# Ramadan 2024

# This document has been produced as things a ‘to know’ for managers and colleagues on how best to support Muslim colleagues whilst they are fasting during Ramadan.

# When is Ramadan 2024?

This year Ramadan is expected to begin on **Monday, March 11, 2024** and will end on **Tuesday, April 9,** Muslims follow the lunar calendar, so these dates can vary slightly, depending on the sighting of the moon.

Ramadan is followed by the festival of Eid-ul- Fitr, a celebration to mark the end of Ramadan.

What is Ramadan? Ramadan is the name of the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is a holy month of fasting, introspection, reflection and prayers for Muslims. Any rewards of good deeds during this month are multiplied several fold. It is celebrated as the month which the Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) over 1400 years ago.

During Ramadan, from dawn until sunset, Muslims are obliged to abstain from all forms of food, drink (including water) and other activities. Most Muslims will wake before dawn for a meal before the start of their fast (known as Suhoor), and break their fast (known as Iftar) with dates and water at sunset, and then a meal. This year fasts in the UK will last around 14-16 hours. All Muslims are required to fast with the exception of children, the elderly, those with health problems or those travelling long distances.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. The overall purpose of the fast is to gain Taqwa (which means to gain piety or God-consciousness) . This is achieved through an increase in prayers, reading the Qur’an, self-reflection and self-discipline.

**My reflections of Ramadhan**

As many Muslims start their Holy Month fasting at the beginning of April, I have taken the time to pen my thoughts and reflections on the month ahead and how this feels for me as a working mum. It’s important for me to say that religion is personal and therefore my experience is just a little insight to my world.

During the entire month of Ramadan, Muslims fast every day from dawn to sunset. I have fasted in Summer when the fasts are long with a window of only a couple of hours to eat and fasted in winter where the days are short, and it feels like you are merely missing a meal. From the outside it is seen as a month in which Muslims don’t eat or drink for several hours in the day, but essentially the month is not really about food at all –although believe me as a foody I openly admit I can get ‘hangry’ this is a health warning for any colleagues who have scheduled meetings with me in Ramadhan. Despite having fasted for years before Ramadhan approaches, I always get anxious about not eating or drinking for a significant amount of time this is because I am one of those dieters who may start something on a Monday morning and by 10am I feel like my sugar levels have dropped and will eat a cake to compensate. People then ask how I manage, and I honestly cannot answer; I suspect it is mind over matter and the overriding sense of doing it for a spiritual reason and being part of a bigger something rather than losing weight. (Although losing weight is a bonus!)

On a serious note, with the beauty and the blessing of Ramadhan it equally brings for me practical challenges of not only being hungry which if I am honest the body adapts to really quickly but the change of schedule to incorporate additional late-night prayers and pre-dawn meals does have an impact on you and can cause fatigue. By the end of the month, I am absolutely ready for our Eid ul Fitr celebrations ‘The Feast of Breaking the Fast' where the end of Ramadhan is celebrated.

Above all this month is the opportunity to reflect and remind ourselves of all the important things in life. This really resonates with my background in social work and the work I currently do with you in creating beautifully ordinary lives for people with disabilities where we are able to appreciate a place, we call a home the opportunity to develop relationships with loved ones and encouraged to hope and dream. This month allows me to step off the hamster wheel and recalibrate to appreciate all the little things in life that we take for granted.

This means refining my ‘To Be’ list and not letting the ‘To Do’ list get the better of me, which tends to happen for most of the year."

I feel like Ramadan is a blessed month but a curious month in the Muslim calendar and would encourage colleagues to be curious and ask questions where you may have been hesitant in the past.

**Tips for Managers**

Ramadan is of major significance to Muslims and, since the period of fast is around 14-16 hours each day this year, there are a number of practical issues that managers should consider:

# Know your team

You will hopefully operate within diverse workplace and if you are a manager you may have a member/s of staff who will be observing Ramadan. Some Muslims who may not be observant during the rest of the year may observe Ramadan.

# Raise awareness

During Ramadan and raising awareness could be as simple as talking about Ramadan in team meetings and offering meetings with anyone who would like to talk about any support they need or issues they might have. Also be sensitive to the obligations it presents for some staff will encourage people to come to you if they need an adjustment to their normal working pattern or need any other support.

# Consider small adjustments

In most cases only slight adjustments to the working day will be needed and could include:

* Working with employees to accommodate flexible working arrangements during this period, such as allowing Muslim staff to start work early or to work flexibly, if it is operationally feasible.
* Working lunches – It is helpful for colleagues to be mindful of holding meetings over lunch where Muslim colleagues are not able to also join in and eat during Ramadan. However, this does not mean that special arrangements have to be made to ensure that no one eats in front of someone who is fasting, but merely a consideration that should be taken.
* Line managers should discuss rosters with staff at the earliest opportunity to ensure this balance is maintained.
* Training courses and Team away days – When organising these during Ramadan be mindful of any participants who are fasting.
* Some Muslims may wish to take leave from work at the end of Ramadan for Eid-ul-Fitr. Managers should recognise that such requests may be presented with little advance notice since the actual day that Eid falls on will depend on when the new moon is sighted. However, at the beginning of Ramadan they will have a fairly good idea of a few dates on which Eid may fall and should be able to give at least a couple of weeks’ notice. This leave is taken from the employee’s holiday entitlement or, where applicable, as unpaid leave. The challenge that line managers face is to ensure that operational commitments are met while still valuing the diversity of employees.
* Managers are advised to demonstrate empathy, sensitivity and understanding to balance supporting our staff to manage their Ramadan commitments, alongside ensuring we meet all our business needs.

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