



NAMP Police Guidance for the Islamic month of Ramadhan

This document is only a guide for Police personnel and is designed to provide an overview and guidance to support Police forces with understanding of fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan and making informed staffing/ operational decisions. It is no way exhaustive and only serves as a guidance document for internal use.

What is Ramadhan?

Ramadhan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. This year 2020, it is anticipated that Ramadhan will start on approximately on 24th April and finish on 23rd May subject to the sighting of the moon.

The month of Ramadhan is based on the lunar calendar. This means that Ramadhan moves forward by about 10 days in relation to the Gregorian calendar, each 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 Ramadhan has no less than 29 days and no more than 30.

Ramadhan is a very special and blessed month which contains innumerable virtues and rewards for Muslims. Muslims believe that it was during this month the holy Qur'an (Islamic holy book) was revealed from the heavens and the first verses revealed on 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.

During this month all Muslims (subject to certain exemptions) are required to fast. Fasting means, refraining from eating, drinking and marital relations from dawn until dusk.



Ramadhan 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, hoping that the good behaviours will become habits for life.



Ramadhan 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 and special donations are made to the poor.

What Muslims do in Ramadhan?

During this month Muslims will fast from dawn to sunset. This period varies in accordance with daylight hours depending upon which month/season Ramadhan falls within. During the summer months fasts can be as long as 18/19 hours.

Certain Muslims are exempt from fasting – i.e. children (under the age of puberty), the sick, 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 in the month of Ramadhan there are extra prayers (after the last prayer of the day) which last about 2 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 Ramadhan. Muslims will seclude themselves within the houses and mosques and are not permitted to leave these premises once this obligation is undertaken unless under exceptional circumstances.



It is important to appreciate that for Muslims, Ramadhan is a very special opportunity to purify their minds, body and soul. Through good actions and worship, Muslims strive to attain higher levels of spirituality and subsequent reward.

During the summer period the fasting day can be over 18 hours long. The below is a breakdown of a typical routine for a Muslim fasting during the summer months. This is for illustration purposes only and not an absolute guide.

Time (guideline only)	Activity
2:00am – 3:00 am	Fast preparation, early morning eating and drinking.
3:00 am – 4:30am	Early morning prayers.
4:30am – 7:00am	Some will choose to sleep after closing the fast.
7:00am	Get up for work.
1:30pm	Afternoon prayers.
6:00pm	Return home from work.
8:00pm	Late afternoon prayer.
9:30pm – 9:45pm	Fast opens and early evening prayer.
10:00pm – 10:30pm	Eat, drink and relax.
11:30pm – 12.45am	Evening and Taraweeh prayers.
1:00am	Return home from evening prayers.
1:00am – 2:00am	Some may choose to sleep where as others may engage in additional prayers.
2:00am – 3:00am	Cycle repeats again.

It can clearly be seen from the above breakdown that with only having 3-4 hrs sleep every night, sleep deprivation is also a significant factor in conjunction to abstaining from food/drink. This cycle then repeats itself for the duration of this month. The illustration changes dramatically for the winter months.

Organisational implications

Muslim detainees in Police Custody

The below mentioned points are guidelines for consideration and recommendations to promote/maintain good race relations and public confidence:

- Custody officers need to ascertain if the Muslim detainee is fasting.
- Halaal food should be available to Muslim detainees. The quantity should be sufficient so that detained persons are 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).
- Custody officers should consider allowing alternative meal arrangements for Muslim detainees. (e.g. from family or friends)
- Fasting would not be a valid reason to be excused from an interview. However the inevitable effects of not eating, drinking and limited sleep should be borne in mind 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/s or witnesses will no doubt be tested at some point by defence lawyers within the courts. Therefore it is important 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 an hour to be granted at the beginning and end times of the fast before interviews.

- Custody officers should ascertain if the detainees wish to perform their daily prayers and where practicable make the necessary provisions.
- Such provisions may include the following:
 1. Toilet facilities must include access to running water for personal hygiene.
 2. A change of clothing.
 3. A place to perform his/her ablutions (e.g. access to a toilet and washbasin).
 4. A clean and quite room.
 5. A prayer mat (e.g. clean cloth/towel/blanket will suffice).
 6. An indication of the direction towards Mecca (South-East from the UK, can be determined by a compass). It would be best practise for Custody Blocks to have a permanent marker to show the relevant direction.
 7. Access to a prayer time-table
 8. Detainees may wish to have access to the holy Quran that can be provided by family/friends. There are very strict guidelines relating to the handling & keeping of a Quran. Every precaution should be taken to ensure the strict criteria of handling and storage is adhered to so as to minimise any risk of any disrespect or offence being caused.

Searches & Warrants

Fasting and prayer times should be taken into consideration when planning searches of Muslim homes, mosques and Islamic establishments. As has been highlighted, these times are particularly important and busy. For example during Ramadhan, 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 whilst ordinary prayer times (five daily prayers) last about 15 minutes each. Muslims men and women will attend the mosque for prayers at these times (for details of prayer times please see AMP/Local mosque websites).



In cases where men are absent from their homes and only females occupants remain, some women may refuse entry until their male family/relative members return. It is important for officers to understand this is based on religious/cultural practise rather than deliberate obstruction to policing activity.

Staff responsible for conducting such searches should make themselves familiar with fasting and the 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 Muslim colleagues who would be able to provide these. There may be slight variations (minutes rather than hours) in these fasting & prayer times depending on the geographical location.

Organisational Guidance for Muslim Police Officers and Staff

During Ramadhan many officers and staff may be observing a fast throughout daylight hours.

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 deal with each Muslim member of staff as an individual.

General Considerations

- Managers to familiarise themselves with the generic Ramadhan awareness document so that informed decisions can be made and the religious needs of Muslim staff are understood.
- Wherever possible promotion boards and interviews should be arranged outside of Ramadhan as many Muslims may have taken the time off work or may not be able to perform to their full potential during this month.

- Access to quiet/prayer rooms and ablution facilities.
- Managers and colleagues may see a noticeable behavioural change in some individuals, which must not be seen in a negative light. This is a natural consequence of the spirit of Ramadhan. Muslim officers and staff may choose to observe periods of silence during the fast to emphasise self-discipline/respect not to mention the physical impact and energy drain that fasting naturally brings.

The below is a step by step guide for managers to consider/follow:

Step 1

Managers to identify Muslim staff who have an intention to fast during Ramadhan and hold one to one meetings with them. It would be preferable to have such conversations as early as possible to allow for abstraction matters to be addressed.



Step 2

During these meetings managers should consider the following:

- Annual leave requests to be considered favourably during this month.
- Annual leave request for the last 10 days of “Itikaaf”. Muslim staff may want this time off for special seclusion, meditation and self-reflection.
- Flexible working needs during this month.
- Annual leave/Time off for Eid celebrations.
- Rearrangement of refreshment breaks to coincide with fasting opening and closing times for operational staff.
- Any training courses that would have adverse impact on Muslim staff i.e. Public order training, PST training etc.

Key note

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

The best method is forward planning but alternative considerations could be to identify other Muslim staff (who do not intend to observe fasts) to support their fasting colleagues or identification of other staff who would like flexibility during this month so that a mutual “trade off” can be arranged.



Muslim Communities & Mosques

Mosques

All mosques experience increased attendance in the month of Ramadhan.

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.



As Muslims are encouraged to attend the mosque for congregational prayers for their daily five prayers, Friday prayers and in the fasting month the additional prayer mentioned earlier “**Taraweeh**”, there will inevitably be parking problems and general congestion. Unfortunately many mosques have very limited car-parking facilities which cannot cater for the increased attendance.

Residents living near mosques may experience increased levels of traffic and noise during the month of Ramadhan and Friday prayers in general. However it is more than likely that the resident make up around mosques is predominantly Muslim and therefore may not give rise to any complaints. Where the demographics majority may not be Muslim then police are encouraged to work closely with mosques to jointly manage traffic issues and any resulting community tensions. Police should exhaust all other forms of intervention before exercising any enforcement measures otherwise this could potentially increase community tension.

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.

Muslim communities

Due to the raised profile of this month over others, a Community impact assessment of the Muslim communities, prior to the month of Ramadhan is appropriate. Key locations or premises that see a high concentration of Muslims is perceived by certain Muslims as an opportunity for hostile groups (far right – **EDL, Britain First**) to target them. The recent events in New Zealand and mosque attacks in Birmingham (March 2019) have taken the feeling of vulnerability into a feeling of real threat for many Muslims.



A pro-active approach by the Police Commanders will build trust and confidence. Meaningful consultation with local Muslim groups/mosques will assist to combat “**Islamophobia**” perceived or otherwise.

It is also not unusual to see groups of 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. They would be basically awaiting their time to eat and observe fast for the next day. This may seem out of the ordinary and may be deemed as ASB. Therefore officers will need to take this into consideration when conducting stop checks etc. and may use this as an opportunity to engage and improve community relations.