

MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN | RAMADAN 2023/1444 AH

RAMADAN GUIDE



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MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN WISHES
EVERYONE A REWARDING RAMADAN.

Ramadan 2023 is estimated begin on the 22nd or 23rd of March 2023, and culminate with the first day of Eid falling on the 22nd or 23rd of April 2023.

Exact dates are subject to sightings of the moon. This booklet contains guidelines, advice and signposts to resources designed to help Muslims in Britain make the most of the blessed month. It is also a handy reference point for communities, workplaces, educators and colleagues of Muslims.

CONTENTS

- 1 What Is Ramadan?**
- 2 What's the Reason for Fasting?**
- 3 Is Fasting Harmful for Your Health?**
- 5 Adapting For Ramadan**
- 7 Maintaining Physical Health**
- 8 Maintaining Mental Health**
- 9 Ramadan & the Cost-of-Living Crisis**
- 10 A Day in Ramadan: At a Glance**
- 11 Charity, Donating and Volunteering**
- 13 Sharing Ramadan in Society**
- 14 Advice for Mosques and Prayer Facilities**
- 15 Eco-Conscious Ramadan**
- 16 Advice for Employers**
- 17 Advice for Line Managers**
- 19 Eid Ul Fitr**

What is Ramadan?

"OH YOU WHO BELIEVE! FASTING HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED TO YOU AS IT WAS PRESCRIBED TO THOSE BEFORE YOU SO THAT YOU MAY BE MINDFUL OF GOD"

[QUR'AN 2:183]

The month of Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic year as it is when the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims around the world fast during daylight hours, meaning they abstain from eating, drinking or engaging in sexual relations for the duration of their fast.

Young children, the old, the sick, travellers and women who are breastfeeding or menstruating are examples of those who are exempt from fasting.

Aside from fasting, Muslims observing Ramadan also increase in spiritual devotional acts such as prayer, giving to charity and strengthening family ties.

Muslims are encouraged to share their food with friends, family and neighbours and to reach out to those who may be fasting alone, to share their Ramadan experiences.

Suhur – the meal taken just before dawn, which marks the beginning of the fast.

Iftar – the meal eaten at sunset to open the fast

Tarawih – a night prayer which is prayed every night during the month of Ramadan. The prayers are lengthier with large portions of the Qur'an recited in them aloud.

Itikaaf – An act of worship where a person will stay at a mosque for a certain number of days and nights devoting

oneself to worshipping Allah, generally done during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Zakat ul Fitr – a charity given by all Muslims of all ages who can afford to do so before the Eid prayer is offered.

Ramadan – this refers to the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar where Muslims are expected to fast from dawn until sunset for one month if able to do so with some exceptions for those who may be ill, travelling, young, old and frail or not able to fast for other valid reasons.

Eid ul fitr – the festival for Muslims at the end of the month of Ramadan and is the first day of the following month of the Islamic calendar.



The Reason For Fasting

Fasting plays an important role in many major world religions and is a central feature in all the Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In Islam, Muslims, who are able to, are required to fast during the month of Ramadan, and are recommended to fast at other times of the year too.

Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam. A key objective of fasting is to work towards an increase in taqwa (closeness to God), and to engender a sense of gratitude, self-discipline and self-improvement, at both an individual and community level, which Muslims are encouraged to continue throughout the year. At an individual level, fasting encourages us to feel an affinity with the poor across the world who have little or no food to eat, whilst for our own bodies, scientific studies have

shown that fasting provides several health benefits and forms of intermittent fasting have been incorporated into several diet regimes. At a community level, the breaking of fast meal (iftar) at sunset encourages families and local communities to share their meal together, whilst charity work in local communities typically increases during Ramadan.

'AISHA REPORTED:

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PEACE AND BLESSINGS BE UPON HIM) USED TO STRIVE MORE IN WORSHIP DURING RAMADAN THAN HE STROVE IN ANY OTHER TIME OF THE YEAR; AND HE WOULD DEVOTE HIMSELF MORE (IN THE WORSHIP OF ALLAH) IN THE LAST TEN NIGHTS OF RAMADAN THAN HE DID IN THE EARLIER PART OF THE MONTH.

(SAHIH MUSLIM).

Is Fasting Harmful to ones health?

If you are healthy with no pre-existing conditions, there is no evidence to suggest fasting is harmful to your health provided you are adequately hydrated in non-fasting hours. Some studies suggest there may even be health benefits from fasting. For those who usually drink caffeine through tea or coffee, the lack of caffeine can bring on headaches and tiredness. However, this will reduce as the body adapts to going without caffeine during the day. Due to the timings of meals before dawn and after sunset, adjustment to new sleeping and eating patterns may also lead to some people feeling more tired than normal.

For additional information, see the section on 'Maintaining Physical Health' (pg.6) in Ramadan.



Adapting for Ramadan

If you are unable to partake of communal activities as a family, or simply dealing with time constraints & pressures, for example, consider the following:





- » Arranging virtual iftars with loved ones and community members through the many online video calling facilities available.
- » Planning your iftar menus in advance so that you can limit multiple shopping trips to reduce the risk of infection and contact with different people
- » Hydrating well for the long fasting days. Dehydration can lead to tiredness, headaches, lack of focus/concentration.
- » Eating high energy, slow burn foods for suhoor (starting your fast).
- » Remaining energised throughout the workday, especially as we can experience heightened levels of anxiety during these times.
- » Taking regular breaks to reflect and take time for yourself. Life can be full, and we try to fill it with more worship during Ramadan. We all want to pray more and this can help with anxiety but it is important to be good to yourself – sometimes it is quality over quantity.



Maintaining Physical Health

Individuals with an illness or health condition where fasting could be detrimental to their health are exempt from fasting. The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) have created a peer reviewed document that brings together a range of literature reviews around how medical professionals can advise patients whether to keep or terminate their fast. Please note, clinicians must exercise discretion based on each individual patient's circumstances.

A wealth of resources for Muslims and the medical community on issues pertaining to health during Ramadan, are available at: britishima.org/ramadan.

Also available for medical healthcare professionals and patients is the **MCB's Ramadan Health Factsheet 2023**.

To download, visit:
mcb.org.uk/ramadan

Maintaining Mental Health

Muslim mental health organisations have documented an exponential rise in demand for their services since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has transpired despite the general lack of conversation around mental health in British Muslim communities.

The restrictions that have kept us apart during Ramadan 2020/21 have now been removed, and we are set to be able to partake of communal activities such as physical iftars and taraweeh prayers in our Mosques. This may well help alleviate feelings of isolation and disconnect. That said, the toll the pandemic has taken on mental health remains, and

(re-) socialising in Ramadan for those impacted by mental health illnesses can prove especially difficult.

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, several Muslim mental health organisations in the UK have come together to collaborate and provide a range of initiatives for British Muslim communities nationwide.

For more information & support, visit: mcb.org.uk/resources/mental-health

Ramadan and the Cost of Living Crisis



Although it is typical for families to stock up on products for meals during the month of fasting, we should remain conscious of the difficult circumstances we all face coming out of the pandemic, the strain on supply chains and the rise in living costs, be it food, fuel or energy.

Please ensure that we only purchase in reasonable quantities, which will allow everyone to acquire what they need. Also, per the spirit of Ramadan and the teachings of our beloved faith, do not hesitate to provide support to those within our communities struggling to observe the holy month, or indeed our

neighbours within the wider community who may also be struggling.

For, Muslims in the UK in need of support, zakat given through the National Zakat Foundation may be able to help. For more information, visit: www.nzf.org.uk

A Day in Ramadan at a Glance

Pre-dawn Meal (Suhoor)

This is an essential meal for Muslims as this will replace breakfast during the month of Ramadan. This pre-dawn meal should be wholesome and filling in order to sustain energy for many hours, and needs to be eaten before sunrise.

'Take the Suhoor meal, for there is blessing in it.'

[Bukhari & Muslim]

During the summer fasts, the days are longer, and the nights are shorter. Please advise pupils and parents to make healthy food choices and to ensure pupils are consuming more liquids than usual, avoiding caffeine and sugar drinks.

Night Prayers (Tarawih)

Tarawih is a recommended voluntary act of worship, which can only take place during the month of Ramadan. This is why it is extremely popular. Muslims can perform anything from four, eight, twelve or 20 units of prayer (rak'ats).

During this prayer portions of the Qur'an are recited out loud with the aim to complete the full recitation by the close of Ramadan known as 'khatam'. This prayer usually takes around 1.5/2 hours and concludes close to midnight.



Breaking the Fast (Iftar)

This meal coincides exactly with the setting of the sun. As per tradition, Muslims break their fast with dates and water, followed by a cooked meal which should contain all the necessary nutrients for a healthy balanced diet.

Salman ibn 'Amir reported: The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "When one of you breaks his fast, let him break it with dates for they are blessed. If they are not found, let him break it with water for it is pure."

[Sunan al-Tirmidhi 695]

Charity, Donating and Volunteering

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

“Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives another except that Allah increases his honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” (Muslim)

Ramadan is also a month of giving, be that financially to charity or physically in service to others. Whether it's to local causes such as a food bank run by your local mosque or community centre, or supporting causes alleviating poverty abroad, giving charity does not diminish our wealth, it multiplies it.

Donating Safely – it is important to ensure your chosen charity is reputable and genuine. In addition, as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, online donation is all the more common. It is important to be vigilant of insecure websites, scams or spam emails seeking donations.

For those interested in donating online, see Muslim Charities Forum's

'How to Give Smart and Give Safe this Ramadan' guide.

If you are involved in running a charity, please see the guide to

'Ethical Considerations for Muslim Charities.'

To download both these resources, visit: www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/covid-19-resources

Volunteering Safely – Although COVID-19 restrictions have been removed this year, infection rates remain high across the UK, so it is important that we remain conscious of this whilst being of service to our communities during Ramadan. There are so many ways to help the most vulnerable around us; for top tips on staying safe whilst doing so, see the Muslim Charities Forum's 'Practical Guide on how to Keep Safe when Volunteering During the COVID-19 Crisis'.



Sharing Ramadan in Society

Use this opportunity to share your faith and your fast with your neighbours, friends and colleagues, be they Muslim or otherwise. This Ramadan, we may well open our mosques, centres and homes to the community with some precautions. We can also continue to find creative ways to share our traditions and practices with the wider community and local residents.

Here are some suggestions:

- » Let people know about Ramadan by sharing this guide
- » Put a Ramadan banner on your front door to let neighbours know you're observing Ramadan
- » Offer to help your neighbours with any shopping they need, especially those who are elderly or infirm
- » Publish Ramadan information in your neighbourhood newsletter or local newspaper
- » Encourage your children to speak to their friends about Ramadan, how they celebrate the month and what it means to them
- » Talk about what Ramadan means to you with colleagues and classmates while working or studying from home

Ramadan is a time of togetherness, so engaging others is also a chance to celebrate Islam, highlighting our peaceful religion and how we work together to worship Allah as one Community.



Advice for Mosques and Prayer Facilities

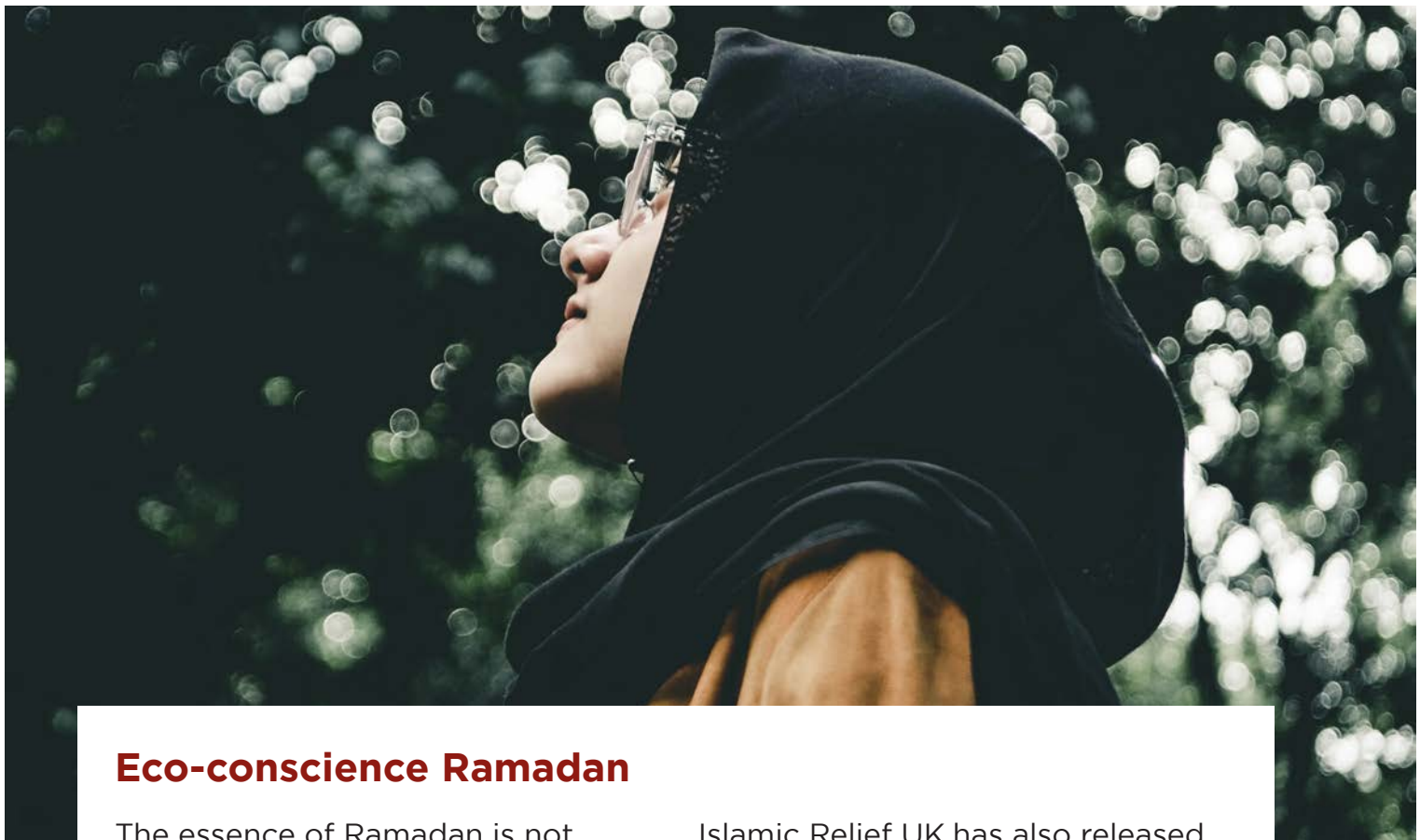
COVID-19 infection rates remain very high across the UK; we encourage Mosques to remind their congregations of the importance of being cautious when attending Iftar or taraweeh prayers. While Mosques may well return to serving iftar on their premises or as a group, they should consider continuing on the exceptional work done in providing boxed food for those who may be struggling to make ends meet or who are vulnerable within the community and in wider society.

Contact local food banks, charities and your local authority to identify where help may be required. Many centres will already have a digital infrastructure in

place, so lectures, Qur'an recitations and supplications should continue to be made available/livestreamed using Skype, Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram or other streaming software or devices, for those unable to attend Mosque. Whilst Mosques and Islamic centres are physical hubs for communities to gather, we should also strive to be virtual hubs of community learning and activism.

Many Mosques may still be implementing basic COVID-19 safety protocol; for Mosques interested in (re-) introducing such measures, MCB's COVID-19 resources, including previous safety guidance, are available at: www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus





Eco-conscience Ramadan

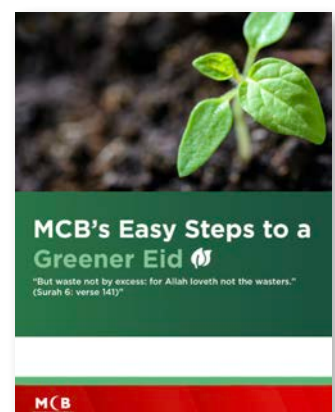
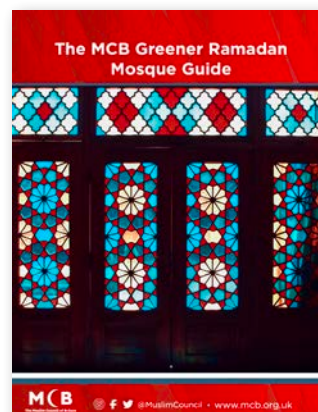
The essence of Ramadan is not simply to refrain from food/drink; as part of our pursuit of greater taqwa, we should strive to observe the holy month such that we reduce, not increase, our consumption, and preserve the bounties of our beautiful planet.

Mosques are the heart of local British Muslim communities and their observance of the holy month of Ramadan. British Muslims are set to attend their local Mosque for communal iftars and taraweeh prayers after two years of largely being unable to.

Mosques can play an integral role in promoting eco-conscious practices throughout Ramadan.

To download MCB's **'6-Step Guide to Eco-Friendly Mosques,'** visit: bit.ly/MCB-Eco-Mosque-Guide

Islamic Relief UK has also released **'11 ways to have an Eco-Ramadan'**, which includes top tips such as: going meat-free for a fortnight; waste less, save more; decorating your home eco-style; cutting your use of single use plastics; buying more fresh produce locally and switching to dairy-free where possible. For more information, visit: www.islamic-relief.org.uk/11-ways-to-have-an-eco-ramadan/



Advice for Employers

What to be aware of:

Some employees will be abstaining from food, liquids and smoking from dawn to sunset, throughout the month of Ramadan, from 23rd March (+/- 1 day), to 24th April (exact dates subject to sighting of the moon).

Muslims observing Ramadan will be fasting during daylight hours, eating one meal just before dawn (suhoor) and one meal at sunset (iftar). Muslims can eat or drink as they please through the night as needed.

Fasts will get longer as the month progresses and days get longer; lasting up to 16hrs as we approach the month of March. Depending on the weather and the length of the fast, some people who fast during Ramadan may experience mild dehydration, which can cause headaches, tiredness and a lack of concentration. For those who usually drink caffeine through tea or coffee, the lack of caffeine can bring on headaches and tiredness. However, this will reduce as the body adapts to going without caffeine during the day.

Due to the timings of meals before dawn and after sunset, adjustment to new sleeping and eating patterns may also lead to some people feeling more tired than normal.

Don't assume that all employees want to be treated differently because they are fasting, but be open to having a discussion with your employees.



Advice for Line Managers



- » Be **aware** and **open to discussing** Ramadan and what support or adjustments your employee would like. Managers may experience requests for annual leave for those observing – be prepared for people to request to take holidays towards the end of Ramadan to celebrate Eid (holiday marking the end of Ramadan).
- » **Be accommodating** over annual leave requests particularly as the majority of Christian holidays are national holidays. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced a useful decision-making tool to help employers deal with requests for time off for religious reasons.
- » **Allow for flexible working** and adjusting working hours (i.e. an early start, working through lunch and an early finish) during this period, if requested
- » Allow workers to **have regular breaks** for afternoon prayers as needed (Dhuhr and Asr) if requested - this is especially important for Muslims observing Ramadan to be able to pray their daily prayers on time.
- » If not already available in your workplace, **we encourage a prayer space** or quiet space be considered for those working on-site and wishing to do their daily prayers.

Simple tips for employers and line managers to consider for Muslim staff during the month of Ramadan

1- Understanding about Ramadan

If you will be supervising staff who will be fasting during Ramadan then a basic understanding of Ramadan and fasting in this month can help identify how you may be able to support staff if needed.

2- Understanding some terminology used during Ramadan

Some of these terminology include Ramadan Mubarak which means Blessed Ramadan. Ramadan Kareem which means Generous Ramadan. Eid Mubarak which means Blessed Eid. Offering Muslim staff one of the above Ramadan greetings can be a nice gesture too.

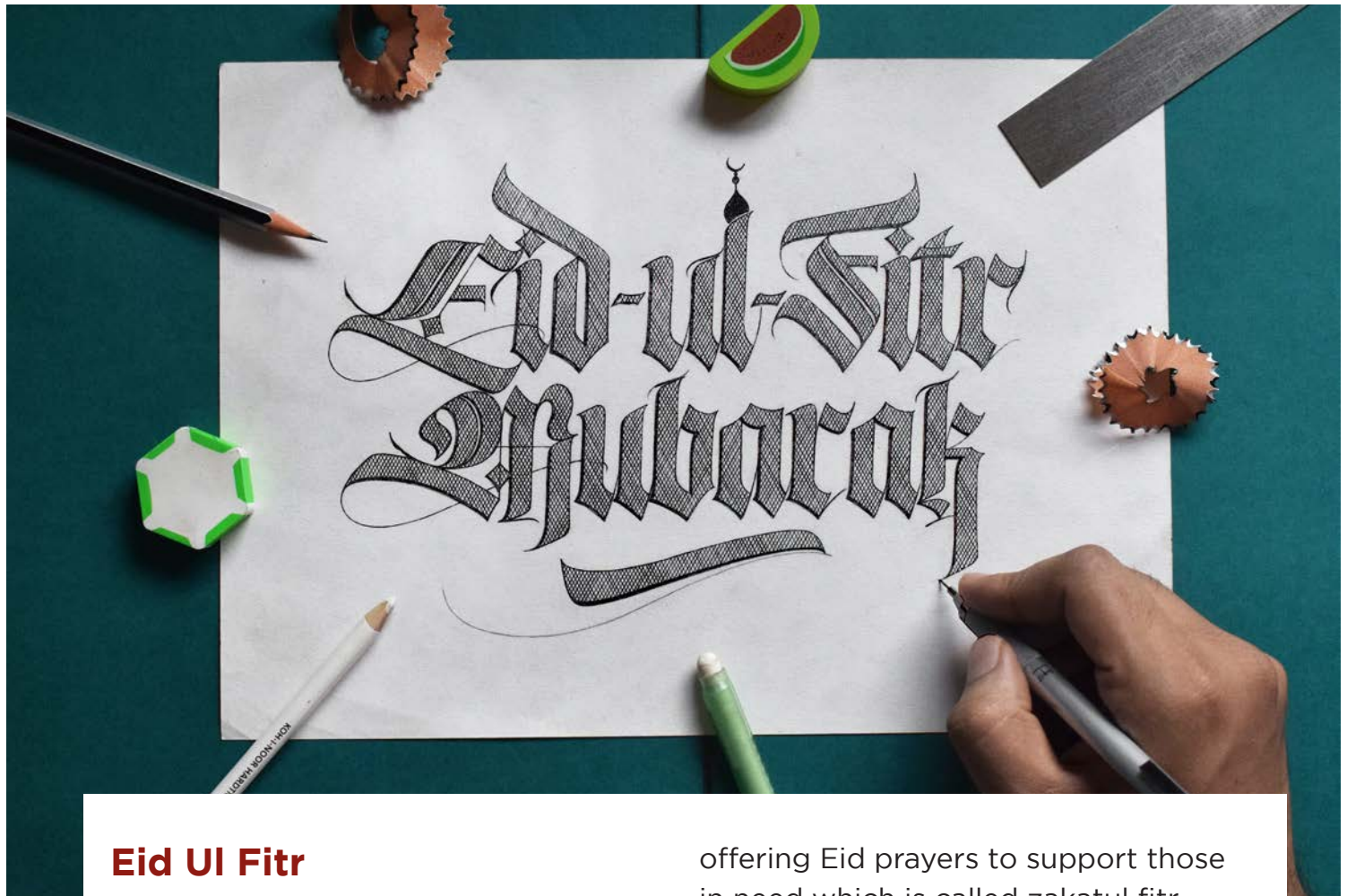
3- Flexibility

Consider some work flexibility and being inclusive for those who are fasting and this may require some adjustments at work in some cases. Speak to the employee in advance to ask if any support may be required. Consider meeting times and review with employee if can be adjusted if needed at any stage including role of work.

4- Speaking about Ramadan

Some Muslims may not fast and some may not require any help and this would be something to consider too.





Eid Ul Fitr

Eid ul Fitr is the festival after the month of Ramadan when this blessed month comes to an end. It is a religious holiday for Muslims that takes place during the first three days of the tenth month of the Islamic calendar in the month called **Shawwal**. It is one of two festivals Muslims celebrate in the year. It allows families to come together and take part in this celebration. The exact date of Eid Ul Fitr can vary and depends on moon sighting.

What happened on the first day of Eid ul Fitr

Muslims will generally visit the Mosque for Eid prayers in the morning on the first day of Eid. They will offer prayers and express gratitude to Allah whilst reflecting on the blessings of this month of Ramadan. They will ensure they have paid a small charity before

offering Eid prayers to support those in need which is called zakatul fitr. Fasting is prohibited during the day of Eid ul fitr.

Following the Eid prayers Muslims will traditionally meet one another offering the greeting of Eid Mubarak which means Blessed Festival. During the Eid celebrations people will wear new clothes and visit family and friends and exchange gifts.





Simple tips for employers and line managers to consider for Muslim staff at the time of Eid Ul Fitr

1. Understanding about Eid Ul Fitr

Understand the festival of Eid Ul Fitr and it's relationship to Ramadan. This is a celebration usually celebrated the day after the month of Ramadan ends. It depends on the sighting of the moon.

2. Taking time off on the day of Eid

Sometimes Eid may take place on different days for different Muslim communities and it may mean some Muslims take off one day and some another day. It would be important to consider this can happen and display some flexibility if staff request a day off work as part of their leave entitlement.

3. Planning Eid day work schedule

If possible it would be worth not holding or scheduling meetings on the day of Eid ul fitr which may involve attendance by Muslim employees where this is possible to allow them to celebrate Eid ul fitr.

4. Eid greetings

Sometimes a simple offering of Eid Mubarak which is a greeting on the day of Eid is a nice gesture if offered to Muslims celebrating Eid.

5. Speaking about Eid

Some Muslims may not take time off Eid for one reason or the other and it would be worth bearing this in mind when discussing or considering a day off for Eid for Muslim staff.

As part of the Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in the NHS, a project of the MCB, a Ramadan Health Factsheet has been produced in conjunction with BIMA to provide NHS frontline staff with key information about Ramadan, who is exempt from fasting and how best to support patients during Ramadan.

mcb.org.uk/ramadan

BIMA has produced a wealth of resources for Muslims and the medical community to provide expert advice and guidance on issues pertaining to Ramadan.

For more information, visit
britishima.org/ramadan

If you have any medical queries regarding Ramadan, contact ramadan@britishima.org.

MCB's Guide to Ramadan 2023

This guidance was developed by the Muslim Council of Britain - information is accurate as of March 2023.

Feedback is welcome, please email:
admin@mcb.org.uk

Media Enquiries
media@mcb.org.uk

Keep up to date with the work of the MCB by joining the mailing list, visit:
mcb.org.uk/get-involved

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About the MCB

Founded in 1997, the Muslim Council of Britain is the UK's largest and most diverse Muslim umbrella body with over 500 members including mosques, charities, and professional networks. We are an independent, democratic and cross-sectarian organisation, with core funding from membership fees and donations from Muslim communities.

Our Mission: Empowering Muslim communities towards achieving a just, cohesive and successful British society.

Help expand our work by becoming a friend of MCB at:
www.mcb.org.uk/friends