



Covid-19 Community Support Guidance during Ramadan

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar year. It is a month of fasting, a duty upon all adults and healthy Muslims. In the UK, Ramadan will start on Thursday 23 April 2020 but is dependent on the sighting of the new moon. The fast lasts between dawn and sunset. It is a total fast with complete abstinence from all food and drink.

What happens when Ramadan ends?

The end of Ramadan, which lasts for 29 or 30 days, is marked by the festival of Eid-UI-Fitr for which some Muslim volunteers will wish to take leave from activities. The actual day that Eid falls on will depend on when the new moon is sighted and for this reason, it might not be possible for the person to be very specific about the day they would like to be away from supporting your efforts and therefore some flexibility may be necessary.

Not everyone observes Ramadan in exactly the same way, but there are some commonalities. For most, Ramadan is more about prayer, reading the Qur'an, and performing acts of charity than merely about forgoing food and drink. Key observances include:

- Refrain from eating or drinking (even water) daily from sunrise to sunset, (approximately 15.5 hours a day). Many Muslims will consider it an obligatory duty to fast from dawn to dusk. Through not eating, people are encouraged to think of the less fortunate who are often without food.
- Wake up early for 'Suhoor'; to eat a power meal before fasting begins at sunrise (around 3.00am).
- Celebrate 'Iftar', the breaking of the fast at sundown. This is often celebrated by gathering with family, friends and neighbours for large feasts and will be impacted by restrictions as a result of the current pandemic.
- Give money, food and time to charity and people in need.
- Reflect, pray, and read verses of the Quran, and under usual circumstances visit the mosque to worship as a community.

Impact of Covid-19:

Supporting communication needs:

Good communication with diverse groups and use of appropriate interpretation is more important than ever now when communication is difficult by the necessary use of PPE. The need for social distancing may also mean that family members who normally support communication where English is not a first language are now unable to do so.



Impact of wearing PPE on volunteers observing Ramadan:

The potential need to wear increased levels of PPE when attending activities or supporting members of the community will cause all volunteers to feel higher levels of exertion, heat and discomfort, and as such, there is an increased risk of dehydration as a result. Volunteers who are fasting as well as their group leaders will need to be aware of the additional risk to their wellbeing. For many Muslims, Ramadan also provides a sense of community and wellbeing. Current social distancing measures and closures of mosques mean this will be very restricted and will add to anxiety and stress that many are already feeling as a result of the pandemic.

Things to consider:

Group Leaders need to be aware of the importance of 'being part of' Ramadan. This could lead to placing a different demand on services in areas where there are high-density ethnic minority Muslim populations. Group Leaders may also need to consider the impact of Ramadan on volunteering levels and exploring ways to accommodate Muslim volunteers' needs.

Other considerations which should take into account include:

- People may be more tired and lack energy due to the lack of food and water, and broken sleep patterns. Consider agile/ flexible working or changing shift rotas to accommodate tiredness.
- Support people to break the fast where possible at the required time.
- Supporting time off to pray, especially at sunset.
- Supporting breaks at different times, if possible - for example lunch break at dusk, initially to coincide with breaking the fast.
- Consider providing a designated space for prayer and reflection, during the current pandemic this could be even more important to volunteer wellbeing.
- Be aware that due to different schools of thought you may also find that Muslim volunteers may not all begin fasting or celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr on the same day.