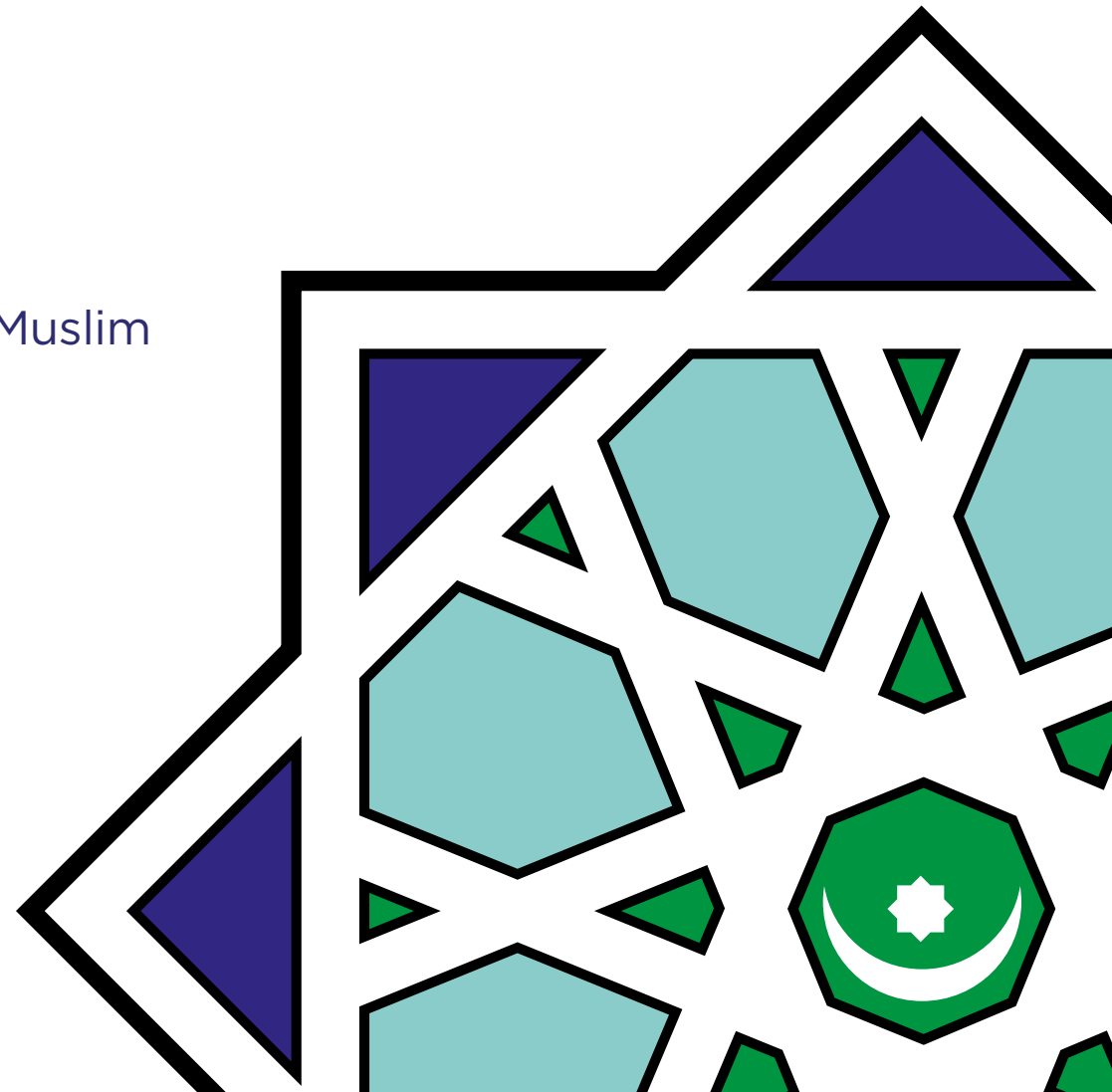


Policing guidance for the Islamic month of Ramadan

Guidance from the National Association of Muslim
Police (NAMP)



What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The month of Ramadan is based on the lunar calendar. This means that each year, Ramadan is approximately 10 days earlier than it was the previous year. The start and end of the month is determined by the sighting of the new moon, which means that the exact start and end dates can only be estimated, until the new moon is sighted. The month of Ramadan has no fewer than 29 days and no more than 30 days. The exact start and end date will vary depending on location and community.

Ramadan is a very special and blessed month that contains innumerable virtues and rewards for Muslims. Muslims believe that during this month, the holy Quran (Islamic holy book) was revealed from the heavens and the first verses were revealed to the prophet of Allah, Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is believed that during this month, the reward for righteous actions is considerably increased.

In accordance with Islam, all Muslims (subject to certain exemptions) are required to fast during this month. The act of fasting means refraining from eating, drinking and marital relations from dawn until sunset.

Ramadan is also a time for inner reflection, devotion to Allah (God) and self-control. The aim is to be a model human being during this month, with the intention that the good behaviours will become habits for life.

Ramadan is followed by a period of celebration known as **Eid-ul-Fitr**. This celebration requires that Muslims perform an additional morning congregational prayer in the mosque. This day may differ by a day or two, depending on the Muslim community. Charity is also given during this period and special donations are made to the poor.



What do Muslims do in Ramadan?

In Ramadan, Muslims will fast from dawn to sunset. This period varies in accordance with daylight hours, depending upon which month and season Ramadan falls within. In summer months, this period can be as long as 20 hours, whereas in winter months it can be as short as 10 hours.

Certain Muslims are exempt from fasting, such as children (under the age of puberty), those who are ill or have certain disabilities, travellers, women who are pregnant, and nursing mothers during the post-natal period and during menstruation.

Irrespective of what month it is, Muslims are required to pray five times a day at prescribed times. However, there are extra prayers in the month of Ramadan (after the last prayer of the day), which can last up to two hours. These additional prayers are called **Taraweeh**. It is preferable to perform these prayers in congregation.

Special emphasis is placed on the recitation of the Quran and other forms of spiritual prayers, in addition to the obligatory prayers. Individuals often spend time in seclusion for spiritual gains, away from the routine of daily life. This seclusion is referred to as **Itikaaf** and most commonly takes place in the last 10 days of Ramadan. Muslims will seclude themselves within their houses and mosques, and do not leave these premises once this obligation is undertaken, unless under exceptional circumstances.

It is important to appreciate that for Muslims, Ramadan is a very special opportunity to purify one's own mind, body and soul. Through good actions and worship, Muslims strive to attain higher levels of spirituality and subsequent reward.

The act of fasting can have an impact on sleeping patterns. Sleep deprivation is also a significant factor in conjunction

to abstaining from food and drink. This cycle then repeats itself for the duration of this month.

Iftar is the name of the evening meal that marks the end of their fasting day. Muslims will often have this meal in a congregation with others who are fasting. It is traditional to break fast with water and dates prior to the main meal. It is common practice for Muslims to invite friends and family over to their home to break fast or to attend an iftar at a mosque or community centre.



Organisational recommendations

The points mentioned below are guidelines for consideration and recommendations to promote trust and confidence within the Muslim community.

Recommendations for police custody

- Custody officers should ask the Muslim detainee if they are fasting and observing Ramadan. It is important to understand their requirements, as everyone will have different needs.
- Halal food should be available to Muslim detainees. The quantity should be sufficient so that the detainee is able to keep the fast if they choose to do so.
- Custody officers should be familiar with the start and end times of the fast, to ensure that meal times are in accordance with these times. Local mosques have printed prayer timetables and timetables are also available online. Liaise with your local association of Muslim police (AMP) for further information.
- Custody officers could consider allowing alternative meal arrangements for Muslim detainees, such as from family or friends.
- Fasting would not be a valid reason to be excused from an interview. However, the inevitable effects of not eating, not drinking and limited sleep should be considered for the purposes of evidence gathering. Each case will need to be reviewed on its individual merits. The credibility of evidence secured during interview of a Muslim detainee or witness will no doubt be tested at some point by defence lawyers within the courts. Therefore, it is important that informed decisions and reasonable steps are taken when dealing with persons in custody who are fasting. Where possible, the interview times should not coincide with start and end times of the fast. Consideration should be afforded for 30 minutes to be granted at the beginning and end times of the fast before interviews.
- Custody officers should ascertain whether the detainees wish to perform their daily prayers and, where practicable, should make the necessary provisions. Such provisions may include the following.
 - A change of clothing.
 - A place to perform ablutions (for example, access to a toilet and running water).
 - A clean and quiet room.
 - A prayer mat (a clean cloth, towel or blanket will suffice).

- An indication of the direction towards Mecca (south-east from the UK, can be determined by a compass). It would be best practice for custody blocks to have a permanent marker to show the relevant direction.
- Access to a prayer timetable.
- Detainees may wish to have access to the holy Quran, which can be provided. There are very strict guidelines relating to the handling and keeping of a Quran. Every precaution should be taken to ensure that the strict criteria of handling and storage are adhered to, so as to minimise any risk of any disrespect or offence being caused.

Recommendations for searches and warrants

Prayer and fasting times should be taken into consideration when planning searches of Muslim homes, mosques and Islamic establishments. As previously highlighted, these times are particularly important and busy. For example, during Ramadan, Muslim households will be up and awake before dawn to prepare for the day's fast. This may seem unusual in other months but is common practice in the fasting month. The fast opening and closing periods last approximately an hour, while ordinary prayer times (five daily prayers) last about 15 minutes each. Muslim men and women may attend the mosque for prayers at these times.

Staff responsible for conducting such searches should make themselves familiar with fasting and five daily prayer times, in order to make informed decisions about the execution times for these warrants. These times can be found on printed timetables from local mosques or from Muslim colleagues who would be able to furnish these timetables. There may be slight variation (minutes rather than hours) in these fasting and prayer times depending on the geographical location.

Guidance for managers and Muslim personnel

During Ramadan, many officers and staff may be observing a fast throughout daylight hours. Some Muslims may also continue to fast after Ramadan.

Fasting impacts upon individuals in different ways. It is therefore important for the organisation and managers not to make any assumptions about any impact and to deal with each Muslim member of staff as an individual.

Recommendations for Muslim personnel

- Muslim officers and staff should notify their line managers at the earliest opportunity regarding any annual leave or workplace adjustments, to ensure they provide sufficient time to allow abstraction matters to be addressed.

Recommendations for managers

- Managers to familiarise themselves with this Ramadan guidance document and the NAMP prayer provisions guidance, so that informed decisions can be made and the religious needs of Muslims are understood.
- Wherever possible, promotion boards and interviews should be arranged outside of Ramadan, as many Muslims may have taken the time off work or may not be able to perform to their full potential during this month.
- Managers and colleagues may see a noticeable behavioural change in some individuals, which may be a natural consequence of the spirit of Ramadan. Muslim officers and staff may choose to observe periods of silence during the fast to emphasise self-discipline and respect, not to mention the physical impact and energy drain that fasting naturally brings.
- Managers should hold one-to-one meetings with Muslim officers and staff who have an intention to fast during Ramadan to discuss workplace adjustments.

One-to-one meetings

During these meetings, managers should consider the following.

- Annual leave requests to be considered during this month. This is particularly important during the last 10 days, known as Itikaaf. Muslims may want this time off for special seclusion, meditation and self-reflection. Annual leave for Eid celebrations at the end of Ramadan should be looked upon favourably, as this is an extremely important time for Muslims.
- Flexible working needs during this month.
- Rearrangement of refreshment breaks to coincide with fasting opening and closing times for operational staff.
- Consider allowing frontline staff who are working during suhur or iftar to attend the local mosque to open or close fast during duty time. This will allow officers time for refreshments, while also being excellent community engagement for the force.
- Any training courses that would have an adverse impact on Muslim staff, such as public order training, personal safety training (PST) and fitness tests.
- If the line manager and staff member are unable to agree a workable solution, then the local AMP should be contacted for advice on a way forward. The local AMP may be able to recommend alternative solutions or to help manage expectations of staff members.

Key considerations

Every reasonable effort should be made to accommodate the above. All alternative avenues should be exhausted before such requests are denied. Denial on the grounds of shortage of personnel without exploring alternative solutions to address abstractions issues would not be appropriate in isolation.

The best method is forward planning. However, an alternative consideration could be to identify other personnel who are not fasting and are able to offer a mutual 'trade-off' that would benefit all parties.



Recommendations for community engagement

Muslim communities

Due to the raised profile of this month over others, there should be extra vigilance of information and intelligence of threats towards Muslim communities. Key locations or premises that see a high concentration of Muslims are perceived by certain Muslims as an opportunity for hostile groups to target them. The Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand and mosque attacks in the UK have resulted in the feeling of vulnerability becoming a feeling of real threat for many Muslims.

It is usual to see groups of teenagers and young Muslim men standing on the street after finishing their Taraweeh prayer in the early hours of the morning (before dawn) engaged in general conversation. It is common for them to be awaiting their time to eat and observe fast for the next day. This may seem out of the ordinary and may be deemed as anti-social

behaviour. Officers will need to take this into consideration when conducting stop checks, and may use this as an opportunity to engage and better community relations.



Mosques

All mosques experience increased attendance in the month of Ramadan.

Policing units need to be familiar with locations of the local mosques. Some mosques are recognisable by their domes and minarets. However, there are many other mosques that appear as ordinary dwelling houses.

Muslims are encouraged to attend the mosque for congregational prayers for their daily five prayers, Muslims are encouraged to attend the mosque for congregational prayers for their daily five prayers, Friday prayers, and the additional prayer (Taraweeh) during the fasting month. Unfortunately, many mosques have very limited car parking facilities that cannot cater for the increased attendance, so there will inevitably be parking problems and general congestion.

Residents living near mosques may experience increased levels of traffic and noise during the month of Ramadan and Friday prayers in general.

Dialogue and liaison with local mosque committee members and local residents groups to explore ways of addressing these issues may prove useful and assist in building better community relations. Mosques are generally very happy to relay messages to the congregation in order to secure their cooperation.

Recommendations for senior officers

In addition to the previous recommendations, there are other considerations that senior officers could support to increase inclusivity and create a greater sense of belonging.

- Consider an Eid celebration video or message on social media and via internal communications. This could also include some of the initiatives that took place during Ramadan.
- Consider supporting the flying of the local AMP flag or a flag with Eid salutations to mark the end of Ramadan.
- Iftar events at mosques and community centres are often open for the police to attend, irrespective whether you are Muslim or not. This is an ideal opportunity to engage with the Muslim community and build good relationships. Details of these type of local events can be identified via your local AMP.

Benefits of the recommendations

- Clear demonstration of inclusivity by forces, delivering against their equality, diversity and inclusion strategies.
- Provides Muslim personnel with a greater sense of belonging, which supports retention.
- A proactive approach by police commanders will build trust and confidence within the Muslim community.
- Helps to improve community cohesion through meaningful engagement with local Muslim groups and mosques. This can assist to break down barriers and combat anti-Muslim hatred, perceived or otherwise.
- Positive impact on attraction to the police service.



About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

college.police.uk



Follow us
[@CollegeofPolice](https://twitter.com/CollegeofPolice)

C8410322

© College of Policing (2022)

About the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP)

NAMP was established to create a stronger network for Muslim officers and staff to address inequality and unfairness within the police service. It is a constituted body that includes police officers of all ranks, police staff, police community support officers and special constables. NAMP's aims include promoting understanding and awareness of Islam, supporting learning and development for its members and strengthening community cohesion.

muslim.police.uk



Follow NAMP
[@Official_NAMP](https://twitter.com/Official_NAMP)

