



Ramadan Mubarak



It's what we do



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Creating an inclusive culture starts with all of us role modelling inclusive behaviours and bringing 'endless inclusion' to life.

This means being culturally aware and curious of our colleagues' differences. This is the reason we've created this toolkit to help get your conversations started for Ramadan, and support our Muslim colleagues.

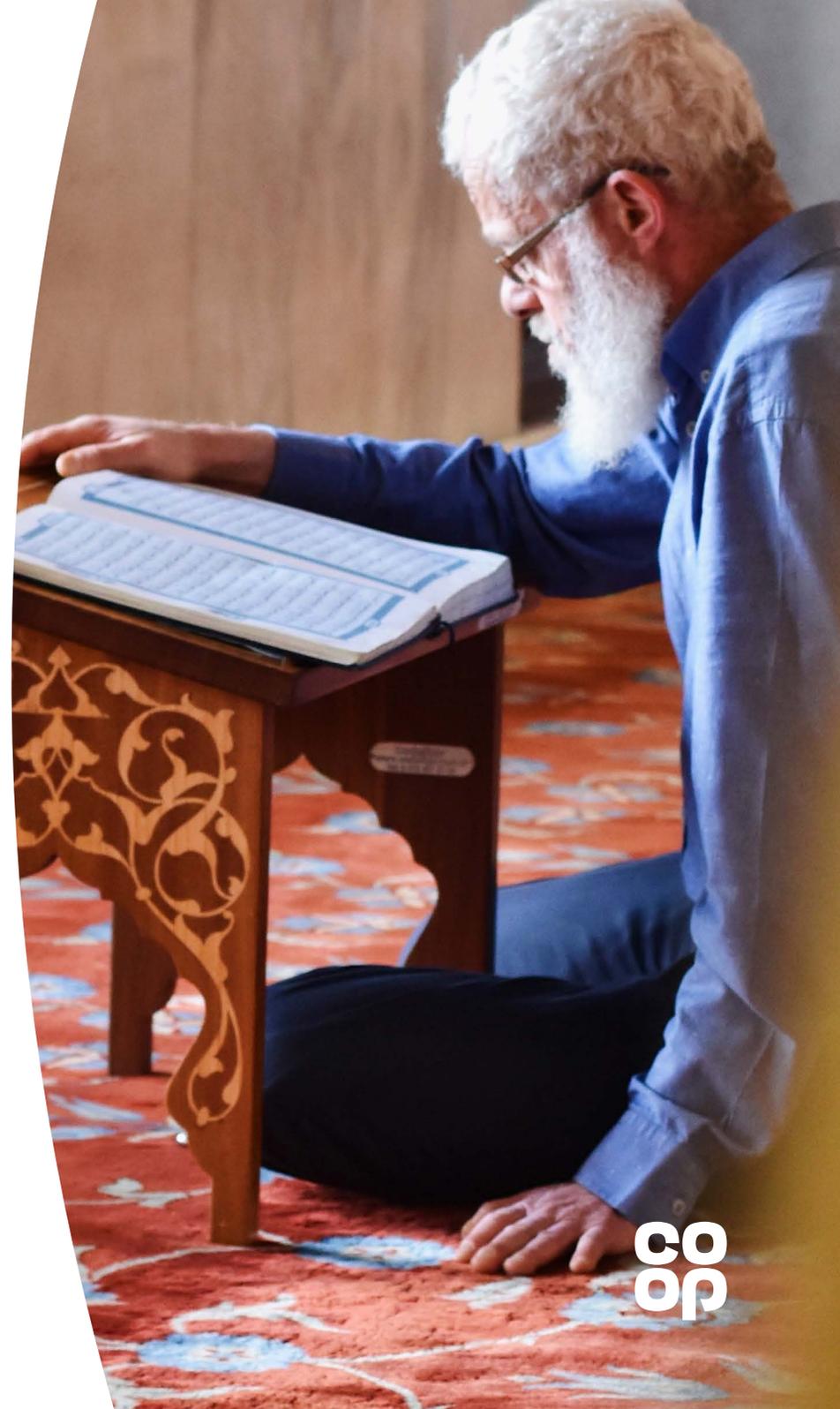
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What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is considered to be one of the holiest months of the year for Muslims, as it is the month the Qur'an (holy book) was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and emphasises the importance of spiritual devotion to Allah (God).

Around 4 million people in the UK mark the month of Ramadan, and it lasts on average 30 days, based on the Lunar calendar. It's also one of the 5 pillars of Islam along with faith, prayer, charity and pilgrimage to Mecca.



Key Dates 2021

Ramadan follows the lunar cycle and does not line up with the Gregorian calendar.

As a result there is no hard start or finish date and it tends to move forward by approximately 2 weeks every year.

The start date of Ramadan and Eid depend on whether the new crescent moon is seen the night before.

Expected dates for 2021 (+/- 1 day):

- ★ **12th April** - Ramadan begins
- ★ **13th May** - Eid al-Fitr



Understanding Ramadan

What happens during the month of Ramadan?

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast, by not eating food or drinking water, during daylight hours and pray at regular intervals as a means of learning self-control, gratitude, and compassion for those less fortunate.

It's a month of intense spiritual rejuvenation during which Muslims spend extra time re-reading the Qur'an, performing special prayers, fasting and doing good deeds or charitable work. Their main focus is on fasting, praying and reflecting on how to refine themselves to become a better Muslim or worshipper.



Understanding Ramadan

Fasting

Depending on the time of year in the UK, the daily fast can sometimes last over 19 hours, making hydration, fatigue and lower levels of concentration very likely - especially significant since Ramadan falls in normal working days.

Those unable to fast, such as pregnant or nursing women, the sick, or elderly people and children, are exempt from fasting.

Fasting is a way for a person to feel connected with millions of poor and hungry people around the world who fast without a choice.

As a result, Muslims often feel more motivated to give charity and help those who are in need.



What is Eid al-Fitr?

At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate one of their major holidays, called Eid al-Fitr, or the “Festival of the Breaking of the Fast”. **In 2021 this is expected to be on May 13th.**

A special prayer and sermon are held the morning of Eid day, followed by a community celebration, usually in a park or large hall. Food, games and presents for children are important parts of the festivities, as friends and family spend the day socialising, eating and reuniting with friends.

There is another similar celebration, called Eid al-Adha, which is expected to be on July 20th this year and coincides with the annual Hajj pilgrimage.



Supporting our colleagues

There are three key areas where we can help to best support our Muslim colleagues during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Focuses on the **key practical considerations** that employers and managers need to be aware of when managing employees who observe Ramadan.

Focuses on the **implications of fasting**, wellbeing, and the combination of working remotely for long hours on employee productivity.

Focuses on how leaders can proactively **promote greater awareness** to foster religious inclusivity in the workplace.



Key practical considerations

What can managers/leaders do to support their teams?



Have open conversations with your team letting them know that you're aware that Ramadan is approaching, and encouraging people to come to you for a chat or if they need any adjustments. Reasonable adjustments to consider would be:

- **Discuss whether more flexible work / shift patterns would be of help.** Colleagues observing Ramadan may find this useful for two reasons:
 - Firstly, to avoid working either late evenings/early mornings, as some may find that having to eat, attend family/community commitments, or being tired due to fasting, mean that either early morning or late evening working is harder during Ramadan.
 - Secondly, to allow colleagues observing Ramadan more time to pray. Muslims pray up to 5 times a day and each prayer can last between 15 and 20 minutes.
- **Flexibility of work within working hours should also be considered.** Colleagues observing Ramadan may not feel they need changes to hours/shifts but may appreciate support if working late, such as moving break times to ensure they can break fast, or moving 9am meetings during Ramadan. Ultimately speak to colleagues observing Ramadan to see what support they might need and appreciate.
- **Consider providing a temporary space for prayer and facilities for ablution (washing).** Discuss with your colleagues where they would feel comfortable and where might be appropriate to set up the space.

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Key practical considerations continued

What can managers/leaders do to support their teams?



- **Support holiday requests so colleagues can take days off during Ramadan and/or for Eid al-Fitr if they wish.**

There are a number of reasons outlined below why colleagues might like to take time off during this period.

The earlier you have these conversations, the better prepared you and your colleagues will feel.

- **The first week may be difficult** as colleagues adjust to fasting - headache, migraines or light-headedness are not uncommon. Colleagues may prefer to take annual leave during this time.
- **Some colleagues may prefer to take a midweek day off** to break up their working week and take some time for rest.
- Weeks of fasting can take its toll and cause fatigue, so **some colleagues may prefer to take annual leave during the last 10 days of Ramadan;** others prefer to take this time off for additional worship that takes place during the early hours of the morning.

- **Colleagues may want to book 2 to 3 days off due to the fact Eid al-Fitr is dependent on the sighting of the new moon crescent.** Therefore there will be uncertainty about the exact date of Eid al-Fitr and uncertainty about the exact days they need off.

If you have a number of colleagues requesting similar days off work, then ask your teams if they can support this by flexing their hours or working days, as you would do at any other popular time for holiday requests. For store colleagues, this might mean advertising hours on the 'SHIFTS' app or reaching out to local branches/stores for support.

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Implications of fasting

What are the implications of fasting, wellbeing, and the combination of working remotely for long hours on employee productivity?



Working hours

Try to plan work activities around the needs of fasting colleagues where possible. This may mean reorganising workloads to allow reduced hours and extra breaks during Ramadan. Key tasks and meetings are best scheduled for the morning when colleagues may find it easier to concentrate, with routine tasks later in the day.

Be mindful that colleagues who are fasting will likely be more tired than usual, especially in the afternoons, and need more frequent breaks.

Medical support

Making suitable arrangements for first aid or medical assistance in case of emergencies is advised, as is adequate supervision of all employees, avoiding lone working.

Fatigue and dehydration

Colleagues are encouraged to tell their managers if they are fasting, so that their manager can support them, such as adjusting their breaks and workload, or taking time off for additional prayer or worship.

It is important to be able to identify the warning signs of fatigue and dehydration. Fasting can affect people in different ways, such as irritability or lack of energy, so speak to your colleagues to identify what to look out for. Encourage colleagues to take rests and breaks if tired or dizzy.



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Promoting greater awareness

How can leaders proactively promote greater awareness to foster religious inclusivity in the workplace?



Islam is a faith that welcomes people of all races and backgrounds, so don't make assumptions about who in your team may be observing Ramadan or not.

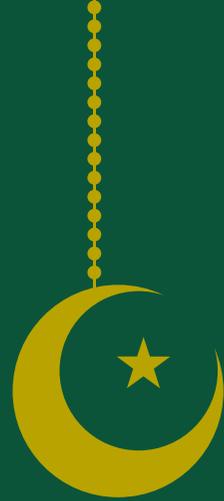
It's also worth being aware that not all Muslims will fast, and those who do may not do so every day. Colleagues who are fasting will not expect others who are not observing Ramadan to do the same.

Don't feel anxious about making a cup of tea or eating your lunch but do be mindful and courteous - for instance, don't offer a brew or any food being shared round the team to colleagues who are fasting.

If your colleagues are working remotely, take the opportunity to check-in on their well-being and offer a Ramadan or Eid al-Fitr greeting.

This a great opportunity to share this toolkit with those who aren't observing Ramadan so that they can support their colleagues, our communities and customers.





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