

RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED ACT 2006

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 received Royal Assent in February 2006 and comes into force on the 1st October 2007. The Act amends the Public Order Act 1986 and creates a new criminal offence of hatred against a person on the grounds of their religion. The offence is punishable by a fine or a prison sentence of up to 7 years. The offence applies to the use of words or behaviour which are threatening and intended to stir up religious hatred, that is hatred against a group of people defined by reference to their religious belief or lack of belief.

The Act is not limited to the field of employment and creates a criminal (rather than civil) offence. However it is important to note that an act of religious discrimination in the workplace (in appropriate circumstances) also amounts to an offence under the Act. Where a body corporate is guilty of the offence and "it is shown that the offence was committed with the consent or connivance of a Director, Manager, Secretary or other similar officer" then both that individual and the body corporate are guilty of the offence.

Practical Tip

- This new legislation is a training point for all managers and it would be advisable to insert a reference to the potential criminal sanction in your internal discrimination policies as a point of information.

If you require any specific advice in connection with the material contained in this bulletin, or on any other Employment Law issues, please contact a member of the Employment Team on 0151 600 3000. If you no longer wish to receive the bulletin please let us know by return email.

This bulletin is for general guidance purposes only and should not be used for any other purpose.

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LIVERPOOL 0151 600 3000

1 Dale Street, Liverpool L2 2ET
Fax: 0151 227 3185
MDX 14118 Liverpool
email: law@brabnerscs.com

MANCHESTER 0161 836 8800

55 King Street, Manchester M2 4LQ
Fax: 0161 836 8801
MDX 14431 Manchester
email: law@brabnerscs.com

PRESTON 01772 823921

7-8 Chapel Street, Preston PR1 8AN
Fax: 01772 201198
MDX 17118 Preston
email: law@brabnerscs.com