

Ramadan (fasting) Guide for HAF Providers

HAF@portsmouthcc.gov.uk



About this Guide

The Guide has been produced to provide useful information on the area of Ramadan for activity providers in Portsmouth. The Guide can be used as a reference by staff to aid their planning and preparation of activities during the month of Ramadan. The aim of the guide is to empower staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to improve Muslim children & young people's engagement with the HAF Fun Pompey programme so that they are supported appropriately.

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What is Islam?

The word Islam means voluntary 'Submission' to the Will of God. It derives from the root word 'salam' meaning peace. Muslims believe in one God, in Arabic known as 'Allah'. Muslims believe Allah is the creator of everything and has created mankind to worship him in this world by following his commands.

Why do Muslims fast

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims won't eat or drink during the hours of daylight. This is called **fasting**. Children are not expected to fast until they reach puberty, usually around the age of 14. However, some children start to practise from early as 10 years of age.

Ramadan remembers the month the **Qur'an** (the Muslim holy book) was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The actual night that the Qur'an was revealed is a night known as **Lailut ul-Qadr** ('The Night of Power').

When is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The exact dates of Ramadan change every year. This is because Islam uses a calendar based on the cycles of the Moon.

In 2022 in the UK, Ramadan will begin in the evening of **Saturday 2 April** and will end on **Sunday 1 May**.

Fasting in Islam

- Fasting is obligatory for all Muslims.
- The objective of fasting is to become more God Conscious i.e., more conscious of the fact that God is watching everything we do and will judge with His complete knowledge and wisdom.
- The objective is to become a more caring person in relation to responsibilities.

The result of a month of fasting during daylight hours should be that a person should be more mindful of what they do and how they use their time on this earth.

Ramadan facts

- Fourth Pillar of Islam (5 Pillars: Testimony, Prayer, Charity, Fasting, and Pilgrimage).

- 9th Month of the Islamic Lunar Calendar.
- An act of worship of spiritual, moral, and social significance.
- Obligatory for males and females to fast once they attain puberty.
- Fasting: Refraining from food, drink, smoking and sexual relations between dawn & sunset.
- Exemptions: Illness, medical condition, travelling, menstruation. (Fasts missed need to be made up at a later date.)
- Ramadan begins 10 or 11 days earlier each year on the Gregorian calendar; hence it takes Ramadan about 33 years to move through the seasons from Jan to Dec.

A Typical Day for a Fasting Person

- Wake up in the morning & have breakfast before the sun rises, also known as pre-dawn meal (Suhoor in Arabic).
- The fast would last from dawn to sunset with no eating or drinking during that time.
- At sunset, families prepare the evening meal together (known as iftar), offer prayers and eat together.
- The fast is broken by eating a date and it is recommended that iftar consists of slow burning, nutritious food that will help keep energy levels up during the day and high water content fruit to keep hydrated.

What invalidates a fast?

- Intentional eating, drinking or sexual intercourse.
- Self-induced vomiting.
- If a female starts her menstruation while fasting.

What does NOT invalidate a Fast?

- Unintentional eating or drinking.
- Using an inhaler for health purposes e.g., asthma.
- A little bit of bleeding from a minor accident.
- Giving a bit of blood for testing. (Not a large amount).
- Using eye drops.
- Tasting food while cooking, out of necessity but it should not go beyond the throat. (Not eating, but simply checking for taste).
- Swallowing your own saliva.

How should fasting Impact People

- Focus on additional acts of worship and God-consciousness.
- Improve themselves in their dealing with others, including their character, respect for others, kindness, and forgiveness.
- Avoid all types of unhelpful comments and bad language and poor behaviour.
- Avoid all types of backbiting, name calling or bullying.
- Make use of their spare time during break and lunch to pray, recite Quran, reflect etc.
- Become more charitable and generous.
- Train themselves to become more self-aware and increase their self-control.
- Develop empathy with the poor, donating to charity and sharing food when opening fast.
- Develop their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural aspects and sense of community.
- Teaches self-awareness and self-control.
- Builds empathy with the less fortunate sections of society.
- Detoxes the body and gives the major organs a rest.
- Promotes greater mental clarity, focus and inner resolve.
- Leads to a feeling of lightness and increased energy levels.
- Promotes inner calm and enhances spiritual connection.
- Breaks from 'routine' in eating and emotional patterns.

Strategies to support

- Have the guide available for easy reference so you can easily look up something you need.
- Be familiar with the facts about Ramadan.
- Share what you have learnt with children, young people and their families, so they know that you are aware.
- Encourage children & young people to remain focused as Ramadan offers more reward.
- Link activities to this period of increased self-awareness and self-improvement.
- Offer alternative activities or resting times during the lunch period.
- Offer activities that are easier and less stressful.
- Encourage children & young people to have a balanced meal at suhoor (pre-dawn)
- Encourage them to try their best because it will be all worth it in the end; the pros outweigh the cons.
- Do not have activities that involve a lot of running around such as football and basketball. Alternative and less-strenuous physical activity could be offered such as walking, gentle jogs, light aerobic workouts in short bursts.

Primary school-aged children

It is imperative that staff are made aware of fasting children to safeguard them against health risks. Although you may wish to make suitable arrangements to support children who are fasting, it is equally important that children realise that Ramadan is not an opportunity to try to gain special individual rights within a setting. It is common practice for Muslim children to begin fasting before they attain puberty to become progressively accustomed to the obligation. Although fasting for the entire month does not become obligatory until the age of puberty, most children aged 10 and 11 (years 5 & 6) are likely to fast the entire month. Children who are very enthusiastic may be encouraged by their parents to fast only on certain days of the week, especially the weekends. It is also important to be aware that young children are more likely to fast when Ramadan falls in the winter months, when the days are shorter, and the climate is cooler. The younger the children, the more difficult it tends to be for them to fast without their physical stamina and concentration levels being affected.

Some effects of fasting include sleepiness, mood swings and headaches. Whether a child decides to fast or not is a matter to be decided between the parent and child. Children should not be encouraged to break their fast early unless it is for health and safety reasons. The overriding consideration should be that the children do not feel disadvantaged in activities because of their religious observance. On the other hand, if a fasting child exhibits health concerns, we have an overriding safeguarding duty of taking action to enable the child to have the best outcome. Strong relationships and a direct link with parents are encouraged to express any concerns as they arise and share responsibility of choices.

Secondary school-aged young people

Fasting is obligatory for Muslim young people and the only dispensation are those who are ill or girls who may be menstruating. Families will normally make their own decision on such issues affecting their children. A sensitive approach may be required while asking young people whether they are fasting or not as it may be embarrassing especially for female pupils in their periods. You may however need to know which pupils are fasting or not through liaising with parents and carers to offer guidance on the best way to avoid dehydration, eating nutritious food, getting appropriate rest periods, etc. You also may wish to provide a quiet room where they are able to pray or rest in between activities.

Medication

Anyone needing regular medication would normally be exempt from fasting. No oral medication should be taken during fasting. Inhalers e.g., for asthma are permissible. In an emergency, the wellbeing of the child/young person should come first, and medicine should be given if a medical professional deems it necessary.

Day of Celebration / Festival for Muslims

- Eid-ul-Fitr (festival of breaking the fast) marks the end of Ramadan.
- At this time Muslims thank Allah for the help and strength given to be able to fast and do good. It is also a time to ask Allah for reward and forgiveness.
- Zakat (charity) is given prior to Eid so it reaches the less fortunate in time for Eid. Approx. £5 per person in the household is offered to families in need and this tends to be sent to third world countries through contacts or charities.
- Eid begins with the sighting of the new moon. There is a special congregational prayer after sunrise, in mosques or parks.
- Muslims dress in their finest clothes, exchange gifts and visit family and friends.

Developed from resources by:

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[What is Ramadan? - BBC Bitesize](#)