

# FAITH IN CARE: RAMADAN AND EID



## A Guide for Carers of Muslim-Heritage Children and Young People

If it's your first time looking after a Muslim child or young person during Ramadan, then it can seem like a daunting prospect, but it need not be. There's lots of information available to support you in supporting a child through Ramadan and celebrating Eid. This brief guide includes information to help social workers and foster carers in making Ramadan and Eid a memorable and positive experience for Muslim children and young people in care.

For those interested in learning more about Ramadan, a guide produced by the Muslim Council of Britain offers key information on what the holy month means for Muslims and how it is observed, whilst also providing practical guidance for maintaining physical and mental health during the month. You can view the guide here:

<https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MCB-Ramadan-Guide-2023.pdf>

It's important to note that whilst children in care are supported with adjusting to their new surroundings, their cultural and religious identities will also need realigning to their present circumstances. You can really support them here by talking to them to understand their needs, what Ramadan means to them as well as their levels of adherence. Faith may be important to your young person so you should find out more and help support them to continue to practice their faith.

For Ramadan this can include providing specific types of food at specific times, giving them information and support to attend prayers at a mosque and getting hold of a copy of the Qur'an. It is a good idea to do some research into religious customs and holidays and to ask the young person what they want or need from you in relation to their faith. Try to avoid making assumptions about the religiosity of the young person too because even though they may come from a country where most people are religious, it doesn't mean that they will be too. The spiritual journey for Muslims is a very personal one and everyone will be at different levels and stages of their faith.

## What is Ramadan and what is it's significance?

The holy month of Ramadan one of the Five Pillars of Islam and also the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and a time when many Muslims across the world fast during daylight hours for 29-30 days. The Islamic calendar is lunar and so Ramadan falls at a slightly earlier time in the year each year. Ramadan 2023 is expected to start around the 23rd of March (check with local mosques for a Ramadan timetable).

Muslims taking part in Ramadan do not eat or drink anything during daylight hours, eating one meal (the 'Suhoor' or 'Sehri') just before dawn and another (the 'Iftar') after sunset. While fasting is obligatory for all healthy Muslims (post puberty), there are exemptions for those who are ill or who's health could be affected by fasting.

Muslims celebrate Ramadan by ritually fasting for the entire month in gratitude to God for His final revelation, the Qur'an. By restricting the body's appetites during daylight hours, believers rejuvenate their spirituality, repair their religious conscience, and cultivate their devotion to God. This is the most significant objective of the fast: restoring the centrality of God in our lives and this goes far beyond the abstinence of just food and drink.

## Supporting a young person learning their faith

For many young Muslims, learning about their faith is a journey and they are constantly seeking knowledge to develop and enhance their understanding of their religion and practicing it accordingly. Ramadan and the rules pertaining to fasting can seem unfamiliar to someone outside the faith. However, for a young Muslim wishing to be more observant, they will need to learn more about their faith through books, videos or by attending classes at local mosques. You can support them by contacting your local mosque or Islamic bookshop for recommended reading materials or go online for free information pertaining to the rules ('Fiqh') of fasting.

If you are caring for pre-puberty children who are able to identify with their faith then you can introduce them to books and stories about Ramadan (search 'Ramadan books for kids') and if they are willing, support and encourage them to start 'mini' fasts of a few hours to help them feel a part of Ramadan and strengthen their Muslim identity.

## Food and dietary needs

It's important that anyone fasting has access to the right types of foods that will aid their fasting throughout the day. Eating right is just as important during this month because the body needs to maintain the right levels of energy and be sufficiently hydrated to allow for people to go about their everyday lives. To support a young person in your care with their fasting, here are a few tips:

- Find out what sorts of foods they prefer eating, this should include preferences for the Suhoor and for the Iftar
- Find out the times for the beginning of the fast and the end of the fast (find your local mosque's Ramadan timetables) and help prepare their meals for them

Whilst fasting is about abstinence, Ramadan is also a time when special foods linked to specific cultures are celebrated and eaten. You can support your child or young person by making something that they may be familiar with or foods which hold special memories. It's a great time to be daring in the kitchen and try something new so why not give these recipes a go:

- <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/healthy-ramadan-recipes>
- <https://fatimacooks.net/41-iftar-ideas-ramadan-recipes-aloo-tikki-recipe/>

## Where to purchase faith-based products for Muslim children and young people

A child or young person practicing their faith may require access to certain resources or materials to support their acts of worship. You can buy products such as prayer mats, Islamic clothing and Qur'ans from specialist Islamic bookshops and stores which tend to be located close to mosques in your local area. Much of what your young person may require can also be purchased online on sites such as Amazon so speak to your young person for guidance on what they might need. Some popular online shops include:

- <https://amsons.co/>
- <https://zamzamdirect.com/>

## Ramadan prayers and local mosques

During Ramadan there are special night prayers ('Taraweeh') which take place and can be done any time after the last of the 5 daily prayers in the evening, right up until the dawn prayer of the following morning. Whilst these are not obligatory, it is the time when Muslims believe you are closest to God, and many try extra hard to pray at night during the blessed month of Ramadan. The last ten nights of Ramadan are particularly blessed, so your young person may make extra effort or exert themselves in extra acts of worship to draw closer to God.

Support a young person in identifying their local Mosque. It is the young person's choice if they wish to attend the prayers. For information on starting/ending of Ramadan, fasting times, Taraweeh prayers and Eid prayers, you can visit the various mosque websites in your locality or contact them directly for more information or advice for what's best for your child. Use this website to find your local mosque: <https://www.nearestmosque.com/>

## Local and national community events

Ramadan is a highly social time as Muslims invite each other to break their fast together and meet for prayers at the mosque. Ramadan is also a time for community building and supporting those around you. Many mosques and local community groups host events which you can attend with your child to help develop a greater sense of identity and community. Many Muslims partake in charitable causes during Ramadan including fundraising for important local and global causes, supporting local food banks and feeding the homeless.

As a non-Muslim carer you may wish to join local initiatives where people from different backgrounds come together to support their neighbours and friends by holding the fast together and/or completing the Iftar together. Information about local initiatives can be found at your local mosque, through local Muslims or search online.

To mark 10 years, [Ramadan Tent Project](#) will be hosting open iftars across 10 UK cities. To find your closest event, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/united-kingdom--london/open-iftar/>

## Eid celebrations

Eid literally means a “festival” or “feast” in Arabic. There are two major Eids in the Islamic calendar per year – Eid al-Fitr earlier in the year and Eid al-Adha later.

**Eid al-Fitr:** Eid al-Fitr is the Islamic festival that marks the end of Ramadan and is celebrated during the first three days of Shawwal (the tenth month in the Muslim (lunar) calendar). This means that the timing of Eid al-Fitr (like Ramadan) is different every year as it is based on the lunar cycle. It does not begin until the new moon is seen, which means it starts at different times for different Muslims around the world. However, some Muslims choose to celebrate Eid al-Fitr when the new moon first appears over Mecca instead of their own locations. For confirmation of Eid dates, please contact your local mosque.

**Eid al-Adha:** Eid-al-Adha is the Islamic festival to remember the Prophet Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son to God and also marks the end of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah. The date may vary according to moon sightings in different parts of the world, but Eid-al Adha 2023 is predicted to take place on Thursday 29th June.

Some of the customs of Eid include having a wash in the morning before prayers, wearing either new clothes, or smart clean clothes, eating something sweet before attending prayers and giving gifts to children and young people. Eid festivities usually start in the morning through the offering of congregational prayers hosted in mosques or outdoor spaces. After prayers have been concluded, Muslims celebrate the rest of the day in accordance with the diverse range of cultures and traditions as reflected across the Muslim world. This is usually in the form of family/friend visits, events in local parks or community centres, days out at theme parks and other similar excursions. You can plan Eid for your child or young person by keeping up to date with events taking place in your local area by visiting your council, community group websites and speaking to your local mosque.

Attendance at school on Eid days may vary across the country depending on the preferences of the school and families. It’s important to consult a young person’s school about the guidelines around school holidays and any exemptions afforded to take the day off.

## Online resources

Detailed guide on supporting vulnerable and looked after children in Ramadan:

<http://spirebarristers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Supporting-children-during-Ramadan-May-2020-1.pdf-2.pdf>

Ramadan activities to do at home for kids:

<https://littlewingscreative.com/ramadan-for-kids-activities/>

<https://ayeina.com/free-eid-printables/>

<https://minhajwelfare.org/ramadanactivitybook/>

Listen to recitation of the Holy Qur’an: <https://quran.com/>

We hope you find this guide informative and useful. Parenting a child of a different faith and ethnicity to yourself may at times be more challenging, but equally as rewarding for you and your family. Language and cultural barriers may make it difficult for carers to access resources and services so please do seek further support and information where you can and help enhance the experience and enrichment of a child in your care. Consult reputable specialist services and organisations for information, advice and training when cultural or faith-based support is needed as they are a reliable source of information and work directly on issues relevant to Muslims.

This guidance was developed by My Foster Family and the information is accurate as of March 2023.

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Website: <https://myfosterfamily.org.uk>

