**Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust**

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

**Guidance for managers and staff for supporting Muslim staff during Ramadan 2020.**

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Bradford Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust is committed to diversity and inclusion and has a number of strategies and action plans to ensure the Trust is meeting its legal and contractual obligations. We strongly believe that diversity and inclusion must be integral to our culture and values and we must strive to make them visible in everything we do.

Religion and Belief is a protected characteristic of the Equality Act 2010, which means that festivals like Ramadan, as well as Easter, Yom Kippur, Vaisakhi and Diwali, and the other religious days and periods, give us an opportunity not just to support those who observe them, but also to learn and understand more about the people we work with and increase our understanding of the communities and patients we serve.

Fasting, in one form or another, has always been important and often necessary part of religious life, discipline and experience in every faith. Many of the key fasting considerations transfer to all primary faiths and practices including Christianity and the sacrifices of ‘Lent’ Judaism and fasting during Yom Kippur and Tish’ah B’av.

**Ramadan 2020**

This year, the month of Ramadan will begin on the evening of Thursday 23 April and end on the evening of Saturday 23 May 2020.

Ramadan involves a daily period of fasting for Muslims starting at sunrise and finishing at sunset over the month. This means abstaining from food, drink (including water) and smoking. While fasting is an important part of Ramadan, it is also a time of self-reflection and self-evaluation for Muslims.

This year will be very different for staff who are Muslim and observe fasting during Ramadan, as traditionally communal activities and prayer are observed and encouraged. Due to the current Covid-19 crisis, access to prayer facilities, quiet rooms and multi faith rooms internally and externally have been largely suspended. These restrictions may have a negative impact on staff wellbeing during an already difficult period. Line managers should encourage staff to talk to their chaplaincy team for support.

Accommodating religious belief and practices during Ramadan is about being responsive to employee’s needs. It does not necessarily mean extra time off; it is about offering flexibility around existing holiday entitlement, working patterns or break periods. Unlike previous years, this may prove more challenging if resources are reduced due to staff absence from self-isolation and illness.

Similarly, staff should also be aware of the health issues related to fasting, so that they are able to make more informed choices, minimise complications and maximise the benefit of their fast as well as operational effectiveness. Those who are ill with COVID-19 won't be able to take part in daily fasting, as fasting is not compulsory or advisable for anyone who is ill or has a medical condition.

**Frequently asked questions on Ramadan**

**What is Ramadan?**

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar year and is the month of fasting. Fasting is a duty upon all adults and healthy Muslims. In the UK this year Ramadan will start on 23rd April 2020. This means that no water or food is to be consumed from sunrise to sunset this totals to almost twenty hours per day without food or drink. People that are ill, those that are travelling long distance, pregnant and breast feeding women may be exempt.

One of the main benefits of Ramadan is an increased awareness of God. It is an opportunity for self-purification and reflection and a renewed focus on spirituality; and for compassion for those in need of the necessities of life. Muslims also appreciate the feeling of togetherness shared by family and friends throughout the month. Perhaps the greatest practical benefit is the yearly lesson in self- restraint and discipline that can carry forward to other aspects of a Muslim’s life such as work and education.

**Working and Ramadan**

Working has a great importance and value in Islam. The importance of lawful earnings is emphasised by numerous instructions of God in the Quran to earn a living through lawful means.

The Prophet Mohammed taught Muslims that one needs to be balanced and harmonised between their worship and work. Muslims have to remain constant in acts of worship, and also to work hard to earn a living and support their families. Prophet Mohammed made it clear that being in a position to purchase day to day provisions from one’s own work is actually a commendable act of worship.

Ramadan should not be used as an excuse for not working to one’s usual level of commitment and productivity and it is important to remember one’s obligations to employers.

**I manage and/or work with staff that are fasting, what do I need to know?**

Fasting in the summer months is combined with disturbances in normal sleep pattern that can leave individuals feeling more tired than normal particularly mid-afternoon and towards the end of the day. Also, towards the latter part of the day some individuals that are fasting might feel a little light headed.

If you have Muslim staff in your department or ward, it may be worth approaching them and allowing them to discuss their needs and the impact this may have on their working patterns.

If it is operationally feasible an agreement to requests for slight adjustments to shift patterns during Ramadan will be appreciated. For example, many Muslims like to be with their families for the end of the fast therefore may need some flexibility with shift arrangements to enable them to spend this time with their families. To be able to finish early they may prefer to start earlier and/or have a shorter lunch break.

It is very considerate to avoid holding events involving food such as get-togethers which may include food and drink during Ramadan. If it is unavoidable please do not be offended if Muslim staff members are unable to participate in such events. If any training day or a key meeting is unavoidable, any special arrangements for Muslim staff that are fasting will always be greatly appreciated.

It is not necessary for individuals that are not fasting to abstain from eating or drinking in the presence of Muslims that are fasting. However, during the month of Ramadan it would not be appropriate to require a Muslim staff member who is fasting to join you in taking a working lunch for example, or to offer food or drinks

To fast along with Muslim colleagues, even for part of the day, is a good way of enhancing understanding, and can be used as a wonderful way of fundraising for a charitable cause during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the month of generosity, giving charity and benevolence.

Many Muslims will endeavour to practice their faith more during Ramadan than they might for the remainder of the year. As a consequence of this more Muslim staff might wish to offer prayers during the day. This will normally be around 1:00 pm and 6:00pm in the summer months for a few minutes each for which the staff member(s) will require a small private area or access to Trust’s chaplaincy facilities for prayer and quiet contemplation.

**How do I express best wishes to colleagues and patients?**

The appropriate way to express best wishes to a Muslim colleague or Patient for Ramadan is to say: **“Ramadan Mubarak”**

**What happens when Ramadan ends?**

The end of Ramadan is marked by the festival of Eid-Ul-Fitr for which some Muslim staff members will wish to take leave from work. The actual day that Eid falls on will depend on when the new moon is sighted. For this reason it might not be possible for the staff member to be very specific about the day he/she would like to be away from work and therefore some flexibility may be necessary.

There are different schools of thought who may celebrate Eid on different days depending on which school of thought they follow. This year Eid may fall on 23rd May or 24th May depending on the sighting of the moon, therefore Eid can be celebrated on either days.

Please try to accommodate any requests for annual leave during this time.

The appropriate way to express best wishes to a Muslim colleague or Patients for Eid is to say:

**“Eid Mubarak”**

Please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Unit for any further guidance and clarification on:

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