

BCOM



BOLTON COUNCIL OF MOSQUES

INFORMATION and GUIDANCE ON RAMADHAN 10/11th August 2010 – 9/10th September 2010

INTRODUCTION

This guide provides staff and managers with information regarding the Muslim month of Ramadan. Fasting during this month is one of the 5 pillars of Islam. Further details about the five pillars can be found on page 4.

1. WHAT IS RAMADAN ?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar during which **every adult, sane, healthy Muslim is obliged to fast from dawn until sunset**. Muslims consider Ramadan to be the most blessed month of the Islamic year. In this month the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) received the first revelation of the Quran through the Angel Gabriel.

Fasting, in various different forms, is a practice common to many faiths, including Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. **The Islamic practice is to abstain from all food, drink, chewing gum, any kind of tobacco use, conjugal relations and smoking** from dawn until sunset.

However, that is merely the physical component of the fast; the **spiritual aspects include refraining from gossiping, lying, slandering and other traits of bad character**. All obscene and irreligious sights and sounds are to be avoided. Purity of thought and action is paramount.

Not all Muslims will fast. People who are ill, travelling, taking medication, pregnant or menstruating are all exempt from fasting. However, they should make up an equal number of days missed at a later date or pay a fixed amount to feed poor people. The mentally impaired (who are unaccountable for their deeds) are also exempt from the duty of fasting but no compensation or other substitute is enjoined on them. Others may not be fasting for other personal reasons.

The fast is an exacting act of deeply personal worship in which Muslims seek a **raised level of God-consciousness**. The act of fasting redirects the heart away from worldly activities, towards The Divine. Other benefits include:

- developing empathy for the hardship and suffering of the poor;
- developing patience, moderation, self-discipline and self-restraint;
- cleansing the body and mind of impurities.

When starting the daily fast Muslims usually wake up before dawn to eat a light breakfast, i.e. to start their fast and say 'Fajr' (dawn) prayers. They are then expected to carry out their daily business as normally as possible, by going to work, looking after their children, doing the household chores etc.

Many Muslims follow the practice of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and break their fast with dates and water at sunset. This is followed by 'Maghrib' (sunset) prayers and then a main meal is usually shared.

Many Muslims will also attend additional congregational prayers during Ramadan, known as '**Tarawih**'. These are performed in congregation after the 'Isha' (night) prayer and last for approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. During the course of the month the whole of the Quran is recited. It comprises 114 chapters and has been divided into 30 equal parts. Normally one part per night is recited.

The holiest night of Ramadan is **Lailat Al-Qadr (the Night of Decree or Power)**. It is believed that God first sent down the Quran on this night. Many Muslims will try to spend the whole of this night in prayer and worship. It occurs on one of the odd nights during the last ten days of Ramadan. The precise night is not known, but many scholars are of the opinion that this night is possibly the 27th (i.e. the night following the 26th of Ramadan).

Every Muslim is obligated to pay a portion of his or her wealth for the benefit of the poor and needy. This is generally done within this month; Zakat means "purification" and "growth". Our possessions are purified by setting aside a portion for those in need. This also increases social welfare and encourages economic growth.

A Muslim may also donate more as an act of Sadaqah (voluntary charity), in order to achieve additional reward from Allah.

The end of Ramadan is celebrated with a three day festival, known as **Eid-al Fitr**. Muslims are encouraged to visit the mosque to offer special congregational prayers on the first morning of Eid-al Fitr to give thanks for the blessings they have received from Allah (the Arabic word for God). They will usually dress up, share celebratory meals with friends and give gifts. The traditional greeting is 'Eid Mubarak'. Like the start of Ramadan, the end of the fast is dependent on the sighting of the moon by a reliable source.

It is **compulsory** for Muslims to fast in Ramadan but there are other optional fasts throughout the year that Muslim colleagues may observe. Some may also make up obligatory fasts missed during Ramadan at a later date.

2. WHEN WILL RAMADAN START?

The Islamic calendar is lunar and each of the 12 months is either 29 or 30 days. **In 2010 Ramadan is due to start on the 11th or 12th August.** The festival of Eid-al Fitr, which marks the **end of Ramadan, will therefore be held around 9th or 10th September**, depending on when the new moon is sighted.

The start of Ramadan is usually determined the day before the first fast when the new moon has been sighted. Muslims usually telephone the Imam at their local mosque for confirmation, or family or friends who have already found out will tell them.

On the first day of Ramadan, **11th August 2010, the fast will begin at 03.48am and be broken at 8.50pm.** The length of the fast will gradually decrease over the month as the days get shorter. It will begin at **4.47am and be broken at 7.48pm on 9th September**, which is likely to be the last day of Ramadan. A timetable can be found at the end of this guide.

The lunar calendar is approximately 10/11 days shorter than the solar calendar and therefore Ramadan will start around 1st / 2nd August in 2011, and the festival of Eid will be on approximately 9th /10th September 2010.

3. FLEXIBILITY AND RAMADAN

A key consideration for managers and colleagues is flexibility over the Ramadan period. The most likely need Muslim staff may present to managers during this period is for flexibility around working hours and break times as those fasting will have a slightly different routine from usual. Managers and Muslim staff should discuss what their needs are and be responsive and sensitive.

Some staff may prefer Ramadan to be a time of personal spiritual reflection and commitment and do not want this to be made public through discussion with anyone. This should be respected.

4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE FOR MANAGERS?

- Muslim staff who are fasting and whose work environment allows it may wish to **set out for work earlier than usual and finish their working day correspondingly early**. This is in line with flexi time arrangements, leave and family friendly policies.
- **Where possible try to accommodate prayer and fasting times** when arranging meetings, training courses, assessment centres, interviews and other formalised structured activities. It is good practice to consult with Muslim staff involved and to ensure water is available and/or accessible to enable the fast to be broken at the prescribed time.
- **Muslim staff working evening shifts may need to break their fast at work; they should be given a few minutes to do this**. It is very important and a religious duty that every attempt is made to break the fast at the right time. This can be done with a glass of water.
- **Some Muslims may wish to pray more actively during Ramadan** and therefore take additional or longer breaks, particularly on a Friday, the holiest day of the Islamic week. Individuals should discuss their particular requirements with their line manager and come to a mutual agreement about the time they will spend away from their desk in prayer. Requests should be considered sympathetically and in confidence, taking into account business needs.
- Where **prayer space** is not routinely available, managers may wish to consider providing a temporary space for the duration of Ramadan. From an Islamic perspective, such a space needs only to be clean, quiet and free from religious symbols or images representing human or animal forms. Where possible, facilities to perform the ablution should also be considered.
- Some care and sensitivity should be exercised when allocating workloads and setting deadlines. Staff will possibly be at their optimum levels earlier in the day, when energy levels may be higher.
- At lunchtimes, do remember that Muslim staff fasting may still wish to take a break, even if just to get some fresh air or to avoid tempting food smells!
- **It is important not to assume that all Muslims will be fasting**. There may be individuals who do not want to fast for various reasons, others may be exempt.
- Staff will often want to take **annual leave during Ramadan**, such as in the last ten days, following Lailat-al Qadr or to celebrate Eid. Managers should endeavour to accommodate the needs of staff who may wish to take annual leave in Ramadan because of its spiritual aspect and the chance of communal prayers. Staff may wish to negotiate more loosely than normal due to the uncertainty about exact dates before the new moon for Ramadan is sighted.
- Others may wish to take a few hours off in the morning to offer **Eid prayers** in congregation at their local mosque and then return back to work. Often mosques will offer several prayer sessions in the morning of Eid to accommodate the large numbers of worshippers.
- **The most important advice for Managers is to talk to staff who are intending to fast. This resolves many issues, can help understanding and mitigate any risks**. All staff who take time off, have to make up the time or take annual or unpaid leave in consultation with their line manager.

Friday prayers take longer than the regular daily prayers; they must be performed in congregation and are accompanied with a short compulsory sermon. All men are obliged to attend; it is optional for women.

5. WHAT SHOULD MUSLIM STAFF DO?

- **Take personal responsibility** for ensuring that neither business needs nor your own needs are unnecessarily jeopardised. Engage in dialogue as early as possible with your line manager to ensure flexibility on both sides. It is a two-way process.

- **You should come to a mutual agreement with your line manager about time you wish to spend in prayer.** As prayer is a personal matter, if you take time to pray outside of usual break times, e.g. lunch hour, this will need to be made up later.
- When requesting days off for religious observance, give your manager as much notice as possible, even if only an estimation of the dates can be provided prior to the sighting of the new moon. special leave may not be granted for the celebration of religious festivals and this may apply to all faiths. You should use annual or flexi leave, or a combination of both. You must have sufficient holiday entitlement in hand.
- If attending interviews, training courses or other events, take time to notify people of your needs.
- Ensure you have the necessary access to food to open your fast.

6. NON-MUSLIM STAFF

- In general, this is a time for staff and managers to gain some knowledge and insight into the Muslim faith. It is also an opportunity to promote better understanding between staff.
- In practical terms, it could be deemed insensitive when eating lunch in front of those observing fast and make it more challenging to observe the fast. This will vary from person to person and will obviously depend on the food!
- Perhaps you may also wish to have a go at fasting for a day yourself? This could increase understanding and empathy for colleagues who are fasting.

7. THE FIVE PILLARS (ACTIONS) OF ISLAM

- ASHAHADAH (Faith):** A profession of faith marking a person's formal entry into Islam, by believing and saying the words "there is no God worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is his final messenger".
- SALAT (Prayer):** There are five obligatory daily prayers. They are a direct link between the worshipper and God. All Muslims should pray in a clean area and face Makkah. Prayers are said before sunrise, at noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and at nightfall.
- ZAKAT (Charity):** One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to Allah and therefore any wealth is held by human beings in trust. Zakat is the compulsory giving of 2.5% of one's excess wealth each year to benefit the poor. It is regarded as a type of worship and of self-purification.
- SAWM (Fasting):** Refraining from food and drink between dawn and sunset during the month of Ramadan.
- HAJJ (Pilgrimage):** The annual pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia is an obligation once in a lifetime for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. It provides an opportunity for Muslims from around the world to meet one another, and demonstrate unity and equality in Islam.

8. COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

At the start of Ramadhan and throughout the month, the mosque communities will see an increase of worshippers attending the mosques. Young and the old will embark at early hours of the morning for the Fajr prayers which in 2010 will start from 3.50am to the late evening additional prayers that will start at 10.00pm and last for 1 ½ hours with possibly some additional programmes thereafter.

Congregations of different young males around the Mosque community will be more visible as well as cars and traffic especially on the 1st, 27th, 29th and Eid day. We would recommend that the local Neighbourhood Managers/officers from the council, police and other organisations try to understand

the local community and the timings and possible cause of disruption the influx of worshippers may create within the Mosque Community.

The best approach of resolving any problems or concerns that is put forward in relation to Carparking, anti-social behaviour and perceived anti – social behaviour, noise, and other community raised matters is to communicate with the local community Mosque management. Bolton Council of Mosques would support to facilitate any discussions and would welcome any organisation or individuals to contact us.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the Bolton Council of Mosques :

T: 01204 363680

Email : info@thebcom.org

Website : www.thebcom.org

FASTING TIMES

A timetable for fasting is shown below. Please note that times of sunrise and sunset will vary by a few minutes around the country. The times shown below are for Bolton.

August	Ramadan	Fast Starts	Fast Ends
11 th August 10	1	3.48am	8.50pm
12 th August 10	2	3.50am	8.48pm
13 th August 10	3	3.52am	8.46pm
14 th August 10	4	3.55am	8.44pm
15 th August 10	5	3.56am	8.41pm
16 th August 10	6	3.58am	8.39pm
17 th August 10	7	4.00am	8.37pm
18 th August 10	8	4.03am	8.35pm
19 th August 10	9	4.04am	8.33pm
20 th August 10	10	4.07am	8.30pm
21 st August 10	11	4.09am	8.28pm
22 nd August 10	12	4.11am	8.26pm
23 rd August 10	13	4.13am	8.24pm
24 th August 10	14	4.14am	8.21pm
25 th August 10	15	4.15am	8.19pm
26 th August 10	16	4.16am	8.17pm
27 th August 10	17	4.17am	8.14pm
28 th August 10	18	4.18am	8.12pm
29 th August 10	19	4.19am	8.10pm
30 th August 10	20	4.20am	8.07pm
31 st August 10	21	4.21am	8.05pm
1 st September 10	22	4.21am	8.05pm
2 nd September 10	23	4.23am	8.03pm
3 rd September 10	24	4.26am	8.00pm
4 th September 10	25	4.28am	7.58pm
5 th September 10	26	4.30am	7.55pm
6 th September 10	27	4:33am	7.53pm
7 th September 10	28	4:35am	7.41pm
8 th September 10	29	4:37am	7.46pm
9 th September 10	30	4:39am	

* Start and end of Ramadan subject to new moon sighting