



## Your quick guide to Ramadan for employers

Ramadan is a period of religious observance in which Muslims fast from dawn until sunset. In Britain's increasingly multicultural workplaces, knowing how to support employees observing Ramadan is essential. This guide provides a few helpful tips.

### Explain Ramadan to all of your staff

It's worth making all of your employees aware of what Ramadan is, how long it lasts and what it entails. Clearly, a Muslim employee wouldn't demand that a non-Muslim employee stops eating in front of them. But some awareness will encourage everyone to behave sensitively.

### Talk to your Muslim employees

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this challenge.

Ramadan is a physically and emotionally testing period for Muslims, and the consequences on individuals can vary. So communicate with each individual and see what they need from you to remain as happy and productive as possible.

### Be flexible where possible

Obviously the hours of certain jobs are rigid. But if you have a Muslim employee who would benefit from some flexibility over their working hours, it's worth considering.

Productivity is a key problem during Ramadan, and being flexible may actually improve productivity. Additionally, being malleable during Ramadan will build a great deal of trust between you and your employee.

### Create a policy on religious observance

Having a clear policy in place on what allowances can be made during periods of religious observance is a good idea.

Firstly, it will ensure that employees and their managers know exactly what is possible and expected. But secondly, it's a good way of ensuring that one particular religious observance is not favoured over another – which can lead to accusations of discrimination.

### Be tolerant and diplomatic

The productivity of a fasting employee may not be as high as usual – particularly towards the end of the day.

Although this may be frustrating, you have to be tolerant and diplomatic in the way you deal with it. Firstly, the relationships you have will be damaged if you're unfair or critical. And secondly, you may find yourself guilty of religious discrimination; employers have faced legal consequences in these scenarios before.

### Try to accommodate holiday requests

The end of Ramadan is marked by the Islamic holiday of Eid – the end of the fasting period.

You may well receive a high number of requests for annual leave during this period, but you must try to accommodate them. Remember that the majority of Christian holidays are catered for in the UK through bank holidays, so failure to make allowances for non-Christian holidays could be deemed discriminatory.

### **Be thoughtful about training events and conferences**

Offsite events, conferences and training sessions often involve a lot of food and drink, and this may be challenging for observers of Ramadan.

If Muslim employees are reluctant to attend these events during Ramadan, be sensitive and discuss the issue with them. Perhaps you can find a way to make the event more comfortable for them. Then again, perhaps it will be easier to allow them to not attend.

Above all, be thoughtful and respectful when these requests are made.

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