



Civil Service



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RAMADHAN GUIDANCE FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This is the official Ramadhan guidance developed by the Civil Service Muslim Network (CSMN) to provide colleagues, line managers and senior leaders across the Civil Service and associated agencies an understanding of:

Ramadhan, and why it is important for Muslim colleagues is understood, respected, and they are supported during this holy month.

We encourage you to read and discuss the contents of this guidance with your team and share this wider with others to improve understanding and become an ally. Or, this guide can act as a reminder to help create an inclusive working environment.

There are hyperlinks and a bibliography for additional information and education.



WHAT IS RAMADHAN?

Ramadhan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar and is one of the holiest months of the year for Muslims. The primary purpose of this month is to improve God consciousness, or Taqwa, when transliterated in Arabic.

The Quran mentions this (Surah al-Baqarah, verse 183):
“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may learn God-consciousness and self-restraining fear (taqwa)”

The simple translation of the verse above highlights that fasting is made obligatory for the believers in Islam and that fasting was prescribed to the nations of the previous Prophets i.e. David, Moses, Jesus (peace be upon them) to become more conscious of God.

It is a time of spiritual reflection, self-improvement and worship when Muslims draw closer to God. Taqwa is achieved through an increase in prayers, reading the Qur'an and giving charity, amongst other actions. Muslims aim to continue positive values such as generosity, patience and forgiveness, with the intention that they strive to maintain these model values throughout the year.

The most known and recognised action in this month is fasting, which is an obligatory act for Muslims.

WHEN IS RAMADHAN?

The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, which is around 11 days shorter than the solar Gregorian calendar and therefore starts earlier each successive year.

The month starts on the night the new moon is sighted. Each month is 29 or 30 days. Last year Ramadhan started on the 22nd March 2023.

This year it is expected to start on **Monday 11th March 2024 and is expected to end on Monday 8th April 2024.**

As the commencement of Ramadhan is confirmed by moon sightings, these dates may vary by one or two days.

WHY IS RAMADHAN IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT FOR MUSLIMS?

Here are some details on the significance of Ramadhan for Muslims:

- Muslims are commanded to adhere to the Five Pillars in Islam: Declaration of faith, five daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting and the pilgrimage of hajj (if able to do so). Ramadhan is the month to fulfil the fourth pillar of fasting. Muslims prepare for Ramadhan in the preceding months and continue to fast in the proceeding month.
- As Ramadhan is a time of increased blessing, Muslims seek to increase their good deeds. This is achieved in various ways, from increasing in voluntary prayers, paying extra to charity or by attending Islamic lectures and classes.
- Ramadhan 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 the month where Muslims increase recitation of the Qur'an and reflect upon it.
- It is the month in which there is the Night of Power, transliterated from Arabic as 'Layla-tul Qadr'. Its signs and virtues are specified in a dedicated chapter in the Qur'an. This night is one of the odd nights in the last 10 nights of Ramadhan. For example, it could be the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or 29th night of Ramadhan. The last 10 nights of Ramadan are the holiest and best nights of the year, and Muslims believe that if one stands in prayer or performs an act of worship in faith and sincerity, the reward is the equivalent of 1000 months of worship. This equates to 83 years and 4 months' worth of worship and reward. **This is why so many Muslim colleagues either take some form of leave or seek to alter working patterns to benefit from this night.**
- Ramadhan is a time of increased compassion, kindness and generosity. It is the month to renew ties, implement the words of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) who said he was not sent to mankind except to perfect good character; and build community relations.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

'Fasting is a shield, so when one of you is fasting, he should neither indulge in obscene language nor should he raise his voice in anger. If someone attacks him or insults him, let him say "I am fasting"'

Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 3, Book 30, Hadith 4



WHAT DOES FASTING INVOLVE?

The Arabic word for fasting is transliterated as 'sawm' in the Qur'an, which literally means 'to abstain'.

Fasting in Ramadhan includes abstaining from drinking, eating, intimate physical/sexual relations, during the period from pre-dawn to sunset.



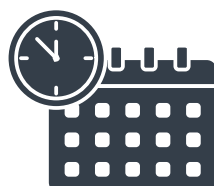
WHAT ARE THE TIMINGS?

This year, the fasts will last for 14 hours on average, with varying start and end times throughout the month, moving from the daylight saving to summer. Fasting periods are framed around the five daily prayers, which are referred to as Fajr (morning prayer), Zuhr (midday prayer), Asr (mid-afternoon prayer), Maghrib (dusk prayer) and Isha (evening prayer).

In a typical day every Muslim around the world will do two things:

- They wake up to have the highly recommended pre-dawn breakfast, known as 'Suhur' in Arabic, and either pray or engage in some form of worship before and or after the time for the Fajr prayer.
- They will have a sunset meal, known as 'Iftar' in Arabic, to break the fast. This is also done either immediately before or after the Maghrib prayer.

Everything else is individual specific. Some use [Ramadhan diaries](#) or [planners](#) to help maximise their day to meet both work commitments and personal spiritual goals.





EXEMPTIONS

Fasting is only prescribed for those able to do so. Those listed below, amongst others, are exempt from fasting. Many Muslims who are unable to fast will engage in the other forms of worship described in this guidance.

**YOUNG
CHILDREN**

**THE
ELDERLY**

**SERIOUS OR
LONG-TERM
ILLNESSES**

**PREGNANT
WOMEN**

**MENSTRUATING
WOMEN**

TRAVELLERS

Those who cannot fast and are exempt from fasting due to long-term, terminal illness or old age are required to offer a specific type of charity, known as 'fidya' in Arabic, in lieu of their fast. This charity is specifically used to feed the hungry.

INCREASE IN WORSHIP

In addition to regular obligatory prayers, Ramadhan brings additional voluntary acts of worship:

- **Tarawih prayers:** These are congregational prayers performed in Mosques each night during Ramadhan in addition to the five daily prayers. The Imam (person who leads the prayer) will usually recite the entire Qur'an over the month, a chapter per night and prayers can last between one to two hours each night in cycles of 2 units of prayer to complete 20 units.
- **Itikhaf:** The last ten nights of Ramadhan are the holiest, so some Muslims spend them in seclusion, known as itikhaf, where they dedicate the entire period to worshipping Allah, devoid of any distraction. Men usually seclude themselves at the mosque spending 10 days and nights at the mosque.
- **Layla tul-Qadr:** The 'Night of Power', takes place during the last ten nights, and is when the Qur'an was revealed. Muslims are encouraged to increase their worship on this night, and some do so throughout the night.
- **Qur'an:** Muslims are encouraged to read, study and reflect upon the Qur'an throughout Ramadhan.



INCREASED CHARITY AND COMPASSION

In addition to paying annually calculated Zakat (almsgiving), Muslims increase charitable activities during Ramadhan. When a specific threshold is met, Muslims are obliged to pay 2.5% of their standing wealth, transliterated from Arabic as 'Zakat.' This is one of the 5 pillars of Islam.

British Muslims have paid £130 million during the month of Ramadhan alone, according to a report by National News. Also, in a report by Ayaan Institute, British Muslims have paid £1bn a year to charity, with an estimate that this will grow to £4bn by 2051.



EID-UL-FITR

Eid is a day of celebration. It is the first day of the 10th Islamic month, Shawaal and marks the end of Ramadhan.

This year, Eid will either take place on **Tuesday 9th or Wednesday 10th April 2024** depending on the sighting of the moon.

The day begins with a congregational Eid prayer ideally in an open space. A special Eid charity donation is made prior to offering the Eid prayer. This money is distributed to the poor to ensure they can celebrate Eid and is generally spent on food and gifts for children.

The Eid prayer is typically followed by celebratory meals and gift exchanges with family and friends.



GUIDANCE FOR MUSLIM COLLEAGUES AND LINE MANAGERS

The Civil Service is one of the most inclusive UK employers. However, we actively promote and support the Cabinet Office to keep it this way by engaging with senior leaders and producing faith literacy products like this guide. Here are some steps you can take to help achieve that ambition.

ADVICE FOR MUSLIM COLLEAGUES

- **Plan ahead** - Speak to your line manager about special arrangements, requests for leave or working from home in advance of Ramadhan, as early as possible.
- **Responsibility** - Take personal responsibility for ensuring that neither business needs, nor your own needs, are unnecessarily impacted.
- **Share** - If you are participating in meetings, let others know of your needs and share your experience with colleagues to build understanding.
- **Productivity** - When considering flexible working arrangements, think about times and environments at/in which you work best.
- **Remain positive** - Remember the benefits and blessings that Ramadan brings - think positively! Use the examples listed in this guide or look online for tips and information on how you can make the most of your Ramadhan! Try to compromise where you can to avoid anxiety and stress.



GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

Ramadhan is a special time of the year for Muslims. As well as increasing worship during this month, most Muslims also continue with their normal duties. Fasting may affect people in different ways, for example fatigue from adapting to fasting and a change of routine and varying energy levels. Engaging colleagues and employees and showing understanding can be helpful in ensuring a productive and harmonious working environment for all. Availability to work late and/or participate in social events maybe limited due to changing their routine to start and end their fasts.

Typical requests are likely to be:

- **A request for flexibility** with working arrangements such as office attendance, to alter working hours from 9am-5pm to 10am-6pm e.g., or working shorter days.
- Not exclusive to Ramadhan, Muslim employees may wish to take **time away from their desk to complete prayers** that fall during the working day, including time to complete ablution (wudhu). Keep in mind that during the months running up to Ramadhan in 2024, 3 or 4 out of the 5 daily prayers fall into the working day. This should be accommodated in the same way as colleagues who take a coffee or comfort break. We recommend you refer to the Civil Service Faith & Belief toolkit as it provides a steer to allow colleagues to undertake religious observances
- Requests for **annual leave during Ramadhan**, in particular during the last 10 nights (1st – 10th April), and to celebrate Eid. In addition to the point above, we recommend that requests for leave and flexible working are managed as per usual departmental policies, though managers should consider the significance and spiritual aspect of Ramadhan. Leave requests for religious observances, as advised in the Civil Service Faith & Belief toolkit should be given priority.



FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR COLLEAGUES AND MANAGERS

Fasting and Neurodivergence

Understandably, fasting impacts different people differently. Some find the change to their routine something they can take in their stride, while others will find it more difficult. One group of people who may find it more challenging to perform at work during a period of fasting or disruption to their usual eating pattern are those with neurodivergences like dyslexia, autism, or ADHD to name a few.

It is important that line managers talk to their staff to understand the impact that fasting or a change to eating patterns has on them. But, everyone should be mindful of the impact that those with neurodivergences could be feeling. To help, here are some examples.

For someone with dyslexia, difficulty with reading and spelling can be a challenge. This could be even harder during a period of fasting, similar to how it would be for anyone when fatigued. With up to 1 in 5 people having dyslexia, it's likely you work with quite a few dyslexics, many of whom may not have shown any signs of it before but might find certain tasks, like these, become harder during their fasting period.

For autistic people, some, not all find they benefit significantly from a regular regime or pattern to their days. Ramadhan, as a major example of a fasting period, means adopting a new routine to the other months of the year. It can be challenging for some to start a new routine for just a month, and this may impact on how they are at work, with a stronger preference for structure being visible in how they work.

Significant changes to how we are living, like Ramadhan or other fasting periods, can have impacts beyond the period of the fast itself. A crude analogy, it is a bit like jet lag. You don't return to your usual rhythm immediately and go back to the previous daily routine unaffected. This period after, as well as during a fasting period, is a key time for line managers and colleagues to be mindful of the additional impact that colleagues with a neurodivergence might be feeling around their fast.

So, whether you are a line manager or not, it is important to be mindful of the wide range of ways fasting can impact colleagues, and to understand the potential effect and additional needs that people can have, especially when neurodivergent.

CSMN GUIDANCE AND COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

We are here to help. We know this guidance doesn't cover everything. So please get in touch with your local Muslim Network or contact us directly. There is no such thing as a silly question. We strive to achieve collaborative, pragmatic and forward-looking solutions.

Please feel free to get in touch at csmn@hmrc.gov.uk in the first instance. You can also contact the CSMN directly - our details are in the annex attached.

We hope that you have a wonderful Ramadhan and Eid.

CSMN Executive Team

WANT TO JOIN CSMN?

4 simple steps to become a member of CSMN. Register on Knowledge Hub:

1. Access Knowledge Hub at <https://khub.net/> and go to 'sign-up'.
2. Register with your name, grade and regional location, and review the confirmation email. Please use your professional/departmental email address.
3. Search for 'Civil Service Muslim Network' under the 'Groups' tab.
4. Request to join the group, accept the user agreement and start to explore, collaborate and network.



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