

Greater Manchester

GM = EQUAL

Equality Alliance

Inclusive Language
Subgroup



Religion
& Belief

Preamble

- This guidance is the product of discussion and research by members of the GM=EqAl Inclusive Language Subgroup.
- It is part of a series created to help GM=EqAl members and staff be respectful and consistent in how we talk and write about the issues we work on.
- It sets out our agreed definitions and terminology around **RELIGION AND BELIEF** and explains key concepts in line with the values of GM=EqAl.
- GM=EqAl is keen for others to share and adopt our language guidance, and welcomes dialogue with partners in order to keep evolving the documents along with our understanding.
- This guidance has been robustly generated but does not claim absolute authority on any topic.

Short version

DO

- Use 'first name', 'forename' or 'given name'
- Capitalise the names of religions and faith groups

DON'T

- Use the phrase 'Christian name'
- Refer to someone's religion unless it is relevant to the context

Religion and belief guidance

- In order to be protected, a religion or other belief system must be recognised as being coherent, cohesive, serious, and compatible with human dignity.
- For an overview of the protections offered to people with (or without) a religion or belief in the UK Equality Act 2010 and Article 9 of the Human Rights Act 1998, see this link: <https://bit.ly/3pvnwq9>
- Although it is not listed as such in the Census to avoid confusion, 'Jewish' and 'Sikh' are legally classified as ethnic as well as religious identities. It is possible to be racially Jewish or Sikh without having a faith, and for people of other ethnicities to convert to Judaism or Sikhism.

Religion and belief guidance

- A person's ethnicity, name, or country of origin is not enough to infer that they observe a particular religion, or any at all. Similarly, not all members of a religious tradition follow the same practices and observances.
- We should not make assumptions about an individual on the basis of their professed religion or belief system.
- Religions are internally diverse; and individual religious identity can be complex and even contradictory.
- It is important not to stereotype faith communities in communications.
- Accurate use of language is important to demonstrate respect for the beliefs of others.

Religion and belief guidance

- GM=EqAl will only refer to people's religion if it is relevant to the information we are communicating.
- Spellings of religious terms can vary, because they have arrived in English from different sources. This site provides useful glossaries (standardised for the education system) for terms related to Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism: <https://bit.ly/3x9aoJB>.
- Names of religions and religious groups take an upper case, e.g. 'Quakers', not 'quakers'.
- In our pluralistic society it is appropriate to use the terms 'first name', 'forename' or 'given name' rather than 'Christian name'.

