice is identified, line managers and staff may seek advice and guidance from the HR department.

Cultural and Religious Observance

- The requirement and need to pray in a particular form is a matter of personal choice based on the nature and depth of personal belief. Practising individuals should advise their line manager if they have any special prayer commitments and these will be met as far as practicable.
- Service needs have to be met. Within that framework individuals will not be required to work for specified periods of time such as mid-day on Friday, Saturdays or Sundays where it conflicts with their religious beliefs and practice. This should normally be agreed prior to commencing employment at the Trust.

- In instances where it proves impossible due to service needs to accommodate requests for time-off for cultural and religious observance, thought should be given to possible solutions e.g. redeployment to another area which will allow such time-off to be granted.

The time off if necessary can be made up through, for example, shorter lunch breaks or earlier or later working times, bearing in mind the requirements in the Working Time Directive. Employees observing a fast may request reduced lunch hours. These should be considered and granted if possible – again bearing in mind working time directive issues

The hospital has a multi-faith room. Please contact the Department of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Ext. 5337 for further information or refer to the Spiritual and Pastoral Care Department information on the Intranet.

These guidelines will be reviewed jointly by the Director of human resources and staff representative chair and management representative chair every two years

The director of human resources will be responsible for the dissemination, implementation and review of this document

Equality Impact Assessment Tool

To be completed and attached to any procedural document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

		Yes/No	Comments
1.	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:	Yes	Policy is to ensure as far as practicable that employees' religious beliefs are taken into account when e.g looking at annual leave/time off during normal working hours to e.g pray
	Race		
	Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)		
	Nationality		
	Gender		
	Culture		
	Religion or belief		
	Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people		
	Age		
	Disability - learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems		
2.	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	Yes but positive	
3.	If you have identified potential discrimination, are there any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	Statute	
4.	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	no	
5.	If so can the impact be avoided?		
6.	What alternative are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?		
7.	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?		

If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to director of human resources, together with any suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact.

Appendix A - Checklist for the Review and Approval of Procedural Document

To be completed and attached to any document which guides practice when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

	Title of document being reviewed:	Yes/No/ Unsure	Comments
1.	Title		
	Is the title clear and unambiguous?	yes	
	Is it clear whether the document is a guideline, policy, protocol or standard?	yes	
2.	Rationale		
	Are reasons for development of the document stated?	Yes statute and revision of current policy	
3.	Development Process		
	Is the method described in brief?	revision	
	Are people involved in the development identified?	yes	JCC
	Do you feel a reasonable attempt has been made to ensure relevant expertise has been used?	yes	Statute and JCC
	Is there evidence of consultation with stakeholders and users?	yes	JCC
4.	Content		
	Is the objective of the document clear?	yes	
	Is the target population clear and unambiguous?	yes	
	Are the intended outcomes described?	yes	
	Are the statements clear and unambiguous?	yes	
5.	Evidence Base		
	Is the type of evidence to support the document identified explicitly?	statute	
	Are key references cited?	na	
	Are the references cited in full?	na	
	Are supporting documents referenced?	na	
6.	Approval		
	Does the document identify which	yes	JCC and relevant hospital

	Title of document being reviewed:	Yes/No/ Unsure	Comments
	committee/group will approve it?		management group
	If appropriate have the joint Human Resources/staff side committee (or equivalent) approved the document?	yes	
7.	Dissemination and Implementation		
	Is there an outline/plan to identify how this will be done?	yes	Director of HR
	Does the plan include the necessary training/support to ensure compliance?	na	
8.	Document Control		
	Does the document identify where it will be held?	Yes	As per all hr policy
	Have archiving arrangements for superseded documents been addressed?	yes	
9.	Process to Monitor Compliance and Effectiveness		
	Are there measurable standards or KPIs to support the monitoring of compliance with and effectiveness of the document?	n/a	
	Is there a plan to review or audit compliance with the document?	n/a	
10.	Review Date		
	Is the review date identified?	yes	2011
	Is the frequency of review identified? If so is it acceptable?	yes	
11.	Overall Responsibility for the Document		
	Is it clear who will be responsible for co-ordinating the dissemination, implementation and review of the documentation?	yes	Director of HR

Individual Approval

If you are happy to approve this document, please sign and date it and forward to the chair of the committee/group where it will receive final approval.

Name		Date	
Signature			

Committee Approval

If the committee is happy to approve this document, please sign and date it and forward copies to the person with responsibility for disseminating and implementing the document and the person who is responsible for maintaining the organisation's database of approved

documents.			
Name		Date	
Signature			

Acknowledgement: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust