

SUPPORTING MUSLIM COLLEAGUES DURING RAMADAN

Ramadan is a month-long Muslim observance which this year begins on the evening of Thursday 23 April and ends at sunset Saturday 23 May, and during which most Muslims fast from dawn until dusk. Employers are not required to make adjustments or arrangements for employees or volunteers who are fasting during Ramadan or other holidays when people of specific religious groups are required to fast, but considerate employers will try to do so.

For example an employer might consider allowing, where it is reasonable to do so, several short breaks during the day rather than an extended lunch hour; allowing flexible hours so workers' arrival or departure times can suit the periods of fasting; providing a quiet area for prayer or rest; and trying not to require fasting workers to attend lunch meetings or evening events. Arrangements such as this should be discussed with fasting workers, rather than assuming this is what they want, and/or employers should make clear to workers that they can ask for such arrangements.

The articles below have practical suggestions for providing a pleasant and supportive working environment for Muslim colleagues. Many of the suggestions are also relevant to arrangements for service users. These articles are all from last year, as I have not yet seen any this year specifically for employers. Obviously this year the guidance will have to be adapted for staff working from home.

- **Ramadan at work: HR best practice.** HRZone, 2 May 2019.
<https://tinyurl.com/ycti9yvo>
- **Supporting Muslim colleagues during Ramadan.** Trades Union Congress, 3 May 2019.
<https://tinyurl.com/y9a588un>
- **Ramadan.** Acas, 2019. (If Acas updates this, it will probably have the same link.)
<https://tinyurl.com/y7yrhxkl>
- **7 things you should avoid saying to a fasting co-worker during Ramadan.** Business Insider, 8 May 2019.
<https://tinyurl.com/y8nkmckk>

The articles below are not intended specifically for employers, but will help anyone understand how coronavirus will affect Ramadan observance this year. The first article, from an English-language publication in the United Arab Emirates, says that the UK, The article also says that this year, people experiencing Covid-19 symptoms are likely to be exempt from the obligation to fast, as are other people who are ill and women who are pregnant or menstruating.

- **Ramadan 2020: Everything you need to know about the holy month in the UAE.** *The National*, United Arab Emirates, 16 April 2020. The UAE's social distancing rules seem to be similar to the UK's.
<https://tinyurl.com/yan4v2ad>.
- **Zoom iftar launched to unite millions during Ramadan coronavirus lockdown.** *The National*, UAE, 10 April 2020. The Ramadan Tent Project, which holds cross-community iftars (the meal to break the fast after sunset each day) and events bringing together political leaders and people of all faiths, will be hosting a virtual iftar through Zoom and streamed live on Facebook instead. Previous open iftars have been held at Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square and Wembley Stadium.

<https://tinyurl.com/rwxp6pb>.

- ***Ramadan 2020: How technology can help community element of holy month.*** *The Mail*, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, 17 April 2020.
<https://tinyurl.com/ybfhpolc>
- ***Ramadan 2020 hit by coronavirus: How holy month of fasting will have to change.*** *Birmingham Live*, Birmingham, 7 April 2020.
<https://tinyurl.com/y8rwaj6n>

Happy Ramadan / Ramadan Mubarak!

Stay safe, stay well, be kind,
Sandy

Sandy Adirondack

[Governance and legal information for voluntary organisations]