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Public Health
Wales

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RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION GUIDELINES

Introduction and Aim

Public Health Wales recognises that many religions require time during the day for prayer or meditation.

This document outlines the procedure within Public Health Wales to support the religious needs of its employees.

Linked Policies, Procedures and Written Control Documents

Annual Leave and Bank Holiday Policy

Annual Leave Purchase Scheme

Flexible Working

Special Leave Policy

Dignity at Work Policy

Scope

Equality and Health Impact Assessment

Integrated Assessment Tool (EHIA) completed.

Approved by

Executive Team

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16 May 2018

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Disclaimer

If the review date of this document has passed please ensure that the version you are using is the most up to date either by contacting the document author or the [Corporate Governance](#).

Summary of reviews/amendments				
Version number	Date of Review	Date of Approval	Date published	Summary of Amendments
1	19 March 2020	19 March 2018	16 May 2018	New document developed.

1 Introduction

Religion or belief is one of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. People have legal protection from being discriminated against because of religion or belief, or lack of religion or belief, under the Act. They also have an absolute right to hold (with a qualified right to manifest) a religion or belief under Article 9 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Public Health Wales is committed to providing a supportive environment where all who wish to can practice and express their religious beliefs.

2 Roles and responsibilities

These guidelines will apply to all employees of Public Health Wales

3 Procedure/Process/Protocol

Many religions require time during the day for prayer or meditation. Some of the prayer/worship requirements of commonly practised religions and beliefs in the UK are listed at **Appendix 1**.

Flexibility around time allowed for prayer and ablutions can be best achieved by discussion with the person concerned, as individual needs can vary. Being flexible with the times of normal break periods can often lead to acceptable solutions. It is important to remember that most individuals have had a great deal of experience at fitting such needs around their work.

Some religions prohibit working on certain days – for instance, from Friday sunset until Saturday sunset in Judaism, and on Sundays in some Christian religious groups. Shift patterns and any necessity for weekend working should be discussed from the first day of employment so that suitable compromises can be reached. Muslims also observe Ramadan for one month of the year, which involves fasting during daylight hours. Flexible working hours can often accommodate such requirements and assist staff who are observing religious rituals. Where it is impossible to do so for reasons of staffing or other business necessities, it is

important to show that every effort has been made to find suitable solutions.

Leave requests

Most religions or beliefs have special spiritual observance or holy days when some staff may wish to request time off in order to attend the associated ceremonies or festivals. Employees should make requests for such leave well in advance, to allow managers to support their requests where it is reasonable and practical to do so.

Managers should sympathetically consider such a request where it is reasonable and practical for the employee to be away from work, and where they have sufficient annual leave entitlement. Where several requests are made for leave on the same day, managers should hold discussions with staff to seek mutually acceptable compromises and solutions.

However, where an employee requests time off at a particularly busy time or at a time when the employee's absence would otherwise cause difficulties for the business or his/her department, or where the amount of time off requested is unreasonable or excessive (taking into account the needs of the business), the organisation reserves the right to refuse to grant some or all of any of the time off requested.

Areas for religious prayer

Employees may request access to an appropriate quiet place (or prayer room) to undertake their religious observance.

At Capital Quarter 2, a dedicated quiet room is available on the 6th Floor for the purpose of allowing employees to pray or undertake religious observance. This room is open to all employees, whatever their religion. There is storage available in this room for prayer mats. Employees who do not adhere to any religion or belief may also use this room for the purpose of quiet contemplation or rest. Employees who choose to use the room provided for these purposes are requested to respect the rights of other individuals to observe their personal beliefs.

Not all PHW sites have a dedicated room for this purpose however, if a quiet place is available and allowing its use for

prayer does not cause problems for other workers or the business, employees should be allowed access.

4 Training requirements

Line managers are responsible for explaining and agreeing use of these guidelines with staff.

5 Monitoring compliance

These guidelines will be reviewed initially twelve months after implementation then every two years or as required to support Public Health Wales policies. Any changes to the guidelines will be agreed in line with the organisation's process for the approval of procedures

Appendix 1

Religion or belief	Prayer/worship
Baha'i	Baha'is are required to say one of three prayers during the day. The prayers must be recited in a quiet place and in a south-easterly direction to face Qiblih. Two of the three prayers require movement and prostration.
Buddhism	There are a number of different traditions in Buddhism arising from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Different traditions will celebrate different festivals. Some Buddhist traditions do not celebrate any festivals. Buddhist members of staff should be asked which festivals are important to them. Festivals follow the lunar calendar and will therefore not take place on the same day each year.
Christianity	There are a wide variety of Christian Churches and organisations all of which have their own specific needs, rituals and observations. In addition there are a number of 'holy days of obligation' when Christians may wish to attend a church service and request a late start to the working day, or early finish in order that they can attend their local church. Many practising Christians will wish to attend their Church on Sundays throughout the year.
Hinduism	Hinduism is a diverse religion and not all Hindus will celebrate the same festivals.
Islam	Observant Muslims are required to pray five times a day in a clean, quiet place. Prayer times are dawn, midday (between 12 and 1 pm in winter and between 1 and 4 pm in summer), late afternoon (between 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm in winter), after sunset and late evening. Each prayer time takes about 15 minutes but Friday midday prayers are particularly important and may take a little longer. Friday prayers must be said in

Religion or belief	Prayer/worship
	<p>congregation so a Muslim may wish to travel to the nearest mosque or prayer gathering. Before prayers observant Muslims undertake a ritual act of purification, which involves the use of running water for washing the hands, face, mouth, nose, lower arms and feet. I think it would be worth mentioning Ramadan in here as it might have an impact on individual's performance and flexible working options could assist</p>
Jainism	<p>Jains are required to worship three times a day - before dawn, at sunset and at night.</p>
Judaism	<p>Observant Jews are required to refrain from work on the Sabbath, which begins one hour before dusk on Friday.</p>
Zoroastrians	<p>Zoroastrians are required to pray five times a day, saying a prayer for each part of the day: Hawab (sunrise to midday), Rapithwin (midday to mid-afternoon), Uzerin (mid-afternoon to sunset), Aiwisruthrem (sunset to midnight) and Ushahin (midnight to dawn). Prayers must be said in front of a fire or symbolic replica of one. A prayer is also said before eating.</p>