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**Guidance for All Staff – Ramadan**

This guidance has been produced to provide further information on the importance of Ramadan for Muslim colleagues. We encourage you to read and share this to improve understanding and foster an inclusive working environment. We wish all staff participating in Ramadan a wonderful Ramadan and Eid.

**What is Ramadan?**

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic Calendar and one of the holiest months of the year for Muslims. The purpose of this important month is to improve God consciousness or Taqwa. It is a time of spiritual reflection, self-improvement, and worship when Muslims draw closer to God. Taqwa is achieved through increased prayers, reading the Qur’an, and giving charity. Muslims aim to continue positive values such as generosity, patience, and forgiveness, with the intention of maintaining these values throughout the year. The most recognised action in this month is fasting, which is obligatory for all Muslims.

**When is Ramadan?**

The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, which is around 11 days shorter than the solar Gregorian calendar. The month starts on the night the new moon is sighted and lasts for 29 or 30 days. This year, Ramadan is expected to start on the evening of **Friday 28th February 2025** and end on **Sunday 30th March 2025**. As the commencement of Ramadan is confirmed by moon sightings, these dates may vary by one or two days.

**Why is Ramadan important and significant for Muslims?**

Muslims adhere to the five Pillars of Islam: declaration of faith, five daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting, and the pilgrimage of hajj (if able to do so). Ramadan is the month to fulfil the fourth pillar of fasting. Muslims prepare for Ramadan in the preceding months and continue to fast in the month following Ramadan (Shawwal).

Ramadan is the month in which the Muslim holy book, the Noble Qur’an, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). It is also the month of Layla-tul Qadr (the Night of Power), believed to be the holiest night, where worship is equivalent to 83 years.

**What does fasting involve?**

The Arabic word for fasting is ‘sawm,’ which means to abstain. Fasting in Ramadan includes abstaining from drinking, eating, and intimate relations from dawn until sunset. This year, the fasts will last for 13 hours on average.

**How does it work?**

Fasting periods are framed around the five daily prayers: Fajr (morning prayer), Zuhr (midday prayer), Asr (mid-afternoon prayer), Maghrib (dusk prayer), and Isha (evening prayer). Muslims wake up for a pre-dawn meal (suhur) and break their fast with a sunset meal (iftar).

**Exemptions**

Fasting is only prescribed for those who can do so. Exemptions include pregnant individuals, those with long-term illnesses, the elderly, and young children.

**Worship**

In addition to regular obligatory prayers, Ramadan encourages additional voluntary acts of worship:

* **Qur’an**: Muslims are encouraged to read, study, and reflect upon the Qur’an.
* **Tarawih prayers**: Congregational prayers performed in Mosques each night during Ramadan.
* **Itikhaf**: Seclusion during the last ten days of Ramadan to dedicate time to worship.
* **Layla-tul Qadr**: The Night of Power, when Muslims increase their worship.

**Eid al-Fitr**

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan and is a day of celebration. This year, Eid will either take place on **Sunday 30th March 2025** or **Monday 31st March 2025**. The day begins with congregational Eid prayer, followed by celebratory meals and gift exchanges.

**Guidance for Managers during Ramadan**

Ramadan is a special time for Muslims, and most continue with their normal duties while fasting. Fasting may affect people in different ways, such as fatigue and a change of routine. Engaging colleagues and showing understanding can ensure a productive working environment for all.

Staff may request flexibility during this time, such as:

* **Prayer breaks**: Allow time for prayers, which may fall during the workday.
* **Annual leave**: Requests for leave during the last ten nights of Ramadan or to celebrate Eid should be managed as per usual departmental policies, considering the significance of Ramadan.

Managers should show understanding and respect the significance of Ramadan. For more information and guidance, please refer to the [Muslim Council of Britain's Ramadan 2025 Guide](https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MCB-Ramadan-2025-Guide.pdf-2.pdf) and [Ramadan Health Factsheet 2025](https://mcb.org.uk/resources/ramadan-health-guide-2025/).

**Tips for Non-Muslim Colleagues**

To support your Muslim colleagues during Ramadan, consider the following tips:

1. **Be Mindful of Eating and Drinking**: Avoid eating or drinking in front of fasting colleagues. Use designated lunch areas or private spaces for meals.
2. **Respect Prayer Times**: Be aware of prayer times and allow colleagues to take short breaks for prayers.
3. **Adjust Meeting Schedules**: Schedule important meetings in the morning when energy levels are higher.
4. **Offer Flexibility**: Be understanding of requests for flexible working hours or annual leave during Ramadan and Eid.
5. **Show Empathy**: Understand that fasting can lead to fatigue and lower energy levels. Be patient and supportive.
6. **Learn and Greet**: Learn about Ramadan and greet your colleagues with "Ramadan Kareem" (Generous Ramadan) or "Ramadan Mubarak" (Blessed Ramadan).
7. **Avoid Food-Centric Events**: Postpone team lunches or food-centric events until after Ramadan.

Let's work together to create an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone during Ramadan.