

Religion and belief in the workplace

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of their religion or belief. With religious festivals of all faiths spread throughout the year, employers need to be aware of workers' rights and some of the issues that can arise to avoid costly tribunal claims.

The Equality Act protects employees, contract workers, partners and office-holders, and covers the areas of recruitment, terms and conditions, promotion, training and dismissal.

An employee, who believes you have discriminated against them, harassed or victimised them because of their religion or belief can bring a claim in an employment tribunal and, if successful, can be awarded unlimited compensation. The average award in April 2012 - March 2013 for this type of discrimination was £16,320.

Employers can be held responsible if one employee discriminates against another in the course of employment, unless they have taken reasonable steps to prevent the conduct from taking place.

Any religion, religious belief or philosophical belief is covered by the act. This includes all recognised religions and other beliefs and even workers with no particular religion or belief, such as humanists and atheists, are protected.

Ware & Kay LLP in YORK



Address
Sentinel House
Peasholme Green
York, YO1 7PP



Tel
01904 716 000
Fax
01904 716 100

This is a sensitive area, as there are no hard and fast rules and each situation has to be assessed individually. Employers should take advice on their position before deciding how to handle any complaints or requests on religious grounds from employees, including:

- wearing religious clothing or jewellery at work;
- the right to time off for religious holidays;
- request to provide a prayer room;
- time off to pray at work;
- opting out of religious services at work;
- provision of religion-specific food (such as halal or kosher) at work or events;
- employee's opting out of part of their job for religious reasons; or
- objections to prizes of alcohol or certain foods.

If you have any queries about religion and belief in your workplace, please contact us for advice.

Ware & Kay LLP

good on paper, even better in person

Contact us

Ware & Kay's specialist, Gill Wilkinson, has extensive experience in all aspects of employment law. Contact her on 01904 716000 or 01937 583210 or gillian.wilkinson@warekay.co.uk.

Ware & Kay LLP in WETHERBY



Address
The Aire Suite
Brunswick Court
Victoria Street
Wetherby, LS22 6RE



Tel
01937 583 210
Fax
01937 587 556