

## Policy on Respect for Religious Diversity in the Workplace

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Southside Housing Association operates in communities characterised by religious diversity. The Association's workforce reflects this diversity. Aspects of religious practice can impact upon service delivery and employment rights.
- 1.2 Southside Housing Association seeks to ensure that its employment practices are tolerant and flexible to allow equality of respect for employees of differing faiths and no faiths.
- 1.3 In adopting this principle (1.2 above), the Association aims to meet its obligations under the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations of December 2003.

### 2.0 OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 A number of faiths are already well represented within Southside's workplace, including
  - ✓ Christian
  - ✓ Sikh
  - ✓ Hindu
  - ✓ Muslim
- 2.2 Although the Association must ensure continuity of service to its customers, it is committed to respecting individual employees needs in relation to the practice of their faiths. This will include allowing flexibility within the working day for prayers, breaking of fasts etc. and seeking to provide adequate facilities. In addition the Association will seek to ensure that time off is granted for key religious festivals i.e. Diwali, Eid, Christmas, Easter, Yom Kippur etc.
- 2.3 The Association's Administrator will liaise with staff and mark religious leave requirements on individual holiday sheets. In addition all new staff will be made familiar with the religious leave policy at their induction and their need to observe religious festivals will be recorded.
- 2.4 The Association recognises the special dietary requirements of some staff because of religious belief. Where catering is part of a work event, the Association will seek to reflect the needs of all staff in any arrangements e.g. kosher, halal, vegetarian etc.
- 2.5 Similarly the consumption of alcohol is an issue that causes difficulties for some religions and again the Association will seek to reflect this concern in any work-based activities. (See separate policy statement)
- 2.6 The Association recognises that dress code is an important aspect of some religions and will seek to respect this in any policy on uniform, dress code etc.
- 2.7 Staff are encouraged to use team meetings and/or supervision to raise issues with colleagues to ensure that a commitment to tolerance of diversity is reflected throughout the workforce. However if you do not wish to raise concerns in a group environment, you should feel confident

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about raising this with your line manager. You may also seek advice separately from the Administrator or Director.

- 2.8 The Association is committed to acting reasonably in fulfilling its employment responsibilities. However it is expected that employees will be reasonable also. The continuity of service to customers is essential and in a small organisation, it is expected that commitments to flexible working arrangements will recognise these constraints during busy and demanding periods.
- 2.9 The commitment of Southside Housing Association to equality of respect for different religions and beliefs, must be considered in the context of other equality and policy commitments. For instance, religious views, however sincerely held, will not be a legitimate excuse for intolerance, or will not be allowed to compromise other commitments e.g. equality of respect for diversity in sexual orientation.

### **3.0 POLICY REVIEW**

- 3.1 It is recognised that this policy will require to be reviewed and developed based on the real experiences of employees. Southside Housing Association is committed to engaging with staff in developing its approach to respecting different religions and beliefs in the workplace.