

## Equality and Diversity Newsletter



October 2008

### Editors Introduction

Welcome to Learning World's Equality and Diversity Newsletter. The newsletter aims to communicate with all of our teams on important topics and to make sure that everyone is kept fully up to date with new legislation, our policies and practices.



*'Learning World is an equal opportunities training provider and welcomes applications from females and minority groups.'*

### Faith and Religion

This section gives some basic information about faith and religion, and explains why they play a significant part in equality and diversity. Faith and religion are often surrounded with mystique, lack of information and knowledge can often create a culture of fear and reluctance to consider them.

#### Judaism

Judaism was founded by Abraham and is practised by Jews. There are different groups within the Jewish faith, i.e. Orthodox and Non-orthodox. Jews believe in one God and declare this by reciting daily prayers. The holy book, which they use as a way of life, is called the Torah. Traditionally, worship is practised in synagogues, where prayers are offered three times a day. Saturday is considered a holy day; it is a day of rest and is celebrated as the Sabbath.

The Jewish Sabbath begins at dusk on Friday and lasts until dusk on Saturday. Orthodox Jews spend that time in study, prayer and rest. They normally do not answer the telephone, write or ride in a car on the Sabbath as these things are considered work and work is forbidden.

#### Beliefs

The Jewish people believe that God made a covenant with Abraham, a promise that he would be their God and they would be his people. While recognising that Reform and Liberal Jews have departed from some of these beliefs, the three key elements of Judaism are:

**God** - is one, is not in bodily form, is eternal, God knows the deeds of human beings, God punishes evil and rewards good, God will send a Messiah and God will resurrect the dead.

**Torah** - the teaching or direction is of divine origin, thus the Torah is eternally valid.

**Israel** - Jews must worship God alone, God has communicated through the prophets. Moses is the greatest of the prophets.



The **Star of David** is the Jewish symbol, known as the Magen David or Shield of David, expresses a spectrum of meanings from the spiritual to the practical. It seems to interlock two triangles forming a strong hexagonal structure. Some view the two opposing triangles politically: representing the unceasing conflict within and surrounding the Jewish nation. Others perceive it to represent the sacred union of opposite energies or Yin Yang.



One of the oldest symbols of the Jewish faith is the **menorah**, a seven-branched candelabrum which indicates divine presence in the world. *(continued over)*

The seven branches of the menorah may represent the sun, moon, planets and seven days of the week. They could also represent the seven days of creation. Normally the Star of David, known as the Seal of Solomon, can be found on the base of the branches.

The menorah is lit each evening and cleaned every morning; replacing the wick and putting fresh olive oil into the cups. The menorah lamp can be found in all synagogues and symbolises 'eternal light'.

## Synagogues

The word synagogue means 'house of assembly'. A synagogue is a Jewish house of prayer, and usually has a large hall, the main sanctuary for prayer, smaller rooms for study



and sometimes a social hall and offices. Some have a separate room for Torah study.

Synagogues often take on a broader role in modern Jewish communities and may include additional facilities such as a function hall, kosher kitchen, religious school, library, day care center and a smaller chapel for daily services.

Synagogues are not consecrated spaces, nor is a synagogue necessary for collective worship. Jewish worship can be carried out wherever ten or more Jews assemble.

## Jewish Festivals

30<sup>th</sup> September 2008 is **Rosh Hashanah** the beginning of the Jewish year when God symbolically judges the Jewish people. A ram's horn is blown in the synagogue to call people to awareness and repentance. It is a ten day festival ending with Yom Kippur.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008 is **Yom Kippur**, the most sacred and solemn day in the Jewish year, bringing the Days of Repentance to an end. Yom Kippur is the most important of a number of official days. A 25 hour fast is observed by devoting this time to prayer and seeking forgiveness. No food or drink is consumed.

## Project India – Lallian Khurd School



15 employees from MEARS went to India earlier this year as part of a voluntary group to refurbish the Lallian Khurd Elementary School in Jalandar, Punjab, near to the Pakistan boarder.

The project was supported by the Bobby Moore International Projects Fund that takes volunteers to a deprived community in another country in order to refurbishing a community facility. Anyone can attend as long as they commit to raising at least £4000. Learning World was pleased to make a contribution to the project.

During the nine days spent working at the school, the team worked non-stop to finish the construction of a new school dining building, which was to be used for both educational and important social functions. Previously the school had cooked all of its food outside in a cauldron on a fire. The team painted the outside of the building as well as the internal walls and windows, repaired the floors, and landscaped and renovated the playground.

The local community welcomed the improved facilities and the experience and memories that the volunteers gained from taking part in the project certainly made the whole nine days worthwhile!



## Disability

Research shows that most of us consider 'disability' or 'disabled' to mean someone who is a wheelchair user or someone who is blind. However, disability is much more diverse and can include various medical conditions and impairments.

Consider the person who has facial burns as a result of a fire, someone who has had a limb amputated or someone who has tunnel vision or who uses a hearing aid. What about chronic depression? Back pain? Repetitive strain injury or cancer? Some conditions may not be visible and the people who have them may not always consider themselves to be disabled - however they will still have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Under the Act, the range of people who have protection from unfair treatment has been broadened.

Disability law is about tackling unfairness and discrimination. The Act itself goes beyond protection for a disabled person who requires physical access to a building. In terms of making 'reasonable adjustments' for employees, often the offering of support or extra training may be all that is needed. Reasonable adjustments are seen as a cornerstone of the DDA, allowing flexibility for employers to recruit and retain the best person for the job. The aim is to ensure that everyone has the right to work towards developing their full potential in life.



**Sean Magee**

Sean is employed as a profiler and has been with Learning World since 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

Sean was working as an overhead technician on telegraph poles when he was first diagnosed with Aggressive Fibromatosis in June 2004. His employer arranged for him to work in the office. By May 2006 he had lost his arm, shoulder and three ribs. Despite this Sean carries on with life much as before. His car requires only minor modifications to drive and he continues to be selected for the pub pool team. Sean joined Learning World in November 2007. His job as a profiler entails a lot of driving round the country and transporting large volumes of paperwork. He and his manager agreed that a trolley would often be more suitable than the normally issued rucksack and apart from that he has encountered no further issues.

Sean is a qualified carpenter and joiner with the A1 Assessor Award. He is tempted to try assessing again but accepts that this may be more difficult than profiling, requiring more site visits and more diverse situations. He is arranging to go on a site visit with one of our current assessors to see if this ambition seems feasible. Watch this space.

## The Multifaith Festival Year – October & November

JUDAISM

**October 9**

**YOM KIPPUR** – a day to remember the past year's sins and to seek forgiveness. It is kept with prayers and fasting.



JUDAISM

**October 16**

**WORLD FOOD DAY** – in developing countries one in three children (under the age of five) are moderately to severely malnourished. Malnourishment is not only going without food, it is not eating the right things and in the right quantity.



JUDAISM

**October 14**

**SUKKOT** – commemorates the forty year journey of the Children of Israel from Mount Sinai. God's protection of the Jewish people from the desert sun with clouds is remembered by building 'succah' (temporary shelters).



JUDAISM

**October 22**

**SIMCHAT TORAH** – when the annual cycle of reading the Torah ends and recommences, as a new scroll is unwound.



## Test your knowledge on direct and indirect discrimination

Decide whether the following examples amount to discrimination and if so, of what type and under what regulation?

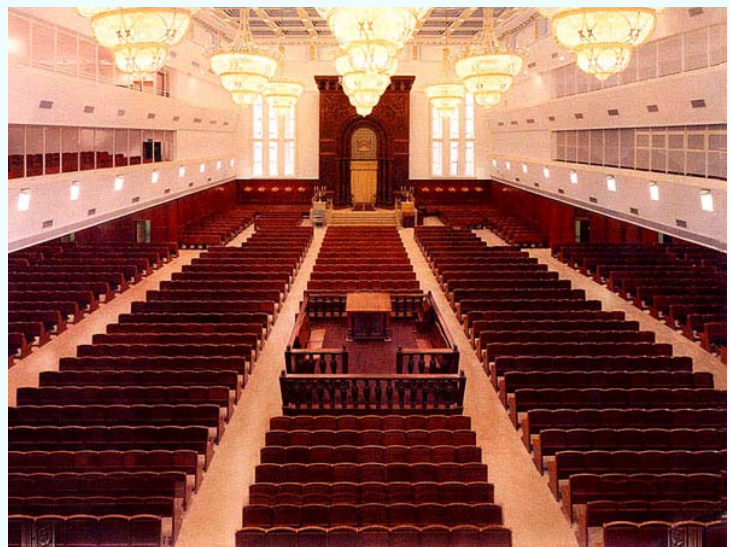
	Direct	Indirect	None
1 An Orthodox Jewish man is sacked for refusing to work on a Saturday when all members of staff have been told to work on that day for the company.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 An NHS Trust does not shortlist a newly married female employee for promotion because there are concerns that she plans to become pregnant and go on maternity leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 A film production company advertising for black actors to play roles in a Jamaican wedding scene turns down an application from a white actor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 A waiter refuses to serve a Sikh man because the restaurant's dress code requires men to remove their hats in the restaurant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 A woman is sacked for wearing trousers to work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 A training company refuses to accept a deaf person on a training course as they have no staff that can use British Sign Language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Answers to the quiz will be published in the next edition of the newsletter.

The **Belz World Centre** is one of the world's largest synagogues in Jerusalem, Israel. The main sanctuary seats 6,000 worshipers, though crowds on the Holy Days can exceed 8,000. The construction took fifteen years and the synagogue dominates the northern Jerusalem skyline.

A huge ark has the capacity to hold 70 Torah scrolls. There are nine chandeliers in the main synagogue each containing over 200,000 pieces of Czech crystal.

The acoustics allow the voice of the cantor (who leads the prayer services) to be heard without the aid of microphones (the use of which is forbidden on the Sabbath and holidays).



The Belz World Centre Synagogue, Jerusalem, Israel.

If you would like any further details about equal opportunities issues please visit [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)  
Information is available in a wide choice of languages.