

Workplace Passover Toolkit

What is Passover?

Passover, or *Pesach* in Hebrew, is a key Jewish festival marking the Hebrews' escape from slavery in ancient Egypt. Lasting 7 or 8 days depending on your region, it begins on the evening of **Saturday 12 April** this year.

While often celebratory, Passover also encourages reflection, with customs and practices varying across communities. During Passover, certain foods are avoided while symbolic ones like *matzah* (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs are eaten, representing the haste of departure of the Hebrews and the hardships they endured.

Traditions differ across families and levels of observance, so it's important to learn about Passover and follow our tips to support Jewish colleagues observing the festival.

Building Awareness

Passover is a chance to promote cultural awareness and celebrate workplace diversity. When planning activities or communications, aim for approaches that are:

- Meaningful – Reflect the historical and cultural significance of Passover in a respectful and thoughtful way.
- Inclusive – Recognise and honour the diversity within Jewish traditions and the broader team, welcoming participation from all employees.
- Flexible – Provide multiple ways to engage, including both in-person and virtual options, to accommodate different preferences and schedules.

Navigating Conversations About Food With Respect

Passover observance varies greatly, shaped by individual beliefs and cultural traditions. When discussing food during this period, keep the following in mind:

- Avoid referring to the Passover period as 'fasting' its about specific dietary rules not total restriction.
- Remember that traditions differ by family; one person we interviewed described a customer involving waving a chicken at the table showing just how diverse practices can be.
- Instead of commenting on someone's food or traditions, ask what Passover means to them and what customs their family follows.

Here are some ways to create awareness before/ during Passover:

Suggestion	Examples/Tips
Distribute this factsheet or create your own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host or share a clear, accessible factsheet on your intranet and circulate it in the lead-up to Passover. • Include key dates, dietary guidance, and respectful workplace practices.
Consider awareness events thoughtfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some organisations hold symbolic or "mock" feasts including traditional symbolic Jewish food to raise awareness. • While some Jewish colleagues may appreciate this, others may prefer not to engage. • Always consult with Jewish staff to understand what would be meaningful or appropriate.
Engage directly with Jewish employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask how they would like Passover to be acknowledged at work; some may appreciate public awareness, while others may prefer privacy. • Tailor initiatives based on this insight.
Use storytelling to highlight Jewish voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Jewish colleagues to share what Passover means to them – through interviews, short written pieces, or videos. • Ensure participation is voluntary and handled sensitively.

Accommodations

Passover is a meaningful time of reflection and celebration for the Jewish community. To support an inclusive workplace, colleagues may require specific accommodations such as flexible working, time off, dietary considerations, or event rescheduling – outlined in the table below.

Flexible Working & Leave

Suggestion	Examples/Tips
<p>Managers should offer flexible working arrangements, such as extra leave or hybrid options, to accommodate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those hosting family/community Seder meals will require significant time to prepare • Some traditions, like removing <i>Chametz</i> (leavened products), can take a full day, as it involves clearing bread, breadcrumbs, and everything in between 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate through regular channels to avoid singling out Jewish employees. • Since the first and last two days of Passover (<i>Yomtov</i>) are considered <u>full holidays</u> where work is not permitted, allow employees to swap bank holidays for these days. • Offer flexible working options, such as working from home or adjusting hours, to accommodate preparation time for special Passover meals.

Dietary Requirements

<p>Organisations with cafes/food provision on-site should look to provide Passover-friendly food options at lunch. This will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove pressure to bring Passover-friendly lunches from home, which can be difficult • Alleviate stress around obtaining Passover friendly lunch from nearby • Normalise the consumption of Passover-friendly food in the office 	<p>Be mindful of dietary needs during Passover, especially for team meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure shared food options are kosher when possible. • If your on-site kitchen doesn't separate meat and dairy, avoid preparing kosher food. • If there's no canteen, consider ordering Passover-friendly lunches for team meals from external vendors
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Rescheduling Events

<p>It's important to be considerate of the fact that by rescheduling events this will allow Jewish employees to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicate their evenings to spending time with their family/community during this important time • Work flexibly/take time off without the worry that they are missing out on work events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider rescheduling events that fall during Passover, especially if they fall on the first or last two days
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Respecting Diversity and Avoiding Assumptions

Not all Jewish people observe Passover, and practices vary widely even among those who do. Instead of assuming, ask colleagues if they're observing Passover and how.

- Be open to individual preferences, as some may enjoy communal events like a Seder meal, while others may not.
- Engage in conversations to better understand diverse traditions, encourage storytelling
- Foster an inclusive culture of respectful curiosity about Passover and the diverse Jewish traditions within your workplace

Conclusion

These tips provide valuable general guidance, but we strongly encourage you to engage with your Jewish colleagues or networks after reviewing this resource. Every workplace is unique, and the needs and preferences of Jewish employees during Passover may vary. It's important to approach these conversations in a way that respects their comfort levels—whether that's through a survey, focus group, or town hall. By personalising these recommendations to suit your organisation, you'll foster a more inclusive and supportive environment, helping Jewish colleagues feel a stronger sense of belonging during Passover and beyond



This document is part of an ongoing series on workplace inclusivity across diverse cultures and religions. If you feel anything is missing or would like to contribute, please reach out to admin@investinginethncity.org