

The Little Diversity Toolkit



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Note: This toolkit is not meant to be definitive and acts as a stepping stone to better understanding and relationships – communities and cultures change, and it can be rewarding to discover new and different aspects in the course of your work.

Introduction

We are committed to valuing diversity, promoting equality and good relations between people of different groups, communities and cultures. We are opposed to all types of unfair discrimination and we will challenge all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, prejudice, harassment and victimisation across the organisation. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination, victimisation, harassment or intimidation.

Our commitment as an employer and service provider:

As an employer we are committed to:

- Providing a safe environment for staff to feel welcome and safe at work.
- Ensuring that all customers that we interact with whether on the telephone or face to face receive the highest level of respect and dignity.
- Ensuring that our employees, contractors or consultants communicate appropriately to our customers.
- Ensuring that our employees, contractors and consultants do not treat our customers less favourably due to their protected characteristics.

- Ensuring that members of staff understand how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better services, and so reduce inequality.
- Making our organisation a fully accessible place that welcomes and respects diversity.

The purpose of this toolkit

This Toolkit has been designed to:

- Provide useful information and guidance for managers.
- Raise employee awareness about different areas of equality and diversity groups.
- Provide hints and tips for managers and staff on how we can improve the service or customers from different backgrounds and with different characteristics.
- Raise awareness of inappropriate / appropriate terms used in the area of Equality and Diversity.
- Explain terms used in the area of Equality and Diversity.

How this toolkit will assist you

This toolkit will also enable managers to be able to respond appropriately and support staff in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy by:

- Outlining how employees can use positive language and avoid potentially offensive terms and phrases.
- Providing advice on areas of good practice so that employees are well informed and able to deal with sensitive issues.
- Highlighting clearly the organisation's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Providing appropriate information that can be communicated to new starters during their period of induction.
- Providing information to help ensure that we actively engage and consult with individuals from all of the diversity groups.
- Raising awareness of dates of religious observance.
- Encouraging managers to be sensitive and aware of meeting the diverse needs of each and every individual member of their team and to discuss what improvements / adjustments may need to be made.



Equality and Diversity – So what's that then?

In the past, equal opportunities have often been described as treating everyone the same. This description of equality however, is somewhat outdated.

Today, when we talk about equality, we describe it in terms of everyone being treated differently but being treated with an equal level of respect.

Diversity is about understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences.

Put simply, equality is about fairness and diversity is the recognition of what makes us different.

The Equality Act 2010

The main piece of legislation covering equalities is the Equality Act 2010. This Act replaces most of the other legislation on equality, such as the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act.

It is vital to any business that it complies with the law and equalities legislation is no different. You must remember that you could be held liable if something goes badly wrong.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

This revised duty came into force on the 5th April 2011 as part of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Duty specifically covers;

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advancing equality of opportunity by
 - Removing disadvantage.
 - Meeting the needs of all people.
 - Encouraging all people to participate in public life.
- Fostering good relations.

There are also some specific duties which relate directly to carrying out the general duty above and these can be

found on the Equality and Human Rights Website.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

Who is covered under the Equality Act?

The short answer to that is everyone! The Act introduces us to 'Protected Characteristics' – a number of categories into which all of us fall in some way. These protected characteristics are categories of people that the law specifically covers and are the grounds (or reason) on which someone might break the law by, for example, discriminating. So what are these protected characteristics?

Gender

The term sex covers both men and women, so contrary to common belief, sex discrimination can (and does) happen to men as well!

Religion or Belief

This characteristic covers all religions including the more mainstream, (Christianity, Islam, Judaism etc.) and those with far fewer adherents i.e. Paganism and Wicca. Belief includes those whose lifestyle is, or could be, substantially affected by that belief, for instance vegans and pacifists.

Age

Includes any age, so this characteristic protects older people, young people and middle-aged people.

Disability

The act defines someone as disabled if they have long term physical or mental impairment which seriously affects their ability to carry out day to day activities. The definition does not extend to people whose ability to carry out any particular job task is impaired, unless that task is also a day to day activity.

Ethnicity

The term ethnicity is a word to describe a person or group of people based on certain factors such as nationality (Irish, Jamaican etc.), skin colour, physical features, cultural beliefs, country of origin, religions, behaviours, political standings, languages etc.

In modern times it has come to mean other things also such as a group of people who are a minority in a country that is not their historical home and keeping their ethnicity is large part of their lives.

Sexual orientation

This characteristic covers straight people, gay people and bisexual people.

Pregnancy and maternity

This characteristic covers women from the moment they know they are pregnant until 26 weeks after the birth of their child.

Marriage and civil partnership

The Act covers people who are married or in a civil partnership, but not single people, even if they are living together, unless they prove they are partners in civil law.

Transgender

This characteristic covers people who feel that they are not the same gender (= sex) as their physical body, or who does not fit easily into being either a male or a female– that is those men who are living life as a woman and vice-versa. It does not matter if the person has had any gender re-assignment surgery or not.

Standards of Behaviour

The use of discriminatory language and inappropriate behaviour can be extremely hurtful and upsetting to the recipient and in some cases is unlawful. These guidelines are designed to raise awareness on the inappropriate use of language and outline terms of acceptable language in the workplace and community.

Employees should not orally, in writing, electronically or with photos, drawings or other mediums direct bad language or insults towards any member of staff based on their characteristics or personal attributes.

Racist and sexist 'humour'

Racist and sexist 'jokes' are offensive to many people and should be avoided.

Aggressive conduct

Harassment, bullying, intimidating, threatening or abusive behaviour towards members of staff or customers will not be tolerated.

Disrespectful behaviour

Disrespectful behaviour towards an individual because of their background, colour, race, sexual orientation, gender, religion or disability or any other personal characteristics will not be tolerated.

Demonstrating Respect

This list is not meant to stereotype but to provide some useful hints and tips when dealing with or interacting with people who may not have English as their first language may be disabled, gay, and lesbian or from different religions, cultures and/or races.

General

- As a manager or employee, it is important for you to be aware of issues that may cause offence, as this could have an adverse impact on an individual's performance.
- A person's strength of feeling towards their lifestyle may vary considerably.
- Your credibility and respect will be greatly enhanced if you take the time to understand some of the customs and common courtesies linked to the various diverse groups.
- Be careful not to generalise or stereotype individuals from any of the diverse groups, as a result of what you have seen, read or experienced in the past.
- The use of inappropriate and/or incorrect terminology may lead to assumptions that you do not understand someone's needs and service expectations.
- If you are in doubt, about language or anything else in relation to equality and diversity, you should check with the individual, this will not cause offence, but show that you are handling the situation sensitively and have no hang-ups with the subject matter.
- Do not underestimate the influence of your own upbringing in the way that it may affect your perception and behaviour towards others.

Accent and language

- Take care and be patient when accent or language hinders communication.
- Be careful when using colloquialisms or terms of endearment which may cause offence e.g. my love, my dear.

Age

- It's true that, as we age, our physiology changes. These changes can lead to poor health, if not addressed. But old age doesn't have to mean feeling sick and tired.
- Some older workers may be more physically able than their younger colleagues.
- Chronological age does not determine one's health nor necessarily bring illness and disease.
- Older colleagues also have a wealth of experience and knowledge which may be helpful to others, particularly younger colleagues, if appropriately channelled into individual and team development.

Culture and Religion

- A person's commitment to their culture and or religion may vary considerably.
- Be aware that it may not be the custom in some instances for a man to be in the same room as a woman who is not related to him.

- Try to appreciate how cultural differences in body language might contribute to misunderstandings and conflict.
- Be aware that it may not be the custom in some instances to shake hands, especially with women.
- Be aware that an act of comfort such as putting your arm around a customer or colleague or other tactile behaviour may cause embarrassment or offence.
- Lack of eye contact during conversation should not be seen as disrespect. In some cases, the opposite will apply.
- Don't assume that a raised voice is necessarily a sign of aggression or loss of control.
- Knock before you enter a room - it may be a prayer room where important customs should be adhered to.
- All persons from a particular country or origin do not always have the same or identical cultural backgrounds or beliefs.
- Terms for religious groups should not be equated to certain ethnic groups, for example, not all Muslims are Asian and not all Arabs are Muslims.
- Not all Ras Tafari have dreadlocks and not everyone with dreadlocks is Ras Tafari.

Disability

- People with a disability are often described / perceived as helpless people to be pitied and cared for because people are often uncomfortable or embarrassed about disability. This is a myth.

- Not all disabilities are physical or visible when dealing with a colleague or customer.
- When a person makes a mistake at work it does not have to be because of their disability.
- A wheelchair is like a bicycle or a car, which is a personal assistive device, enabling one to get around and should not be seen as confining.
- Not all people with a hearing disability are able to lip-read. Lip-reading skills vary among people who do use them and may not be entirely reliable.
- People with disabilities go to school, get married, work, have families, do laundry, grocery shop, laugh, cry, pay taxes, get angry, have prejudices, vote, plan and dream like everyone else.
- People with disabilities can have children naturally or through adoption.
- People with disabilities, like other people, are sexual beings.
- Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help. If you would like to help someone with a disability, ask if he or she needs it before you act.

Gender

- Using the correct terminology is very important in the use of the words transsexual or transvestite (See Section on what does that mean?).
- Avoid gender segregation in the workplace by advertising social events to the entire organisation.

- Engage in a variety of events that would include various interests.
- Non-sexist language is not intended to 'de-sex' language, but to ensure a balanced and fair representation of men and women in language. Non-sexist language increases clarity in language use by removing ambiguities and increases accuracy by avoiding false assumptions about the nature and roles of women and men in society.
- It is important to recognise and avoid language that trivialises or denigrates either men or women. Members of both sexes should be treated with the same respect, dignity and seriousness.
- Avoid irrelevant references to a person's physical appearance. It should also be noted that references to a woman's/man's marital or parenting status are generally irrelevant in contexts where his/her professional role or capacity are being described.

Race

- A person has the right to define their cultural or racial background as they see appropriate.
- Avoid the use of racial and ethnic terms such as coloured, Afro-Caribbean, half caste as they are likely to cause offence. Alternatives may include Black, African-Caribbean and dual parentage respectively.
- Care should be taken not to make assumptions about the cultural or racial identity of mixed race people.

- Acknowledge that there is diversity within minority groups. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Lebanese and Pakistani people may not define themselves all as Asian.

Sexual orientation

- A gay man or lesbian woman may not feel comfortable to disclose their sexual orientation, if, how, when to do it should be left to the individual.
- Be conscious that invitations to spouses or significant others to work functions should include same sex couples.
- Do not make assumptions about a person's sexual orientation based on your interpretation of their dress, voice, interests etc.

Transgender Community

- Recognise that gender variance is not associated with sexual orientation.
- Whilst there is not an automatic link to being transgender and the gay, lesbian or bisexual community, some of the experiences around acceptance and societal stereotypes will be similar.
- Be conscious of the need for confidentiality and privacy given attitudes and pressures on individuals.

Travelling Communities

- Gypsies and Travellers are ethnic groups that share a common lifestyle and culture, which frequently involves travelling. There also exists a social group of travellers (New Travellers) that are individuals who choose to take on a nomadic lifestyle Irish Travellers. Many have settled into housing or attempt to settle on official outdoor sites. Others continue to travel mainly in caravans.
- Scottish Travellers consider themselves culturally and socially distinctive from other traveller communities.
- Circus and Fairground Community known as show people travel with their own fairground often remaining sedentary during winter.
- Romany who also refer to themselves as Gypsies and Travellers, experience prejudice and social exclusion and can struggle to access public services in health and education.



Improving Service Provision

The following should be considered when developing or allocating homes:

- Over 10% of ethnic minority families have seven or more members.
- Certain ethnic minority family groups will be more likely to include extended family members and so will require larger accommodation.
- Certain groups may prefer 2 separate rooms, one for men and the other for women (in particular when there are visitors). The second room may also be utilised as a bedroom for elderly extended family members where necessary.
- Cooking traditions of certain ethnic minority groups are dependent on access to gas.
- Muslims may prefer a property to have a porch to be available for taking shoes off.
- Certain ethnic minority groups live in congregation with other similar minorities for mutual support and security against fear of harassment.
- Certain ethnic minorities tend to move more towards developed networks of families, friends, mosques and other services e.g. halal shops etc.
- Younger generations may tend to live near the family to provide an element of support, but also want some independence.

- Ensure that non-discriminatory customer feedback and improvement suggestions are established.
- Ensure that all staff are clear about their responsibilities and the provisions of each area of legislation.
- Ensure that staff are aware of all the services available to customers who may be blind, deaf, non-English speaking or have learning difficulties.
- Front line staff to be provided with guidance to fulfil requests for alternative formats e.g. audio/CD and Braille.
- Automatically offer telephone numbers to customers accompanied by a Text phone number or information about the availability of RNID Type Talk.
- Inform customers who do not speak English as their first language about access to translation services.
- Monitor and review translation services, Text phone numbers and Type Talk services on a regular basis.
- Customers who have problems with their vision should be offered documents in large text as far as it is practically possible.
- Encourage staff to be sensitive to the needs of people who may be of a different race, colour, gender, disabled etc.
- Use plain English and avoid using technical jargon when communicating with customers.
- Ensure that tender specifications require contractors / suppliers to demonstrate compliance with Equality and Diversity.
- Ask customers whether or not our services are accessible and useful to them and use any opportunities to test new

products / services, wherever possible with a pilot group of people from a range of different diversity groups.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Definitions of refugee status

Asylum seeker	asylum claim submitted, awaiting Home Office decision
Refugee status	(Accepted as a refugee under the Geneva Convention) given leave to remain in the UK for four years and can then apply for settled status (Indefinite leave to remain, see below). Eligible for family reunion for one spouse and all children under 18 years.
Indefinite leave to remain (ILR)	Given permanent residence in Britain indefinitely. Eligible for family reunion only if able to support family without recourse to public funding.
Exceptional leave to remain (ELR)	The Home Office accepts there are strong reasons why the person should not return to the country of origin and grants the right to stay in Britain for four years.

	Expected to return if the home country situation improves. Ineligible for family reunion.
Refusal	The person has a right of appeal, within strict time limits.
Economic migrant	Someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants.

And Remember

- The belief that most asylum seekers come to Britain for welfare benefits is at odds with the fact that many are highly skilled and previously enjoyed a high standard of living.
- Refugees bring with them a wealth of skills and experience.
- Asylum seekers are too often presented as criminals, whereas in reality they are more likely to be victims of crime.

Culture

Things you might like to know

Eastern Europe

- The OK sign, of forming the thumb and forefinger into a circle is considered rude in many Eastern European countries.
- Whistling indoors in Russia including during applause is associated with financial loss.
- In some Eastern European countries, such as Latvia, it is bad luck to present even-numbered bunches of flowers.
- In previously closed Communist societies there may still be a lack of familiarity with the jargon and culture of the West.

Western Europe

- A handshake is used to greet and bid farewell. Tight but not forceful handshakes are attributed to a confident person.
- It is polite, but not compulsory to shake the hand of a woman before a man.
- In a group do not cross the handshake of other people.
- The OK sign, of forming the thumb and forefinger into a circle is considered rude in Denmark.
- In certain areas, such as Belgium, it is polite to wait until there is a space in the conversation to speak: in other areas, such as Italy, interruptions are common.

- Paid holiday on the Continent is much more than we are used to in the UK, for example, the French have five weeks of paid holiday per year and the German have six.

Middle East

- Dress is modest although younger individuals and those from major urban areas may be more westernised in their approach to dress.
- There can be difficulty in transliterating names owing to the differences between Arabic and Latin alphabets.
- Hands are shaken and in very familiar settings men will kiss on alternate cheeks or alternate sides of the neck.
- Whilst not offensive, the use of Mr should be avoided because it sounds ignorant.
- It is impolite to enquire after female acquaintances with which one is not familiar.
- Food and hospitality are an important aspect of Middle Eastern life.
- Eating with one's fingers is common. Food may be passed to another person with fingers and it would be an insult to reject such an offer. Offering food is a sign that the (personal but not necessarily business) relationship is trusted.
- Soles of the feet should not point in any one person's direction. Remove shoes if entering into a carpeted room.
- The left hand is considered unclean, and it is rude to pass anything with it.
- The thumbs-up sign is considered offensive in some of the Arabic world.

East Asia

- In Japan, the number four is considered an unlucky number, as are sets off our: the word four is pronounced in the same way as the word death in Japanese.
- Communication is non-confrontational and polite. E.g. no is considered as harsh.
- Very personal questions may be asked to gain an understanding of you and the way in which to address you.
- Hand movements and facial expressions are not used extensively, so the spoken word needs to be relied on.
- Where possible, it would be wise to approach the male head of the family rather than young or female members of the family direct.
- When addressing a Chinese person, it is respectful to address them by their title e.g. Mr Lee.
- The order of names is opposite to that of Western names, for example Chen Teng, (Chen being the family name). The order may be changed to suit western norms; however, this should be checked.

Different Settled Communities in the UK

There are some important points of contrast between some ethnic minority families and white families as well as differences between minority groups. This section provides a background on where communities originate from, the language they speak, religion(s) they follow, diet and any special events.

The UK's Black African Communities

Africa is a whole continent of 54 countries with a patchwork of tribes, languages and local customs. The current UK population of Black Africans are largely from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Somalia.

Language: Each of the different African communities has their own language (some have more than one). However, English is the dominant language used amongst each of these communities. The official languages of South Africa are English and Afrikaans. Muslim countries, predominately those in the north of Africa, speak Arabic.

Religion: The two main religions practised by the African communities in the UK are Christianity and Islam. Both have very strong links into the communities and are a reflection of the cultural traditions that bind the groups together.

Diet: Foods differ among each of the African countries, but fruit and vegetables are widely used in each of the countries, exotic game and fish is also widely used.

The UK's Caribbean Community

The UK's black community is made up of different communities originating from the Caribbean and Africa. These two communities are different by character and history.

Many second and third generation Afro-Caribbean categorise themselves as Black British, having been born in the UK and some only being connected to the Caribbean by decent and many have adopted English/British traditions. (See Black African Communities on next section).

Black Caribbean: A large number of people from the Caribbean are of Jamaican origin; however, many originate from a large number of smaller nations including:

The Leeward Islands, which are made up of The Virgin Islands, Anguilla, St. Martin.

(Guadeloupe) Saba, Saint Eustatius, Antigua, Barbuda, St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat and Dominica. The Windward Islands is the southern groups of the Lesser Antilles in the West Indies consisting of Martinique and the former British Windward.

Islands: Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago are in the region but not part of the group.

Language: Language is not an issue as English is the main language across the communities; however, some people from different Caribbean islands speak French patois.

Religion: Christianity is the main religion in this community; however, Jehovah's Witnesses and Rastafarians are other religions that attract numbers from these communities.

Diet: Most of the individual islands have their own traditional dish. However popular dishes include: root vegetables including sweet potatoes, plantain, yam, dashin, and cassava. Fish, meat and vegetables are popular in the Caribbean diet. Traditional dishes include: Roti, Ackee and salt fish, flying fish and cuckoo and oil-down.

Special Events: Caribbean Festivals and Caribbean Carnivals are an expression of each island's culture and ethnic background. Dates of festivals for each island vary.

The UK's Asian Communities

Although China is part of Asia, in this context it will be treated as a community within itself. Therefore, the Asian Category is made up of the following communities:

- Bangladeshi
- Indian
- Pakistani

The UKs Bangladeshi Community

Most Bangladeshi people in Britain come from the rural area of Sylhet in North East.

Bangladesh and have strong links back home. They are thus a very close-knit community with strong internal communication networks.

Language: Bangla is the official language of Bangladesh, sometimes referred to as Bengali. Bangla's direct ancestor is a form of Magadhi Prakrit or Middle Indo-Aryan which descended from Sanskrit or Old Indo-Aryan. Bangla evolved mainly from Sanskrit. Also Hindi, Urdu, Farsi, English--all contributed lots of words and terms to form this language. The Sylheti community has a distinctive dialect, which gives them a strong cultural identity. Traditionally their core values centre on the family, community and business.

Religion: Bangladesh is one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. Most Bangladeshi's are Sunni. Most Bangladeshi Muslims are Sunnis, but there is a small Shia community. Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity constitute to a percentage of the Bangladeshi community.

Diet: A typically Bengali diet is supposed to be fairly healthy consisting of all the essentials that nutritionists recommend plenty of fish, loads of vegetables and basketfuls of fruits. A staple is rice and dhal.

Special Events: much of the traditional festivities in Bangladesh revolve around the Bengali Year, the most important of them being the Bengali New Year or Pawhela Boishakh celebrations. The Bengali New Year begins at dawn, and the day is marked with singing, processions, and fairs. The start date of the Bengali calendar was made to coincide with the start date of the Islamic calendar.

The UKs Indian Community

Individuals from the Indian subcontinent, including the community of East African Asians that migrated from India to Kenya and Uganda and subsequently to the UK.

Religion: This community can also be identified by religion - Hindu, Sikh, Indian Muslim (also Jain, Buddhist and Christian).

Language: Languages spoken vary widely, but can be broken down by region of origin into the following main ones:

- Hindi is the lingua franca of the Indian subcontinent and is also the language of the film industry (Bollywood). Mainly North Indians including Hindu-Punjabis.
- Punjabi stems from the state of Punjab. Spoken predominantly by the Punjabi Sikh community. Has a different written script to Hindi, but Hindi and Punjabi speakers communicate well with each other, as there are many common words and phrases.
- Gujarati stems from the state of Gujarat. Gujarati's are mainly Hindu (quite a few Jain) and more traditional and orthodox than their Punjabi counterparts. Again, the written script is different and there are also less verbal bonds than between Hindi and Punjabi speakers. The majority of east African Asians now in the UK are originally from Gujarat and may also speak Swahili.
- There is a raft of other languages spoken in India, including: Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Multani and Sindhi.

Diet: Indian cuisine is very diverse as a result of its diverse population. Indian cuisine has been influenced by environmental, social, religious and political factors from within. Most Indian cuisines are related by significant usage of spices, and by the use of a larger variety of vegetables than most other culinary traditions. In addition, a balanced Indian diet is considered one of the healthiest in the world. North Indian meals typically consist of Chapatti's or roti's and rice as staples, eaten with a wide variety of side dishes like dals, curries, yoghurt and chutney. South Indian dishes are mostly rice-based, sambhar, rasam and curries being important side dishes. Coconut is an important ingredient in most South Indian food.

The UKs Pakistani Community

Pakistan was originally part of the whole of the Indian subcontinent until 1947, when at the end of the British Raj; the country was divided into India and Pakistan with separate governments. A key reason for the partition was separation by religion.

Language: The UK Pakistani community speak Urdu (including a dialect called Mirpuri) as well as Punjabi. The state of Punjab was divided during the partition, and as a result there are Pakistani Muslims who speak Punjabi.

Religion: Most Pakistanis are Muslim and this community is the most religious and orthodox of the Islamic communities, following the laws of the Koran very strictly (although there are always exceptions to the rule).

Diet: Meat is a major part of Pakistani diet, whereas vegetables and beans are as important. Wheat is also the main staple of Pakistani diet, whereas rice is also popular. The content of spices can range from very spicy/hot to mild.

The UK's Chinese Community

The Chinese community do not tend to form close-knit geographic communities in the way that some other ethnic minority groups do. However, the family is very important in Chinese culture.

Language: Approximately 95 percent of the Chinese population speaks Chinese, as opposed to the non-Chinese languages such as Tibetan, Mongolian, Lolo, Miao, and Tai spoken by minorities.

Religion: Many gods are worshiped in China, especially during traditional festivals.

Though Chinese have the traditions of worshipping many gods and most people usually follow the traditions, religions have never been as deeply rooted in China as those in many other countries. So different Gods are invited for different occasions.

For an example, when they were short of money, the god of fortune would be the guest at the table of sacrifice.

Diet: Traditionally, Chinese culinary characteristics are divided by region. The northern portion of China has a distinct Mongolian influence with more emphasis on noodles,

soybeans and breads. Cantonese cooking has evolved in the South.

Fresh fruit and seafood is also used. Rice tends to be included in the diet with fresh vegetables.

Special Events: Dragons are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and Chinese people often consider themselves the descendants of the dragon. The Chinese

New Year is based on the Chinese Lunar calendar and each year represents an animal.



Travelling Communities

Introduction

Travelling people should not be regarded as one single group of people. There are several groups of travelling people made up of men, women and children who do not live in permanent housing. They come from a variety of backgrounds including:

- Traditional Romany and English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gypsy heritage.
- Fairground and circus travellers
- New Travellers

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are both ethnic minority groups and protected by the Equality Act 2010 from discrimination on the grounds of their race. The term Romany is defined as 'A person of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin.'

Whilst there are cultural differences, Gypsies and traditional Travellers have many shared characteristics such as a strong family unit. Great care is placed on the socialisation of children together with care of the elderly and infirm; a sense of pride and resilience; entrepreneurial skills and occupational adaptability; and a strict code of cleanliness with regard to interior living spaces.

Religion/Language: There can be key differences amongst religion and language, e.g. many Gypsies speak the inherited languages of Romany/ Romani's and Irish Travellers may speak Cant or Gammon.

Where do travellers live?

Movement within the Gypsy and Traveller communities varies and depends on seasonal work, trade or family gatherings. Many Irish Travellers have settled into housing or attempted to settle on official outdoor sites. Others continue to travel, mainly in caravans.

Many Travellers live in tents, vans, caravans, trucks and camper vans. They are nomadic, choosing to move from place to place, so their homes are often mobile.

However, it is important to state that not all travellers do live in mobile homes and have selected for whatever reason to live in permanent houses. The travelling aspect of traditional communities is just one aspect of their identity.

The circus and fairground community known as show people travel with their own fairground.

New Travellers

New Travellers (often called 'New Age') are a separate and distinctive group who should not be confused with Gypsies and Traditional Travellers. This is a movement of mainly young

people. Such groups were first identified in the 1960s and were called hippies. The communities have continued on through the 70s, 80s, and 90s and into the 2000s. They are often people who choose to leave difficult social conditions in either rural and urban areas or they maybe people who have lost homes through repossession and also the formerly homeless.

Diet: Many Gypsy and Traveller communities have particular cultural views on what to eat, which involve strict hygiene rules.

Bereavement: Burial is preferable to cremation. The funeral and procession is seen as a celebration of the deceased's life. It is not uncommon for a site to be vacated after a death.

Special Events: Family events, such as birth, marriages and deaths are very important, as they are to every family.

Horse fairs, showground fairs and other cultural events are important gathering for the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Hints and Tips

There are many myths and stereotypes concerning Travellers which may have been promoted by ignorance and prejudice, so it is wise to base your knowledge not on myth but rather from getting to know people for yourself.

Please use a capital G and T when referring to Gypsies and Travellers, this denotes racial status. It can cause offence if you appear to deny the rights of racial status.

High moral standards and the care of children, particularly the younger ones, are seen as being very important.

Travellers can have what you might term “old fashioned” values, and you may find women on site during the day with men out working, and reluctance to talk to you without men there.

Cleanliness is important to Travellers in terms of personal hygiene and within their home.

Every member of the family has a clearly defined role and great importance is placed on the care of their children. Children are encouraged to be independent and male children might be a spokesperson for the family when not all the family is present.

Some Travellers use both their parents' surnames depending on whose family they are with at the time.

Illiteracy may be an issue with those at adult age, be careful about causing offence. It is important to ascertain if they can understand the document or script, if in doubt, offer to read it to them.

The UK's Somali Community

A brief overview of recent history and culture.

Somalia was colonised by the British in the North and the Italians in the South. British Somaliland gained its independence in 1960 and promptly joined with the newly independent Italian Somaliland to form the Republic of Somalia.

In 1970 the dictator Siad Barre declared Somalia a socialist state. The country received support from the USSR during the 1970s. In 1991, Siad Barre was overthrown by a group of clans who opposed him. This marked the beginning of decades of violent civil war and social disintegration. The US invaded Somalia in 1992 intending to restore peace, but Operation Restore Hope was a disaster, and they soon withdrew. Somalia has been without effective central government since 1991. Enormous damage was done to the infrastructure of the country during the civil war.

Around one million Somalis have died due to war and famine, and approximately two million have sought asylum abroad (of a pre-war total population of seven million).

Culturally, Somalis have been a very cohesive ethnic group for several centuries. This is quite unusual in Sub Saharan African states. Somalis share a common language (Somali), a common culture, and a common religion: the vast majority of Somalis are Sunni Muslims. The Somali language has a rich oral tradition of storytelling, drama, poetry and use of spoken

rather than written language to spread news and political arguments. The written form of Somali was only introduced in the 1970s. Prior to this written information was in Arabic, English or Italian. Traditionally, Somalis are rural nomads and make a living from herding their livestock camels, sheep, and goats.

The camel is an important cultural symbol to Somalis. Somalia has close cultural links with the Arab world (and is a member of the Arab League) as a result of the shared religion and a history of trade links with Arab nations.

The Somali community is organised along kinship lines, known as clans. The concept of clan is often a difficult one for Europeans to understand. The clan is akin to a widely extended family or kinship group. The structure of Somali clans is comparable to that of Scottish clans in the 15th century. Somalis identify themselves closely with their clans, more so than to any political, regional or nationalistic identity. Clans divide into sub-clans, and operate together at a higher level as clan families. Inter-marriage between different clans was traditionally a way of binding clans' interests together and preserving peaceful relations between them. Clans serve as an identifier or an address Somalis will ask another Somali s clan name to identify them. If you are trying to find someone in a Somali city, you will be able to do so by finding one of their clan members. A Somali saying states what a man s address is in Europe his clan is in Somalia. (Recorded by Lewis in *A Pastoral Democracy*, 1961).

As in many African states, political power in Somalia was distributed along clan lines.

As the country disintegrated into civil war, many different clan factions started fighting each other for resources and power. Intense fighting continues in the South today.

Census and other official ethnicity monitoring forms do not list Somali as a separate category. Somalis may tick Black British or Black European (if they have citizenship), or Black African on these forms. They are attracted to Bristol by the availability of housing and employment, and the chance to live in an already established Somali community (Clifford, 2005).

Major languages are Somali and Arabic.

Somalia borders Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

It has a population of around 8 million (85% Somali, 15% Bantu, Arab and non-Somali).

Dictator Mohammed Siad Barre was ousted in 1991 and Somalia has since been without an effective government.

His departure offered the momentum for Somaliland in the northwest to break away from Somalia and declare itself independent.

The self-declared republic of Somaliland has a government, a national flag and an anthem but has been unable to secure international recognition as an independent state.

In 2000 a transitional government was set up in the south with the aim of reconciling the country's warring militias and so far has been unsuccessful in establishing its authority.

Nearly 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Somalia lived in more than 20 countries at the end of 2002, including 140,000 in Kenya and 80,000 in Yemen.

In 2002, there were 6,680 asylum applications in the UK from Somalia.

Did you know?

The world's poorest countries take responsibilities for the vast majority of refugees. Two-thirds of all refugees are hosted in the Middle East and in Africa.

Communication

Effective Communication to our customers and staff is paramount and we understand that not everyone has the same ability to understand or use speech and language to relate to others in society. Places for People would like to remove language and communication barriers to enable easy interaction with our customers. This covers different language needs, communicating with people who are deaf, use of inappropriate / appropriate language.

Different Language Needs

Places for People provides services to a significant number of customers who are non-English speaking through Bigword which is the translation and interpreting service used across the Group to ensure that we are able to meet verbal and written communication needs of our non-English speaking customers. This service is to ensure that we are able to reach all ethnic groups in our target audience. Language Line is able to provide these services on over 100 languages see list below. (Also see Contact Information list at the back of this Toolkit).



<p>A Afrikaans Akan Albanian Amharic Arabic Armenian Ashanti Assamese Assyrian Azerbaijani</p>	<p>B Badini Bengali Berber Bosnian Bulgarian Burmese</p>	<p>C Cantonese Catalan Creole Croatian Czech</p>	<p>D Danish Dari Dutch</p>	<p>E Esperanto Estonian</p>	<p>F Fanti Farsi/Persian Finnish Flemish French</p>
<p>G Ga Georgian German Greek Gujarati</p>	<p>H Hakka Hausa Hebrew Hindi Hungarian</p>	<p>I-J Igbo Icelandic Indonesian Italian Japanese</p>	<p>K Kashmiri Kazakh Korean Krio Kurdish Kurmanji</p>	<p>L Laotian Latvian Lingala Lithuanian Luganda</p>	<p>M Macedonian Malay Malayalam Maltese Mandarin Mandinka Marathi Mirpuri Mongolian Moroccan</p>
<p>N-R Norwegian Polish Portuguese Punjabi Pushtu (Pashto) Romanian Russian</p>	<p>S Serbian Sinhalese Slovak Slovenian Somali Sorani Spanish Swahili Swedish Sylheti</p>	<p>T Tagalog Taiwanese Tamil Telugu Thai Tibetan Tigrinya Turkish Twi</p>	<p>U Ukrainian Urdu Uzbek</p>	<p>V-Z Vietnamese Welsh Wolof Xhosa Yiddish Yoruba</p>	

British Sign Language (BSL)

British Sign Language (BSL) is the official language of the British Deaf Community. This language is like other languages where they evolve and change. BSL is understood throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Sign languages are used all over the world wherever groups of people who are deaf come together, and although the language may be different they share visual / spatial grammars to obtain a common ground of understanding.

BSL is able to bring people who are deaf / hard of hearing together with hearing people on an equal basis for successful benefit to both.

Sign Supported English (SSE)

Some people use a mixture of speech and signing which is known as Sign Supported English (SSE), which is often used by people who lost their hearing after they learned to speak, but are part of the Deaf Community.

Finger spelling is often used by people who lip-read to understand difficult or unfamiliar words. It is also used by people who use sign language for names when there is no specific sign. It is not the same as sign language, but with finger spelling every letter is shown, making it rather slow.

And Remember

- We communicate at every moment you cannot not communicate.

- Be aware of the way you communicate with others.
- People who are not able to speak can be wonderful communicators.
- The loss of one or two senses may impair communication but it does not have to stop communication.
- Where language is an issue, it may be useful to use a family member or friend. An independent interpreter e.g. Language Line should be used wherever possible.
- Don't assume that just because someone responds to a question in English that they fully understand.
- Language can be powerful in fuelling racial, ethnic, sexual conflict.



Language

One of the most important things you can do as an employee and colleague is to use appropriate language in the workplace and in all communications with customers. Making a good impression and projecting yourself as mature, intelligent, confident, and professional is critical to long-term success. Inappropriate language, whether spoken or written, can negatively affect your credibility and put off or even offend those you work with. Both in speech and in writing take the time and make the effort to use appropriate language. Here are a few tips:

Use a level of formality appropriate for your audience

When conversing in less formal situations or when writing less formal correspondence, you can use less formal English, but still remain respectful and professional at all times.

Do not use profanity

Swearing is never acceptable in the workplace or with communication with customers.

Avoid biased or derogatory comments

Do not use sexist language or language that is biased against any racial, ethnic, religious, age, or other group. Avoid comments, generalisations, examples, or jokes that affirm or perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Avoid slang

You should generally avoid slang—even words or expressions that are commonly accepted in other settings. Be judicious in your use of idiomatic expressions, and particularly regionalisms, as well.

Be cautious when using jargon

Jargon should be used sparingly, and only when speaking or writing to an audience that will be familiar with the terms used. If you feel it is appropriate to use jargon for a more general audience, make sure you define the terms used.

Be polite

Childhood instructions about using please and thank you are just as important in the business world as they were at the dinner table. You will be able to accomplish more and will undoubtedly have better relationships with co-workers and colleagues if you treat them respectfully and show sincere appreciation by using courtesy words.

The suggestions above will help you to use appropriate language in the workplace. By following these principles, you'll make a good impression and you will be known as a professional, courteous employee and colleague.

Religion

There are many religions and faith groups in this country; however, this section mainly focuses on the most popular religions in the UK, highlighting information on festival dates, language, traditional dress, bereavement and types of food. The religions outlined are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Rastafarianism.

In consulting the information provided in this Toolkit it cannot be stressed too highly that as members of faith communities and as individuals, we vary widely in our religious orthodoxy and with regard to customs associated with our beliefs.

Sometimes customs are more a matter of cultural tradition than of religious observance and because of this presenting information of this sort is a challenging area and open to a large degree of interpretation. Nevertheless, some kind of practical guidelines are undoubtedly useful and information is presented for this purpose to those of us who need basic information.

What you need to know about Buddhism (Buddhists)

There are 3 main Buddhist festivals celebrated by western Buddhists.

Key Festivals

Wesak - May/June, Dhammachakra - July, Sangha - November.

Faith /Religion/Place of Worship

The belief of a Buddhist revolves around the life and teachings of Buddha, Siddhartha Guatama. Buddha is not worshipped, but he is a guide who composed the wheel of teaching of Dharma.

Buddhists can worship either at home or at a temple. Buddhists will often set aside a room or part of a room as a shrine. The shrine will consist of a statue of The Buddha, candles and an incense burner. Similarly, Buddhist temples contain an image or statue of The Buddha.

Language

The main language of Buddhists is the spoken language of their country of residence, but teachings are written in either Pali or Sanskrit depending on the particular school of Buddhism.

Traditional Dress

No specific rules exist for ordinary Buddhists about what they should wear but most will conform to the local traditions and customs. Those who have entered the path to becoming a spiritual leader, a teacher or a monk/ nun may be stricter in their dress and only wear simple cotton clothing. Buddhists who have taken vows and become a monk/ nun may shave their heads and will often wear orange robes.

Diet

Many but not all Buddhists believe eating flesh will stimulate the passions and so follow a vegetarian diet. Alcohol and drugs are abstained from or are taken in moderation.

And Remember

- There are no stipulated times of meditation. Breaks for meditation maybe fitted in around lunch time so as not to interrupt the working day.
- A great deal of importance is based on body language: the quiet and calm control of speech and personal space is respected.
- It is inappropriate to touch a figure of The Buddha, unless invited to.

What you need to know about Christianity (Christians)

Key Dates

- Christmas Eve 24 December
- Christmas Day 25 December
- Ash Wednesday Feb/March
- Easter Sunday March/April
- Good Friday March/April
- All Saints Day 1 November

Faith /Religion/ Place of Worship Language

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and follow his teachings. Christians believe in justification by faith that through their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and his resurrection from the dead, that they have a relationship with God and receive forgiveness for their sins (disobedience to God), through the death of Jesus Christ. Christians tend to worship in a Church on a Sunday, however many practicing Christians may wish to attend a church service at the start or beginning of the day.

There are over 1 billion Christians all over the world, so there is no defined language.

Diet

There are no special dietary considerations. However, some strict Christians voluntarily refrain from drinking alcohol and smoking.

During Lent, the 40 days of preparation for Easter, many Christians choose to observe some kind of fasting. A lot of Christians avoid alcohol during this period.

And Remember

- When entering a Christian place of worship, respect should be shown.
- It may be appropriate to describe the follower of Christianity by not referring to their denomination.

- Some denominations observe the Sabbath which is described in the Old Testament of the Bible and have Friday evening and Saturday as their day of rest.

Additional notes:

There are a range of Denominations within Christianity (listed below):

- African-instituted originate from Africa (some influence from African culture).
- Anglican self-governing and part of worldwide Anglican Communion.
- Baptist baptise adult believers.
- Congregational infant baptism is practiced.
- Lutheran roots in 16th century reformation led by Martin Luther.
- Methodist roots in 18th Century evangelical revival led by John and Charles Wesley.
- Orthodox roots in the Eastern part of the old Roman Empire.
- Oriental Orthodox found mainly in the Middle East, Africa and India.
- Pentecostal roots in the 20th Century Pentecostal revival. Mainly black-majority churches.
- Reformed with roots in 16th Century Reformation.
- Roman Catholic in communion with the Pope in Rome. Special devotion to the Virgin Mary as the mother of Jesus.

- Other traditions include: Moravian Church and the Salvation Army and Society of Friends (Quakers) who have a strong focus on the environment and community.

What you need to know about Hinduism (Hindus)

Key Festivals

Hinduism is a diverse religion and not all Hindus will celebrate the same festivals. Hindus also fast at different times of the year.

- Makar Sankranti 14 Jan
- Mahashivratri February
- Holi March
- Rama Navami Mar/April
- Hanuman Jayanti April
- Raksha Bandhan August
- Janmashtami August
- Ganesh Chaturthi September/October
- Dushera (aka Vijayadashmi) September/October
- Karava Chauth October
- Diwali Late Oct / Early November
- New Year Late Oct / Early November

Religion: like Islam, Hinduism is more than just a religion; it also describes a way of life and set of beliefs. The Hindu caste system, which was originally based upon occupation, is a

fundamental aspect of Hinduism and is practised by most Hindus throughout the world.

Hinduism doesn't have a personal god at its heart (although individual Hindus may). They worship only the Supreme Spirit; however, they do this through many different Gods, all stemming from one Supreme Spirit.

These deities are in many cases vastly different e.g. animals or armed humans. Shiva, Parvathi, Vishnu and Brahma are some of the Hindu deities.

Place of worship

Hindu worship, or puja, involves images (murtis), prayers (mantras) and diagrams of the universe (yantras). Central to Hindu worship is the image, or icon which can be worshipped either at home or in the temple.

Hindu worship is primarily an individual act rather than a communal one, as it involves making personal offerings to the deity.

Language: Some Hindus speak Hindi but others speak Gujarati or Punjabi.

Traditional Dress

Traditional Hindus wear Asian dress i.e. salwar kameez and some Hindu women also wear saris.

Diet - Hindus are not allowed to eat beef and some Hindus are vegetarian.

Bereavement: Hindus are cremated. Normally the first 12-13 days are classed as the traditional mourning period. Close family members would normally require this time off. The funeral normally takes place within this period.

Other Physical contact between the sexes is discouraged and some Hindus may politely refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex. This should not be viewed negatively.

And Remember...

- When entering a Hindu home, it is best not to shake hands unless a handshake is offered. Hindus normally greet each other formally with a bow of respect with palms of hands touching (like offering prayers) or informally with a hug.
- If offered refreshments it is polite to accept.
- On occasions cross gender communication can cause difficulties or offence.
- Shoes must be removed when entering a home or temple.
- When planning a meeting you may want to consider how you might meet their religious requirements and dietary needs wherever possible. This may vary considerably, and the best advice is to ask.
- If avoidable, try to ensure that your visit does not conflict with a special or significant day in the Hindu calendar.

What you need to know about Islam (Muslims)

Key Festivals

The dates of festivals are reliant on a sighting of the new moon and will therefore vary from year to year. Approximate dates maybe known, but it is not always possible to give a definitive date until much nearer the time.

Ramadan takes place in the 9th month of the Muslim lunar calendar. This is a significant time for Muslims. Eid Al Fitr 3 days to mark the end of Ramadan.

Eid al-Adha takes places 2 months and 10 days after Eid Al-Fitr and is a 4 day festival. Most Muslims will usually seek leave for the 1st of the four days. For more information on key religious festivals click on [here](#).

Religion Islam is more than a religion it incorporates a way of life and set of beliefs. Muslims abide by the articles of faith, rituals of worship and code of conduct and the tenets of Islam. All Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime.

Muslims may therefore seek one extended leave period. They are also required to Pronounce the "declaration of faith" (Allah is the only God, and Mohammed is his messenger), pray five times each day and fast each day during the month of Ramadan.

Place of worship

It is an obligatory aspect of the faith that Muslims perform 5 prayers (Salah) a day. Daily prayer must be conducted at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, just after sunset and at night. As prayer times are determined by the movement of sun, prayer times are not at the same times each day and vary throughout the year.

It is preferable, but not compulsory for men to perform their prayers in a mosque. However, the Friday noon prayer must be performed in a mosque. Females can pray at home, a mosque or elsewhere. Men and women do not pray together. Muslims always face Makkah in Saudi Arabia (south east from Britain) when they pray.

Language There are a few different languages spoken by Muslims a few examples include Urdu, Arabic and Sylheti.

Traditional Dress

Traditional Muslims wear Asian wear i.e. salwar kameez (this can be worn by both men and women). Muslim Women may wish to cover their whole body except their face, hands and feet and wear a hijab.

Diet Muslims are forbidden to eat any food which is derived from the pig; this includes lard, which may be found in bread or ice-cream.

Islam also forbids the consumption of alcohol, including if it is in risotto or fruit salad.

Bereavement: Muslims are always buried. Burial is preferable within 24 hours of death.

Other: Any form of gambling is forbidden under Islam.

Observant Muslims are required to wash following use of the toilet and will therefore appreciate access to water in the toilet cubicle; often Muslims will carry a small container of water into the cubicle for this purpose. By agreement with other staff and cleaners, these containers could be kept in the cubicle.

Physical contact between the sexes is discouraged and some Muslims may politely refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex. This should not be viewed negatively.

And Remember...

- Consider the needs of staff / customers who need to pray 5 times a day. This may involve the provision of prayer time and a room.
- If you arrive unannounced at a family home, you may interrupt prayers.
- If possible, wait a short period, to enable prayers to finish without interruption.
- When planning a meeting you may want to consider how you might meet their religious requirements and dietary needs wherever possible.
- Any food provided should be Halal.
- It would be preferable to avoid shaking hands with Muslim women, rather than risk causing offence.

- Some men, especially when they are about to go for prayers, may also wish to avoid shaking hands.
- Many Muslim women may not be comfortable in mixed company and will tend to avoid being in a room if men are present. On occasions cross-gender communication can cause difficulties or offence.
- Many women, if alone, may not open the door fully or even ask for a female officer to visit.
- A woman may ask a visitor to come back another day because they are not in a position to make any decisions or because the head of household may not be available.
- Being asked to wait in another room whilst someone attends to your request is normal. Such behaviour shows respect but can be misinterpreted as showing disrespect.
- If you are offered refreshments it is polite to accept and try a small amount of food.
- During visits it may be helpful to involve an elder, other member of the family or the Imaam (spiritual leader) of the local Mosque where the customer worships.
- It is advisable not to visit the Mosque during prayer times.
- You will be expected to remove your shoes before entering a Mosque or home.
- If possible, avoid visits during special or significant days in the Muslim calendar.
- Muslims represent a significant market for affordable home ownership schemes provided the appropriate financial products are available.

- Lenders have recognised the large potential market for Sharia compliant financial products; those which do not involve any type of interest (paying or receiving).
- Avoid holding an event at a church hall or at a mosque. Using a church may be deemed as indirectly deterring participation from Muslims. With the mosque being regarded as a male-only place, using a mosque maybe deemed as indirectly deterring participation from women.

Ramadan

We respect and welcomes the diversity of religion and belief of our employees and our customers. Please note that these are very general guidelines. Muslims differ from generation to generation, culture to culture, some are more devout that others and interpretations and practices of the faith are numerous. It may also be the case that the individual is Muslim by name only and chooses not to practice their religion.

What is Ramadan?

The word Ramadan simply refers to the name of a month, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This month is considered to be the holiest of the twelve and it is in this month that believers are asked to fast and perform other additional acts of worship. Christians may be familiar with the concepts of fasting during Lent. To fast in the month of Ramadan is a pillar of Islam meaning it is incumbent on all Muslims to perform it.

What do Muslims do in Ramadan?

The basic requirement is for all Muslims to fast from sunrise to sunset. Fasting means that no food, water, smoke, gum or anything else can go past the lips. As well as physical things that can break ones fast there are actions that are considered impermissible whilst fasting including telling a lie, slander, denouncing someone behind their back, a false oath or greed.

The fast is broken at sunset. Most Muslims will do so with water and dates which is tradition. After sunset they are able to drink and eat without limitation.

In addition to fasting, Muslims will also spend most of their evenings in a special prayer called Taraweeh which is often performed in congregation at a mosque.

Eid ul Fitr

The end of Ramadan is celebrated with the Eid ul Fitr Festival of the Fast breaking.

On the first day Muslims go to the mosque for prayer. This is followed by a three day holiday in which families and friends visit each other, exchange gifts and socialise.

Ramadan in the Workplace

It is best not to make assumptions and managers are advised to have a discussion with Muslim employees about their religious practice during Ramadan.

Other staff may not know about Ramadan so it's good to have a discussion about what fasting entails and how it may affect different individuals.

You could try and avoid working lunches and team meals out to be sensitive to Muslim colleagues, again it's best to have a conversation about this.

As far as is possible, try and allow Muslim employees to take a ten minute break at sunset to break their fast and pray. Usual timekeeping arrangements can apply herewith the needs of the business in mind.

Try to allocate a private quiet area or room for prayer during breaks; these breaks usually take just a few minutes.

Remember that it might be difficult for people to commit to evening functions.

Try and use Ramadan as a platform for greater cross cultural communication for example, team meals organised at the end of breaking the fast.

How Ramadan impacts on our Customers

We need to make sure that we consider how we deliver services to all of our customers and include thinking around peoples differences. This includes faith and belief, gender, disability, sexuality, ethnicity, age and issues around supporting community cohesion.

If we are aware that our customers are Muslim it is good practice to think about the practical impact that this may have during Ramadan and take steps to work around this. For example, ability to attend evening meetings and appointments for repairs and other visits.

Celebrations after Eid may also be an ideal opportunity to bring communities together to share food and generate understanding.

What you need to know about Judaism (Jews)

Key Festivals

Observant Jews are required to refrain from work on the Sabbath and Festivals, except where life is at risk. This includes travelling (except on foot), writing, carrying, switching on and off electricity, using a telephone and

transactions of a commercial nature (that is buying and selling). The Sabbath and all other Festivals begin one hour before dusk and so practicing Jews need to be home by then. Sabbath begins one hour before dusk on Friday.

- Passover Mar / Apr - 2 sets of 2 days
- Pentecost (Shavuot) May / June - 2 days
- New Year Sept / Oct - 2 days
- Day of Atonement Sept / Oct 1 day fasting
- Tabernacles (Sukkot) Sept / Oct 2 sets of 2 days

Religion/Place of Worship

The Jewish place of worship is called a Synagogue. The Synagogue is also used for prayer, study and as a community centre. The main Jewish holy book is called the Torah (also known as the five books of Moses).

Language: in Britain most Jews speak English, many are able to speak Hebrew, which is the main language used in worship, and the Jewish scriptures are written in Hebrew. Jewish languages such as Yiddish and Ladino are conversationally spoken in some Jewish households.

Traditional Dress

Orthodox Jewish men keep their head covered at all times by wearing a Kippah (skull cap). Orthodox Jewish women tend to dress modestly and may not want to wear trousers, short skirts or short sleeves: some may wish to keep their heads covered by a scarf or beret.

Diet

Jews uphold the Kashrut, a series of special dietary laws which refer to the provision of Kosher food (food which is prepared in a specially prescribed way). Kosher food means permitted. Jews do not eat pork in any form and many do not eat meat and milk at the same time. This is known as Treif (forbidden). Many have separate kitchens and fridges for the preparation of food.

Bereavement: Funerals must take place as soon as possible following the death the same day where possible and therefore takes place at short notice, usually within two days of death. Following a death, the immediate family must stay at home and mourn for seven days (Shiva). Following the death of a Father or Mother, an observant Jewish man will be required to go to a Synagogue to pray morning, afternoon and evening for 11 months of the Jewish calendar. The majority of Jews are buried although a few may opt for cremation.

And Remember...

- If you visit a Synagogue it is best to make an appointment. Some Synagogues will not admit visitors whom they are not expecting.
- Historically Jews have been persecuted for thousands of years. Due to this catalogue of persecution, they tend to form very close knit communities.

What you need to know about Sikhism (Sikhs)

Key Festivals

- Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 5 January
- Vaisakhi (the birth of Sikhism) 14 April
- Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev 16 June
- Sri Guru Granth Sahib Day 1 September
- Divali (Diwali) the festival of light.
- Oct/November
- (Date set by lunar calendar)
- Birthday of Guru Nanak November

Religion Sikhism is not based on rigid rules or laws but on the teachings of the 10 Gurus set out in the Guru Granth Sahib. It is a way of devotion and a pattern of life.

Place of worship

Sikhs follow Sikhism and pray in a Gurdwara (Sikh Temple), their Holy Book is called the Guru Granth Sahib.

Language The main language is Punjabi this comes from the Punjab district of India, which is where the Sikh religion originated.

Traditional Dress

Traditional Sikhs are not allowed to cut their hair, so men tend to wear turbans (long piece of cloth wrapped around their head) and women tend to wear traditional Asian dress called the salwar kameez.

Practicing male Sikhs observe the 5 Ks of the faith. These are:

1. Kesh: Uncut Hair. Observant Sikhs do not remove or cut any hair from their body. Sikh men and some women will wear a turban.
2. Kangha: Wooden comb usually worn in the hair.
3. Kara: Metal bracelet worn on the wrist.
4. Kachhahera: Knee length underpants.
5. Kirpan: Short sword worn under the clothing so that it is not visible.

Diet: Restrictions are a matter of conscience and religious belief for each individual Sikh. However, no Sikh is permitted to eat Halal meat, (which is meat slaughtered in accordance with Islamic slaughtering tradition), or beef.

Most practicing Sikhs are vegetarian and abstain from alcohol, smoking and other intoxicants.

Bereavement: Sikhs are cremated and have a preference for this to take place as soon after the death as possible. There is no specified mourning period and normal compassionate leave arrangements will suffice.

And Remember...

- If you visit a Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) you will be expected to keep your head covered. You will also be asked to remove your shoes if you enter the place of worship.

- If you need to make contact with anyone at the Gurdwara then it is advisable to do this through the President.
- Sikhs will often have a special place of worship in their home and will need to pray at set times during the day. It is impolite to interrupt these prayers, unless unavoidable. It would be more prudent to call back at alter time.
- There may be a room set aside for prayer. Before entering you should remove your shoes and have your head covered as a sign of respect.
- If possible, try to ensure that visits do not conflict with a special or significant day in the Sikh Calendar.
- A Sikh woman may feel more comfortable if she is spoken to in the presence of a member of her family.
- If you are offered any food or drink at a Sikh home or in a Gurdwara it could cause offence if you refuse to accept without good cause. Try to accept a little so as not to offend.
- If you are asked to sit down in the Gurdwara it is extremely bad manners to put your feet out in front of you, in the direction of the holy book. Try to sit on your legs, point them in a different direction or cross them.

What you need to know about Rastafarianism (Rastafarians)

Key Festivals

- Christmas Day-6 January
- Anniversary of Haile Selassie s visit to Jamaica-21 April
- Birthday of Haile Selassie I-23 July
- Birthday of Marcus Garvey-17 August
- Ethiopian New Year -September
- Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie - November

Religion/Philosophy

Rastafarianism is a religious movement that accepts that Haile Selassie I (former Emperor of Ethiopia) as Jah the Rastafarian name for God incarnate. Some Rastafarians consider some aspects of the Bible as sacred. However, others believe that some aspects of the bible have been changed and reject it, and in replacement use a Holy Piby.

Worship is played out by reasoning's and Nyabinghi Reasoning's = informal small gatherings of Ras Tafari in which there is avid discussion. Nyabinghi = drumming and chanting may last over several days. Rastafarianism is a way of life. The ethos of the philosophy is the repatriation of all those taken in slavery.

Most Ras Tafari in the UK speaks English; however, Patois maybe used for ease of communication with each other.

Traditional Dress

Most Ras Tafari, especially women, will cover their hair and dress modestly. Many Ras Tafari women wear long skirts and will not wear trousers.

Diet: Most Ras Tafari are vegetarian, and many eat only I-tal food, which is vegan. I-tal food is completely natural, having never come into contact with chemicals, pesticides or preservatives(Organic food is preferred).

Some very strict Ras Tafari do not eat cooked food although most living in the UK will do so.

Herbal drinks, fruit juice and water are preferred on an I-tal diet.

Bereavement: There are no special requirements beyond compassionate leave.

And Remember...

- Not all Ras Tafari have dreadlocks and not everyone who has dreadlocks is Ras Tafari.
- Ras Tafari do not tend to like their dreadlocks being touched.
- Ras Tafari people have a strong affiliation with Africa.
- Ras Tafari tend to refer to each other as brethren male and sister female.

Diversity Resources

Other diversity resources available are as follows:

Policies

A-Z guides

Housing Diversity Network Membership services

Email info@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk if you would like information about these services. They include:

- mentoring programme
- advice line
- newsletter

Little language Phrase Book

The Diversity Calendar

The Diversity Handbook

Toolbox talks and trainers guide

Your Notes:

This guide was originally developed by Places for People and has been shared with the Housing Diversity Network for members of the Network to use. It should only be used by an organisation that is a member of Housing Diversity Network and should not be made available in any way to others.

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