

Ramadan: A Note for Providers

What does it mean?

During the holy month of Ramadan, which occurs on the ninth month of the lunar-based Islamic calendar, all Muslims are required to abstain from food and drink from dawn to dusk for 30 days. Fasting during Ramadan means abstinence from all food and drink, including water and chewing gum, from dawn to sunset – to remind Muslims of the less fortunate, to reinforce the need to be thankful and exercise self-control.

Who is exempt?

Children who have not reached puberty, the elderly, those who are physically or mentally incapable of fasting, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and travellers are exempt. Please note that it is the accepted view of health professionals, that fasting prior to the age of eight years is not advised. However, some younger persons may also want to observe the fast in line with their friends and families, for all or part of the day or week.

What does this mean for providers?

If there are children attending provision who are partaking in Ramadan, it is important to be mindful of how this could affect their energy levels. Prolonged periods of fasting may potentially lead to reduced energy levels and difficulty concentrating which means that some children may not be as willing to engage in activities.

What can we do?

For provisions to maximise inclusivity, providers should consider how families of Muslim faith may want to keep to key routines whilst attending provision. During Ramadan, five daily prayers are carried out, including: Fajr (sunrise prayer), Dhuhr (noon prayer), Asr (afternoon prayer), Maghrib (sunset prayer), and Isha (night prayer). Indoor provision may want to consider having dedicated private spaces for children/parents/carers to prayer. Please also note before prayers, they may wish to undertake an ablution (called Wudu) which is a cleansing ritual to purify themselves before prayers, they may need access to a sink in a bathroom to do this and towel to dry themselves. Certain things break an ablution such as going to the bathroom which means they will need to re-do the ablution.

How does this affect food provision?

Some children may opt out of food provision altogether if participating in Ramadan; the same as a special dietary requirement, this should be met with understanding. As a provider, if there is prior knowledge that some children may be fasting during provision, it could be worth considering how to occupy the young person's time whilst others eat. One option could be engaging children with educational resources, ensuring that children do not feel excluded or isolated because of their faith. If multiple children are attending who are fasting, it may be necessary to assign a designated member of staff to supervise alternative arrangements whilst others eat. Where appropriate, families could be offered a takeaway meal to eat at a more suitable time, this could be a good alternative for families where food insecurity is of concern.

Please note the above is guidance only - specific advice should be sought where necessary especially with the family. Please note not all children who reach the age of puberty will necessarily fast therefore best to check with the family first.

Additional Resources

[Buckinghamshire Council - Ramadan Guidance for Schools](#)

[The British Nutrition Foundation – A Healthy Ramadan](#)

[Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics - Ramadan The Practice of Fasting](#)

[Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - Guidance for Schools on Ramadan](#)