



WISDOM BEYOND WARDS

A comprehensive guide on world religions
for NHS workers

Guidance on:

- Islam
- Hinduism
- Christianity
- Sikhism
- Judaism
- Buddhism



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Foreword



This guide is intended to be part of a suite of guidance which aims to equip our NHS colleagues at all levels to understand the religious and spiritual needs of all people.

The aim is to promote inclusivity and diversity and take account of everyone's needs in the design and delivery of services.

The extent to which individuals observe their religion and culture can vary greatly. Some may be deeply devout, while others may identify only nominally and not actively practice. It is crucial never to make assumptions about a person's beliefs, cultural or religious views, or needs.

Remember, individuals are the ultimate experts on their own culture, religion, beliefs, or spirituality. Always ask them first

Religion is a protected characteristic according to the Equality Act 2010. The European Council Directive of 2000 established a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; this came into force in the UK in December 2003 through the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations. These regulations make it unlawful to discriminate against people on the grounds of their religion or belief.

I am pleased to be working with the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board who have commissioned this work on behalf of the Strive and Thrive NHSE Team.

We must remove barriers to ensure we recruit, retain and develop exceptional individuals; only once we commit to this, we will underpin our health objectives and be known as true ambassadors of the NHS.

Maysoon Shafiq

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About the Author

Ustadah Maysoon Shafiq is a dedicated and active Faith Leader known for her efforts in bridging gaps between different faiths and beliefs. She has played a vital role in fostering understanding and knowledge about Islam among both Muslim and non-Muslim communities and is keen in promoting diversity and inclusion.

Ustadah Maysoon is the first female Muslim Chaplaincy Team Lead to be appointed in NHS England. Her appointment made headlines nationally and internationally. She also sits as the Head of Islamic Advice for the National NHS Muslim Network.

Her work has been recognised with a plethora of awards including winning thrice the title for the Religious Advocate of the Year Award at the British Muslim Awards 2022, 2023 and 2025 and the Most Impactful Alimah at the Beacon Mosque Awards 2021. She has also received the Inspirational Woman Award both nationally and globally at the SHE Inspires Awards 2023. More recently, she has been recognised as the 'Top 50 Most Influential Muslims in Europe 2025' with the Equality X Award.

Ustadah Maysoon has worked closely with the Muslim Council of Britain on the "Women in Mosques Development Programme" and the Prince of Wales Trust on the MOSAIC Leadership programme and she is used as a subject in GCSE and A level Religious Studies examinations.

Ustadah Maysoon has featured in "Inspiring Women, Inspiring Women" featuring inspirational women who work within the NHS. She has also featured in the Religions for Peace (New York) publication "Building a Better World: The Women Leading Religions for Peace".

Ustadah Maysoon is currently in the final stages of her PhD at Sheffield Hallam University, where her research focuses on the underutilisation of palliative care services by the Muslim community. Her goal is to educate both community members and medical practitioners on providing culturally competent care.

Ustadah Maysoon is proud of her achievements but always acknowledges that she would not be able to achieve them without the love and support from her husband.

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The role of religion or belief in healthcare

We live in a society with an ever widening and diverse mix of religions and beliefs, which NHS organisations need to consider when developing both services to the public and employment policies. Even within established religions there are various branches and regional and sectional variants with different traditions of interpretation, rituals and practices, moral guidelines and laws. There are also levels of personal compliance ranging from nominal to strict observance. Additionally, many people hold strong views about not having personal religious belief.

The NHS actively recruits international staff therefore it is important to raise awareness amongst health staff of the need to take religion or belief into account when dealing with patients and colleagues, and this guidance document should aid NHS professionals in understanding the importance of religious identity or belief and in appreciating how this has the potential to interact with and impact on health and healthcare delivery.

Section 1 – Buddhism

Core, Beliefs and Values of Buddhism

Buddhism is a non-theistic religion founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) in the 5th–6th century BCE. It focuses on personal spiritual development, the attainment of wisdom, and freedom from suffering. Central to Buddhist thought is the idea that enlightenment (*Nirvana*) can be achieved through ethical living, mindfulness, and meditation.

The Four Noble Truths are the foundation of all Buddhist teaching:

1. ***Dukkha* – The Truth of Suffering:**
All beings experience suffering or dissatisfaction — physically, emotionally, or spiritually.
2. ***Samudaya* – The Cause of Suffering:**
Suffering arises from craving (*tanha*), attachment, and ignorance.
3. ***Nirodha* – The End of Suffering:**
It is possible to end suffering by letting go of desire and attachment.
4. ***Magga* – The Path to the End of Suffering:**
The way to end suffering is by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path offers ethical, mental, and spiritual guidance for living wisely and compassionately

Table 8: The Noble Enlightened Path

Category	Path Element	Meaning
Wisdom (<i>Prajna</i>)	Right View	Understanding reality and the Four Noble Truths
	Right Intention	Acting with compassion and selflessness
Ethical Conduct (<i>Sila</i>)	Right Speech	Speaking truthfully and kindly
	Right Action	Living ethically; avoiding harm to others
	Right Livelihood	Earning a living in ways that do not cause suffering
Mental Discipline (<i>Samadhi</i>)	Right Effort	Developing positive states of mind
	Right Mindfulness	Cultivating awareness of thoughts, actions, and surroundings
	Right Concentration	Practicing meditation to develop focus and insight

Modesty in dress code

In Buddhism, modesty in dress is an expression of respect, mindfulness, and humility. The way one dresses reflects one's state of mind and intention to live simply and ethically. Modesty is viewed as a virtue that helps reduce attachment, ego, and distraction. Clothing should be clean, simple, and appropriate for the setting. Dress should not attract undue attention or express vanity.

The Buddha encouraged followers to live with “*restraint in body, speech, and mind*”, which includes how one presents oneself.

For Buddhist patients modesty considerations include:

- Preference for privacy during medical examinations or procedures.
- Some may request same-gender healthcare professionals for intimate care.
- Clothing that maintains dignity and comfort is important.
- Avoiding unnecessary exposure of the body is seen as respectful to self and others.

Providing gowns or coverings that ensure comfort and modesty supports both Buddhist values and patient dignity.

Religious worship practices

Many Buddhists have shrines or altars at home featuring images of the Buddha, candles, and offerings. Temples (*Viharas*, Monasteries) are spaces for community meditation, chanting, and teaching. Visitors remove shoes as a sign of respect, and bowing to a Buddha image symbolizes reverence — not idol worship, but respect for enlightenment.

Buddhism is centred on personal practice, meditation, and ethical living rather than worship of a creator god. The purpose of worship and devotion in Buddhism is to honour the Buddha, cultivate mindfulness, and develop wisdom and compassion.

The core practice in all Buddhist traditions is to focus on mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samadhi*), and insight (*vipassana*) through meditation (*Bhavana*). Chanting and recitation is used to express devotion, focus the mind, and transmit teachings.

Buddhist teachings were passed down orally and later compiled into scriptures known collectively as the Tripitaka (Three Baskets).

Blood transfusion, transplants and organ donation

Buddhism emphasises the value of life and compassion for all beings. Ethical decisions in healthcare are guided by non-harming (*Ahimsa*), compassion (*Karuna*), and mindfulness.

While Buddhism does not have absolute prohibitions against medical procedures, patient choice and intention are central.

When a baby is born / beliefs for stillbirths / NVFs / miscarriages

In Buddhism, birth is part of the cycle of *samsāra* (rebirth). The circumstances of a new life including health, family, and environment are influenced by past karma. Families often perform rituals to bless a new born, such as chanting *paritta* (protective *suttas*) or sprinkling water, to promote a safe and auspicious beginning.

Stillbirths or miscarriages are seen as unfortunate events within the karmic continuum. They are not viewed as punishments but as part of natural impermanence (*anicca*).

The early death of a foetus may indicate that the rebirth was not yet ready to fully establish itself in the womb due to karmic or natural reasons.

Care from the opposite gender

While there is no strict religious prohibition against receiving care from the opposite gender, considerations of modesty, comfort, and personal preference are important. Some patients may feel uncomfortable with physical examinations, intimate care, or procedures performed by the opposite gender. Respecting this preference supports mental well-being and spiritual peace.

Dietary requirements

Many Buddhists practice some form of vegetarianism or avoid killing animals whenever possible, reflecting the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-harming).

Alcohol and recreational drugs are avoided to maintain clarity of mind.

Some medicines may contain animal-derived ingredients (gelatine, enzymes, or dairy). Buddhist patients who avoid harming animals may prefer vegetarian or vegan alternatives if available.

Life-saving treatment overrides dietary restrictions, but options for ethically acceptable medications should be considered when feasible.

Festivals and celebrations

In Buddhism, festivals are a reminder of the path to enlightenment, and an opportunity to cultivate compassion and wisdom.

Buddhist celebrations are primarily spiritual and ethical, emphasising mindfulness, generosity, and community harmony.

Table 9: The major festivals in Buddhism

Festival	Approx. Date	Significance	Practices
<i>Vesak</i> (Buddha Day)	Full moon in May	Birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha	Temple visits, meditation, chanting, offerings, vegetarian meals, acts of charity
<i>Magha Puja</i>	Full moon of the third lunar month (Feb/Mar)	Commemorates gathering of 1,250 enlightened monks	Candlelight processions, chanting, meditation
<i>Asalha Puja</i> (Dhamma Day)	Full moon of the eighth lunar month (July)	Buddha's first sermon, teaching the Four Noble Truths	Meditation, sermons, almsgiving to monks
Uposatha Days	New, full, and quarter moons	Spiritual renewal and reflection	Observing precepts, meditation, temple visits
<i>Kathina</i> (Robe Offering)	End of Vassa (rainy season retreat)	Offering robes and gifts to monks	Ceremonial offerings, communal meals, generosity

Death customs and end of life care

Life should be preserved when meaningful, but unnecessary prolongation of suffering is discouraged. Decisions are guided by mindfulness, ethical intention, and compassion.

Cremation is common in many Buddhist countries, symbolising impermanence and detachment.

Buddhist chaplains may assist in ethical reflection, meditation, and family discussions.

Section 2 – Christianity

Core, Beliefs and Values of Christianity

Christianity is a monotheistic faith centred on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With over two billion followers worldwide, it is the largest religion globally. There is a wide diversity of beliefs, ethical standpoints and forms of worship among the many denominations and groups which make up the Christian Church. Some of the beliefs are:

- **Monotheism and the Trinity**
Christians believe in one God who exists in three persons: God the Father (Creator), God the Son (Jesus Christ, the Redeemer), and God the Holy Spirit (the Sanctifier and guide). This doctrine is known as the Trinity.
- **Jesus Christ: Son of God and Saviour**
Jesus is regarded as both fully divine and fully human. Christians believe he was sent by God to save humanity from sin. His crucifixion and resurrection are seen as acts of atonement, offering forgiveness and the promise of eternal life to believers.
- **Salvation through Faith**
Salvation is viewed as a gift from God, attainable through faith in Jesus Christ. This faith involves trusting in Jesus' sacrifice and striving to live according to his teachings.
- **The Bible as Sacred Scripture**
The Christian Bible comprises the Old Testament (shared with Judaism) and the New Testament, which includes the Gospels detailing Jesus' life and teachings. Christians believe the Bible is divinely inspired and authoritative for faith and practice.
- **Life After Death and Eternal Life**
Christians believe in an afterlife where individuals are judged and, based on their faith and actions, are granted eternal life with God. Heaven is depicted as the eternal dwelling place of the righteous, while hell is associated with separation from God.

Major groups in Christianity

The two major groups of Christians are Protestants and Roman Catholics. Within the Protestant group there are a number of distinct denominations such as Church of England, Baptist, Episcopalian, Methodist, Free Church and many more. These have a common core of beliefs but also a number of distinctive practices.

At the centre of Christian beliefs is Jesus, who is regarded as the revelation of God. For many Christians this revelation is such that he is understood to be the incarnation of God.

Religious worship practices

- **Baptism:** A sacrament symbolising initiation into the Christian faith, representing purification and the believer's faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Holy Communion (Eucharist):** A ritual commemorating Jesus' Last Supper, involving the sharing of bread and wine as symbols of Jesus' body and blood.
- **Prayer:** Central to Christian life, prayer is a means of communicating with God, seeking guidance, and expressing gratitude.
- **Sunday Worship:** Christians gather on Sundays, the Sabbath, to worship, pray, and reflect on scripture.

Blood transfusion, transplant and organ donation

Most Christian denominations accept blood transfusions as essential medical procedures to save lives. The Catholic Church, for instance, does not oppose blood transfusions, as they are seen as life-saving measures that do not conflict with Christian teachings. Similarly, the Church of England and other Protestant denominations support blood transfusions as part of medical care.

Organ donation is widely supported across Christian denominations. The Catholic Church views organ donation as a noble act of charity and love, emphasising that it is morally acceptable when done with the donor's consent and without compromising the dignity of the deceased. Pope John Paul II described organ donation as a way to give of oneself so that others may continue to live. The Church of England also encourages organ donation, considering it an act of Christian duty.

Other denominations, such as the Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Baptist Church, similarly support organ donation, viewing it as an expression of Christian love and compassion. The Methodist Church UK has consistently supported organ donation and transplantation as a means through which healing and health may be made possible. The Church encourages members to consider organ donation as part of their Christian giving.

Jehovah's Witness – beliefs around blood transfusions

Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions based on their religious beliefs, which are rooted in their interpretation of several Bible passages they believe that God forbids the consumption of blood, whether by eating or transfusion. They cite several Bible verses, including:

- **Genesis 9:4** – "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."
- **Leviticus 17:10** – "If anyone... eats any blood, I will set my face against that person."
- **Acts 15:28-29** – Advises Christians to "abstain... from blood."

They interpret these verses to mean that receiving blood—even in medical situations—is spiritually unacceptable.

What Is Refused

Jehovah's Witnesses typically refuse:

- Whole blood
- Major blood components: red cells, white cells, platelets, plasma

What May Be Accepted

Some may accept certain blood **fractions** (small components derived from blood), such as:

- Albumin
- Immunoglobulins
- Clotting factors (e.g., Factor VIII)

These decisions are left to the individual's conscience.

Medical Implications

Jehovah's Witnesses may seek alternatives such as:

- Volume expanders (non-blood fluids)
- Cell salvage (recycling their own blood during surgery)
- Erythropoietin (to boost red blood cell production)
- Advanced surgical and anaesthetic techniques

Many NHS hospitals now have programs tailored to treat Jehovah's Witnesses without using blood.

Festivals and celebrations

- **Advent:** A four-week period leading up to Christmas, beginning on the Sunday closest to November 30. It marks the start of the Christian liturgical year and is a time of preparation and anticipation for the birth of Jesus.
- **Christmas (December 25):** Celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Traditions include nativity scenes, church services, gift-giving, and festive meals.
- **Epiphany (January 6):** Commemorates the visit of the Magi (Three Wise Men) to the infant Jesus, symbolizing the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles. In some traditions, it also marks the baptism of Jesus.
- **Candlemas (February 2):** It commemorates Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus to God. Many Christians have candles blessed during services, symbolizing Jesus as the Light of the World.
- **Lent:** A 40-day period (excluding Sundays) of fasting, prayer, and penance leading up to Easter, commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness
- **Holy Week:** The final week of Lent, including:
 - **Palm Sunday:** Commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
 - **Maundy Thursday:** Remembers the Last Supper.
 - **Good Friday:** Observes the crucifixion of Jesus.
 - **Holy Saturday:** A day of reflection and waiting.
 - **Easter Sunday:** Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, the most significant event in Christianity.
- **Pentecost (50 days after Easter):** Marks the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, empowering them to spread the message of Jesus. It is considered the "birthday" of the Christian Church.

Death customs

Christian death customs and funeral rites vary across denominations and cultures, but they share common themes of honouring the deceased, offering comfort to the bereaved, and affirming the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Dying patients of all Christian denominations may wish the pastoral support of their own faith leader or welcome the services of Chaplaincy. Roman Catholic patients may want the Sacraments of the Sick.

If a baby is ill parents may wish to be offered a service of blessing or baptism for their baby. Some Christians do not practice infant baptism and may prefer that sick or dying babies receive a blessing instead.

Section 3 – Hinduism

Core, Beliefs and Values of Hinduism

Hindus believe in one God and worship that one God under many manifestations, deities or images. Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth governed by Karma (a complex belief in cause and effect).

1. Dharma (Righteous Duty or Ethics):

Dharma refers to the moral and ethical duties and responsibilities of an individual. It varies based on age, caste, gender, and occupation, but the idea is to live in a way that upholds cosmic law and order.

2. Karma (Action and Consequence):

Karma is the belief that every action has consequences. Good actions bring good results (either in this life or the next), while bad actions bring suffering. It's a key force that drives the cycle of rebirth.

3. Samsara (Cycle of Rebirth):

Hindus believe in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The soul (atman) is reborn in a new body, and this continues until the soul achieves liberation (moksha).

4. Moksha (Liberation):

Moksha is the ultimate goal—freedom from the cycle of rebirth. It is achieved through self-realisation and union with **Brahman** (the Supreme Reality).

5. Atman (The Soul):

Hindus believe that every living being has an eternal soul, or **atman**, which is part of the universal soul, **Brahman**.

6. Brahman (Universal Soul):

Brahman is the single, unchanging, universal spirit that underlies everything. All gods and goddesses are seen as different expressions or aspects of Brahman.

7. Gods and Goddesses:

Hinduism is both monotheistic and polytheistic. It has one ultimate reality (Brahman) but also worships many gods and goddesses like:

- **Brahma** (the creator),
- **Vishnu** (the preserver),
- **Shiva** (the destroyer),
- **Lakshmi, Saraswati, Durga**, and many more.

Modesty in dress code

In Hinduism, modesty in dress is valued and often linked to cultural norms, religious teachings, and traditional values. Hindus are encouraged to dress in a way that reflects respect, humility, and self-discipline. Modest clothing is often associated with purity and spiritual focus, helping to avoid distractions and promote dignity.

Some Hindu women may find it difficult to wear the x-ray or hospital gown due to it being short. Jewellery may have religious significance and a thread may be worn on the wrist which should not be removed without permission.

Religious worship practices and sacred texts

Spiritual practices like yoga, meditation, prayer, and rituals are essential to connect with the divine and purify the mind

Key scriptures include:

- **The Vedas** (oldest, foundational texts),
- **Upanishads** (philosophical texts),
- **Bhagavad Gita** (spiritual teachings from the Mahabharata),
- **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** (epic stories with moral and spiritual lessons).

Blood transfusion, transplants and organ donation

In Hinduism, there are no religious prohibitions against blood transfusion, organ transplants, or organ donation. In fact, many Hindu teachings and scriptures support these practices if they are done with compassion and a desire to help others.

Hindu ethics emphasise dharma (duty) and ahimsa (non-violence)—helping someone in need is considered a noble act. The body is considered a temporary vessel for the soul (atman). Since the soul is eternal and not bound to the physical body, helping others through medical means is not seen as spiritually harmful.

When a baby is born

When a baby is born in a Hindu family, it is considered a sacred and joyful event, full of religious and cultural rituals. Birth is seen as a blessing and part of the soul's journey (samsara). The new born is believed to carry karma from past lives.

Traditions performed immediately after birth or within a few days include; whispering sacred words (like the Gayatri mantra) in the baby's ear and/or giving a small taste of ghee (butter) or honey (in some traditions).

Care from the opposite gender

In Hinduism, care and service—especially when done with respect and compassion—are considered acts of dharma (duty) and seva (selfless service). However, care from the opposite gender is sometimes approached with cultural sensitivity and modesty. Many Hindu women will prefer a female doctor when being examined or treated. However, care from the opposite gender is generally accepted if medically necessary and there is no alternative caregiver of the same gender.

Diet / medication alternatives

Hindus often follow specific dietary principles and these affect medical treatments, especially when certain medications or nutritional supplements contain animal-derived ingredients.

Vegetarianism is highly respected and practiced widely amongst Hindus. Beef is strictly avoided as the cow is considered sacred.

Table 2: Common concerns and preferred alternatives in healthcare

Medical Product/Ingredient	Hindu Concern	Preferred/Alternative Option
Gelatine capsules (from beef/pork)	May be rejected by vegetarians or religious Hindus	Use vegetarian or plant-based capsules
Heparin (animal-derived)	Some versions come from pigs or cows	Synthetic or alternative anticoagulants (consult required)
Vaccines with animal derivatives	Some contain gelatine or bovine serum	Many Hindus accept vaccines if no alternative, but informing patients helps
Vitamin D3 (often from sheep wool or fish)	Non-vegetarian source	Vitamin D2 (plant-based) or vegan D3 from lichen
Insulin (some animal-based)	Traditional forms from pigs or cows	Human recombinant insulin is widely accepted
Nutritional supplements (fish oil, collagen)	Often not vegetarian	Use plant-based omega-3 or vegetarian supplements

Festivals and celebrations

Hinduism has a rich tradition of festivals and celebrations that are deeply spiritual, seasonal, and joyful. Most festivals are connected to Hindu deities, epic stories, agricultural cycles, and cosmic events (like the lunar calendar or solstices). These festivals vary by region but share common themes of good over evil, light over darkness, knowledge, and gratitude.

Table 3: Major Hindu festivals

Festival	When It Happens	Significance	Common Celebrations
Diwali	October/November	Festival of lights – celebrates victory of light over darkness and good over evil	Lighting diyas (lamps), fireworks, sweets, worship of Lakshmi, home cleaning
Holi	March (Full moon)	Festival of colours – celebrates spring and the divine love of Krishna and Radha	Throwing colours, singing, dancing, sweets
Navaratri/Dussehra	Sept–Oct (9–10 days)	Worship of Goddess Durga and victory of Rama over Ravana	Fasting, dance (Garba), Ram Leela plays, idol worship
Raksha Bandhan	August	Celebrates bond between brothers and sisters	Sisters tie a rakhi (sacred thread) on brothers' wrists
Janmashtami	August/September	Birth of Lord Krishna	Night time prayers, fasting, plays about Krishna's life
Ganesh Chaturthi	August/September	Birth of Lord Ganesha	Clay idols, 10-day worship, immersion processions
Makar Sankranti / Pongal	January	Harvest festival; marks sun's movement northward	Kite flying, rice dishes, cow worship
Rama Navami	March/April	Birth of Lord Rama	Reciting Ramayana, temple worship

Festival	When It Happens	Significance	Common Celebrations
Karva Chauth	October/November	Wives fast for the health and long life of husbands	Moon rituals, dressing up, community prayers
Mahashivratri	February/March	Night of Lord Shiva	Fasting, night prayers, Shiva temple visits

Death customs

In Hinduism, death is not the end, but a transition in the soul's journey (Atman) through the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (Samsara). The final goal is Moksha, or liberation from this cycle. Hindu death customs are deeply spiritual and aim to honour the soul, purify it, and help it move peacefully to the next stage.

If a Hindu patient is dying in hospital, relatives may wish to bring money and clothes for them to touch before they are given to the needy. Relatives will welcome the opportunity to sit with the dying patient and read from the holy book or chant mantras.

Hindus cremate the body usually within 24 hours and this is performed by the eldest son or close male relative.

Section 4 – Islam

Core, Beliefs and Values of Islam

The belief of Muslims centres on the religion of Islam, which is based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the holy book known as the Qur'an. The core beliefs of Muslims are summarised in the Six Articles of Faith and the Five Pillars of Islam.

Six Articles of Faith

These are the core theological beliefs in Islam:

1. **Belief in Allah** – Muslims believe in one, all-powerful, and compassionate God (Allah).
2. **Belief in Angels** – Muslims believe in the existence of angels who carry out God's commands.
3. **Belief in the Books of God** – Muslims believe in the divine books revealed to various prophets, including the Qur'an (to Muhammad (peace be upon him)), the Torah (to Moses), the Psalms (to David), and the Gospel (to Jesus).
4. **Belief in the Prophets** – Muslims believe that God sent many prophets to guide humanity, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) (who is considered the final prophet).
5. **Belief in the Day of Judgment** – Muslims believe that all humans will be resurrected for judgment by God and held accountable for their actions.
6. **Belief in Divine Decree (Qadar)** – Muslims believe that God has complete knowledge and control over everything, though humans still have free will.

The five pillars of Islam

These are the five basic acts of worship that define a Muslim's faith and practice:

1. **Shahada (Faith)** – Declaring that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is His messenger.
2. **Salah (Prayer)** – Performing ritual prayers five times a day.
3. **Zakat (Charity)** – Giving to those in need, usually 2.5% of one's savings annually.
4. **Sawm (Fasting)** – Fasting during the month of Ramadhan from dawn until sunset.
5. **Hajj (Pilgrimage)** – Making a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime, if physically and financially able.

Modesty in dress code

Generally, a Muslim woman is not allowed to be examined or surrounded by male members of medical staff. It is always preferable that a female member of the medical staff is present. However, in situations where this is not possible or same gender care cannot be provided then it is permissible for the care from the opposite gender to be administered.

Modesty for Muslim Women

The general principles are:

- **Covering the body:** Most Islamic scholars agree that a Muslim woman should cover her entire body except the face and hands (though some interpret this more strictly).
- **Loose-fitting clothing:** Clothes should not be tight or transparent; they should not reveal the shape of the body.
- **Avoiding flashy appearance:** Clothing should not be worn to attract attention or show off wealth or beauty in public.
- **Hijab (headscarf):** Worn by many Muslim women as a sign of modesty and obedience to God. It's a common—but not the only—way to fulfil the concept of modest dress.

Qur'an Reference:

"...and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils all over their bosoms..." (Qur'an 24:31)

For the reasons mentioned above, a patient who is a Muslim woman may find it difficult to accept an x-ray gown because it is short and may find it uncomfortable to wear the hospital gown upon admission.

Modesty for Muslim men

Men also have guidelines:

- **Covering the body:** Men are generally required to cover from the navel to the knees at minimum.
- **Avoiding tight or transparent clothes:** Clothes should not emphasize the body shape.
- **Being clean and dignified:** Dressing neatly and respectfully is encouraged.

Qur'an Reference:

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts. That is purer for them." (Qur'an 24:30)

Washing (ablution) and toilet

Muslims attach great importance to cleanliness it is considered half of their faith. The use of toilet paper alone is seen as inadequate after the use of the toilet and therefore water must also be used to cleanse.

Ritual washing (ablution) is done before the five daily prayers.

Steps of Ablution (Wudu):

1. Intention (niyyah) – Mentally intending to perform wudu for the sake of worship.
2. Washing hands – Three times, up to the wrists.
3. Rinsing mouth – Three times.
4. Rinsing nose – Inhaling water and blowing it out, three times.
5. Washing the face – Three times.
6. Washing the arms – Up to the elbows, three times.
7. Wiping the head (masah) – Once, including ears.

8. Washing the feet – Up to the ankles, three times.

Qur'an reference:

"O you who believe! When you rise for prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and (wash) your feet up to the ankles..."

(Qur'an 5:6)

If water is not available or will cause further harm or exacerbate injury then Muslims can perform Dry Ablution (Tayammum), using clean earth or dust. This is more suitable for when patients are bed bound or have restricted movement.

Steps of Dry Ablution (Tayammum):

1. Intend to purify for worship.
2. Strike hands lightly on clean earth.
3. Wipe the face.
4. Wipe the hands and forearms.

Qur'an reference:

"...And if you do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it..."

(Qur'an 5:6)

Religious worship practices: Prayers and Qur'an

One of the most important religious practices for Muslims are the five daily prayers. The times are broadly as follows; dawn (Fajr), just after noon (Zohar), afternoon (Asr), following sunset (Maghrib) and the night prayer (Isha).

Muslims welcome privacy and a quiet room to be able to offer their prayer. They must face the Qibla (the sacred direction) which is facing South-East in the UK. This is the direction of the Kaaba in Makkah, Saudi Arabia (The House of God).

Muslims practice the Qur'an as both a spiritual guide and a practical manual for daily life. It is the central religious text of Islam, believed to be the literal word of God (Allah) as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel).

The most holy day of the week for Muslims is Friday.

Blood transfusion, transplants and organ donation

In Islam, blood transfusion, organ transplantation, and organ donation are generally permissible, as long as certain ethical and religious conditions are met. The underlying Islamic principle is to save human life, which is considered a noble and highly rewarded act.

Permissible under conditions, especially to save or greatly improve life. The majority of Islamic scholars and councils support it with conditions:

Conditions for permissibility:

- **Donor consent:** Must be given willingly, without coercion.
- **No sale of organs:** Selling organs for profit is prohibited.
- **Respect for the human body:** The process must be handled with dignity.

- **No unnecessary harm:** Living donors should not be put at serious risk.
- **Brain death or legal death confirmed:** In the case of deceased donation.

Types of donation:

- **Living donor:** Allowed (e.g., kidney, liver segment), as long as donor health isn't endangered.
- **Deceased donor:** Permitted if death is legally and medically confirmed, and family or donor consent is given.

Qur'an reference:

"...And whoever saves one life—it is as if he had saved mankind entirely." (Qur'an 5:32)

When a baby is born/ beliefs for stillbirths / NVFs / miscarriages

In Islam, the birth of a child is a deeply spiritual event, and even in the case of stillbirths, neonatal deaths (NVFs), or miscarriages, Islamic teachings offer compassion, meaning, and hope rooted in the belief in God's mercy and the afterlife.

Muslims believe the soul is breathed into the foetus at 120 days (around 4 months) after conception. If the Muslim woman miscarries before 120 days, the foetus is not considered fully ensouled and so there is no requirement to name the foetus or perform funeral prayer. But merely it is encouraged to bury the remains.

Islam distinguishes between infants who have lived briefly and those who have not survived birth, affecting religious practice. Any infant who survived birth and took a breath will require a *ghusl* (wash), *kaffan* (shroud) and *Salah-tul-Janazah* (prayer) and burial. The infant is to be named.

Upon birth, the practices Muslims follow:

1. **Adhan (Call to prayer):**
The father or a close relative softly recites the *adhan* in the right ear and the *iqamah* in the left ear of the new born (this can be done by a female if no male relative is available).
2. **Tahneek:**
A small piece of softened date or something sweet is rubbed gently on the baby's palate (tradition of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him).
3. **Naming the child:**
Usually done on the 7th day. Names with good meanings are encouraged.
4. **Circumcision (for boys):**
Recommended (and often performed in infancy), but timing may vary by culture.

Care from the opposite gender

In Islam, care from the opposite gender—such as medical treatment, personal assistance, or caregiving—is permissible under certain conditions, especially when necessary. The religion emphasises modesty and gender boundaries, but it also prioritises human dignity, health, and compassion.

If same-gender care is not available, it is permissible to receive care from the opposite gender. This applies to medical treatment, childbirth, emergencies, or caregiving when no suitable alternative exists.

Halal diet / medication alternatives

Muslims will eat only permitted food (halal) and will not eat or drink anything which is considered forbidden (haram)

In Islam, consuming halal (permissible) food and medicine is a key part of living a life that aligns with Islamic values. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to eat what is pure and lawful, and the same principle extends to medication when possible.

Islamic law emphasises preserving life and health, so while halal options are preferred, haram ingredients may be temporarily allowed if:

- No halal alternative is available, and
- The medicine is necessary, and
- It is prescribed by a qualified doctor.

Table 1: Common concerns and preferred alternatives in healthcare

Ingredient	Source	Notes
Gelatine	Often from pork/cow	Look for halal-certified or plant-based gelatine
Alcohol (ethanol)	Used as solvent	Permissible in small amounts if no intoxication or alternative
Lard	From pig fat	Not permissible
Enzymes or rennet	May be animal-based	Must be from halal-slaughtered animals or microbial sources

Festivals and celebrations

In Islam, festivals and celebrations are deeply rooted in faith, gratitude, and community. Muslims observe a few major religious celebrations that are based on the lunar (Hijri) calendar and have spiritual significance, rather than purely cultural or social reasons.

Some of the festivals include:

- Eid al Fitr (celebrated after the completion of the month of Ramadhan)
- Eid al Adha (celebrated on the 10th Dhul-Hijjah; coincides with the Hajj pilgrimage)
- Ramadhan (the observing of fasts in the month of Ramadhan for 30 days from Dawn to Sunset)
- Mawlid (Prophet Muhammad's peace be upon him birthday)

Death customs

A dying Muslim will wish to lie on their right-side facing Makkah. Upon death, the eyes should be closed and the lower jaw gently bound with cloth to the top of the head. The deceased is laid out with their arms placed straight down the side of the body.

Before death, a large number of visitors may arrive at all hours as it is seen as an important religious duty to visit the sick and dying.

In Islam, the body is generally buried as quickly as possible (usually within 24 hours). A post-mortem is usually avoided unless it is a legal requirement. However, with the introduction of digital autopsy this has minimised grievances. Cremation is strictly forbidden in Islam.

Section 5 – Judaism

Core, Beliefs and Values of Judaism

- **Belief in one God (monotheism)**
Judaism teaches that there is only one God (*Adonai*), who is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. God is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and benevolent (all-good).
- **Covenant with God**
Jews believe they have a special covenant (agreement) with God, first made with Abraham and renewed through Moses at Mount Sinai. In this covenant, Jews commit to living according to God’s laws (*Mitzvot*), and in return, God promises to guide and protect them.
- **The importance of moral and ethical living**
Judaism places strong emphasis on doing what is right and just (*Tzedek*). Good deeds (*Mitzvot*) and acts of kindness (*Gemilut Chasadim*) are essential expressions of faith. Ethical living includes honesty, charity, compassion,

Modesty in dress code

In Judaism, modesty (*Tzniut*) is a key value that influences how individuals dress and conduct themselves. It is seen as a way of expressing respect for oneself, others, and God, and is rooted in humility, dignity, and privacy.

Modesty requirements can vary among Jewish communities, but healthcare professionals should be aware of the sensitivities that may affect clothing, physical contact, and exposure during care.

Table 5: Dress practices in Judaism

Group	Common Dress Practices
Orthodox / Haredi Jews	Women wear long skirts or dresses (covering knees), long sleeves, and high necklines. Married women cover their hair with a scarf (<i>tichel</i>), hat, or wig (<i>sheitel</i>). Men wear long trousers, long-sleeved shirts, and often a head covering (<i>kippah</i> or <i>yarmulke</i>).
Modern Orthodox Jews	Similar standards, but some variation in sleeve length or head coverings depending on personal choice.
Conservative, Reform, and Liberal Jews	Modesty is encouraged but interpreted more flexibly; personal preference guides dress. Head coverings may or may not be worn.

Jewish patients especially those from Orthodox or traditional communities — may have particular modesty concerns during hospital stays, medical procedures, or physical examinations. These sensitivities should be handled with respect, consent, and privacy.

Religious worship practices and sacred texts

The Torah is the central text of Judaism, containing God’s commandments and teachings. It guides all aspects of Jewish life — spiritual, ethical, social, and legal. Observant Jews strive to live according to the 613 commandments (*Mitzvot*) found in the Torah.

The Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, they form the moral and ethical code of Judaism. They emphasise respect for God and for other people — honesty, compassion, and justice.

Blood transfusion, transplants and organ donation

Judaism places a high value on preserving life (*Pikuach Nefesh*). Saving a life is considered paramount, even if it requires breaking other religious laws. Therefore, most medical interventions that preserve or save life, including blood transfusions, organ transplants, and donation, are generally permitted and encouraged.

Table 6: Beliefs on preservation

Principle	Meaning	Application
<i>Pikuach Nefesh</i>	Preservation of human life overrides almost all other commandments.	Life-saving procedures, such as blood transfusions or transplants, are morally and religiously required.
<i>Kavod HaMet</i>	Respect for the dead.	Organ donation should respect the deceased's dignity; procedures should be handled sensitively.
<i>Chesed</i>	Acts of kindness and compassion.	Donating blood or organs is considered an act of loving-kindness toward others.

When a baby is born / beliefs for stillbirths / NVFs / miscarriages

Judaism places high value on life (*Pikuach Nefesh*), but also recognises that life and death are part of God's plan. Every child, whether born alive or stillborn, is considered a soul entrusted to God.

Birth is a celebration of life. Families give thanks to God and may perform prayers such as *Shehecheyanu* ("Who has kept us alive and sustained us"). *Brit Milah* (Circumcision Ceremony) which is performed on male infants on the 8th day after birth, as a sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people and is usually accompanied by a celebration and family gathering. Female infants may have a *Simchat Bat* or naming ceremony.

Judaism distinguishes between infants who have lived briefly and those who have not survived birth, affecting religious practice.

A stillborn baby or an infant who dies shortly after birth may not be fully obligated in *mitzvot* (religious duties), but is treated with dignity and respect.

Miscarried or NVF infants are considered full human life in potential, and mourning is permitted but adjusted according to Jewish law.

Parents may observe private mourning and recite prayers such as Psalm 23 or personal supplications.

Burial is preferred for stillborn or deceased infants; Jewish law emphasises prompt and respectful interment.

Care from the opposite gender

Same-gender care is often preferred, especially for physical examinations or intimate procedures. If same-gender staff are unavailable, explain the necessity and ensure privacy and consent.

In Orthodox settings, touch between men and women (who are not family members) is generally avoided.

Dietary requirements (*Kashrut*) / medication alternatives

Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) defines which foods are permitted (*Kosher*) and forbidden (*Treif*). Observant Jews follow these rules strictly, particularly in Orthodox communities. Dietary observance may also influence medication and medical interventions, especially if the product contains non-Kosher ingredients.

Table 7: Dietary requirements in Judaism

Category	Permitted / Kosher	Forbidden / Treif
Meat	Animals with split hooves that chew cud (e.g., cows, sheep); must be slaughtered according to <i>Shechita</i> (ritual slaughter)	Pigs, rabbits, shellfish, scavenger animals, improperly slaughtered meat
Fish	Fish with fins and scales (e.g., salmon, cod)	Shellfish, eels, catfish
Dairy	Milk, cheese, and butter from Kosher animals	Non-Kosher milk or mixed with non-Kosher ingredients
Meat & Dairy Together	Must be kept separate; waiting period between eating meat and dairy	Mixing meat and dairy is prohibited
Fruits & Vegetables	Generally permitted	Must be checked for insects or contamination (insects are not kosher)
Wine & Grape Products	Must be Kosher-certified, especially if used for ritual purposes	Wine handled by non-Jews may not be kosher

Life-saving treatments override dietary restrictions. Medications containing non-Kosher ingredients may be permitted if no alternatives exist and the patient's health depends on it. Always discuss religious concerns with patients to find acceptable alternatives when feasible.

Festivals and celebrations

- Shabbat (Sabbath) – weekly observance Friday evening to Saturday evening
- Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) - Holiest day of the Jewish year; focus on repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)
- Passover (Pesach)

Death customs and end of life care

Judaism places a strong emphasis on the sanctity of life, yet recognises that death is a natural part of life. Life should be preserved *Pikuach Nefesh* (preservation of life) whenever possible. Life-prolonging treatments may be pursued, but unnecessary suffering need not be prolonged.

Pain relief and palliative care are important, even if they may indirectly shorten life, as relieving suffering is a moral priority. The presence of family, prayer, and recitation of Psalms or Shema is encouraged.

After death, Burial is ideally prompt, usually within 24 hours, unless delayed for legal or practical reasons.

Consultation with a rabbi or Jewish chaplain is common for guidance.

Section 6 – Sikhism

Core, Beliefs and Values of Sikhism

Sikhism is a monotheistic faith founded by Guru Nanak Dev Ji in the 15th century. Sikhs believe in one God (*Ik Onkar*) and follow the teachings of the Ten Gurus, which are enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, the eternal living Guru.

“There is only one God; His Name is Truth; He is the Creator.” — *Guru Granth Sahib*

- **Belief in One God (Ik Onkar)**
Sikhism teaches that there is only one God, who is formless, eternal, and all-pervading. God is beyond gender and human attributes but is close to everyone and can be realised through love, devotion, and meditation.
- **Equality of all people**
Sikhism strongly rejects discrimination based on caste, gender, race, or religion. Every person is equal in the eyes of God.
- **The three pillars of Sikh life**
Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, established three guiding principles for daily living:
 1. *Naam Japna* — Remember and meditate on God’s name.
 2. *Kirat Karni* — Earn an honest living through hard work and integrity.
 3. *Vand Chakna* — Share with others, especially those in need.

The Sacred Articles of Faith (the Five Ks)

Practicing Sikhs, known as *Khalsa*, keep five symbols of faith:

1. *Kesh* — Uncut hair, symbolising acceptance of God’s will.
2. *Kara* — Steel bracelet, a reminder of unity and self-restraint.
3. *Kanga* — Wooden comb, representing cleanliness and order.
4. *Kachera* — Cotton undergarment, symbolising self-control.
5. *Kirpan* — Small sword, representing courage and defence of truth and justice.

Respecting Articles of Faith

Sikhs show respect for the Five Ks by:

- **Wearing them with reverence and responsibility**, understanding their meaning rather than treating them as ornaments.
- **Keeping them clean and cared for**, as symbols of spiritual discipline.
- **Avoiding actions that dishonour them**, such as cutting hair or misusing the *Kirpan*.
- **Explaining their significance** to others respectfully when questioned, promoting understanding and harmony.

The *Kirpan* is often misunderstood. It is not a weapon of aggression but a symbol of spiritual courage and justice. Sikhs carry it responsibly, respecting both religious duty and social laws, demonstrating peaceful coexistence and integrity. NHS workers do not need to be alarmed but be mindful this is a sacred item for Sikhs.

Modesty in dress code

Both men and women are expected to dress modestly — Sikhism does not encourage revealing or extravagant clothing. Many Sikh men and some women wear a turban (*Dastar*) or headscarf (*Chunni or Patka*) as a sign of respect and identity.

The *Kara* is a religious bangle worn on the wrist as a symbol of restraint and unity with God

Religious worship practices

The Gurdwara (meaning “doorway to the Guru”) is the Sikh place of worship. Sikh worship is both personal and communal, focusing on devotion, reflection, and service.

Sikh worship is a blend of devotion, discipline, and community service. It emphasises remembering God, practicing equality, and living by the teachings of the Gurus. Whether through meditation, prayer, or *Seva*, every act of worship brings a Sikh closer to God and to humanity.

Blood transfusion, transplants and organ donation

Sikhism places great importance on selfless service (*Seva*), compassion, and helping others in need. These values guide Sikh attitudes toward modern medical practices such as blood transfusion, organ transplantation, and organ donation. There are no religious prohibitions in Sikhism against donating or receiving blood or organs. In fact, such acts are seen as expressions of charity, kindness, and service to humanity.

When a baby is born / beliefs for stillbirths / NVFs / miscarriages

In Sikhism, life is a sacred gift from God (*Waheguru*), and every soul is believed to have a divine purpose. Birth and death are both part of the cycle of life and rebirth (*Samsara*). Sikhs accept both with humility, believing that everything happens according to God’s will (*Hukam*). Sikhs believe the soul (*Atma*) is eternal and part of God. The physical body is temporary — it is the soul’s spiritual progress that continues through cycles of birth and death. Every birth and death occurs in accordance with *Hukam* (divine will).

The Sikh response to birth, stillbirth, and loss is rooted in faith, acceptance, and prayer, emphasising spiritual comfort and community support. Sikhism views the loss of a baby, at any stage, with deep compassion but also spiritual acceptance.

The birth of a child is seen as a blessing from God. Families give thanks through *Ardas* (prayer), expressing gratitude for the safe arrival of the baby.

Care from the opposite gender

While Sikhism allows care from the opposite gender, modesty (*Sat Santokh*) and respect are important. Some individuals or families may request same-gender care out of personal or cultural preference, especially for intimate examinations, procedures or childbirth or personal hygiene care reasons.

In such cases healthcare staff should be respectful and accommodating if practical. If same-gender staff are unavailable, it is usually acceptable for care to continue as long as privacy and dignity are maintained. Sikh patients often appreciate clear explanations and reassurance about professional standards and respect for modesty.

Dietary considerations

There is variation among Sikhs regarding vegetarianism, depending on personal, family, or community.

Table 4: Diet considerations

Group	Common Dietary Practice	Notes
<i>Khalsa</i> (<i>Amritdhari Sikhs</i>)	Strict vegetarian	Avoid meat, fish, and eggs. Refrain from food prepared with ritual slaughter (Halal or Kosher).
<i>Non-Amritdhari Sikhs</i>	Varied	Some eat meat (except Halal or Kosher), while others prefer vegetarian diets out of personal or ethical choice.

It is therefore advisable to ask the patient their dietary preferences.

Festivals and celebrations

- *Gurpurabs*: Birth or death anniversaries of the Sikh Gurus, celebrated with prayers, processions, and community service.
- *Vaisakhi*: Marks the founding of the *Khalsa* (Sikh community) in 1699.
- Bandi Chhor Divas (Festival of Liberation)
- *Akhand Path*: Continuous 48-hour reading of the entire Guru Granth Sahib.
- *Amrit Ceremony*: Initiation into the *Khalsa*, symbolising commitment to Sikh discipline and values.

Death customs and end of life care

Sikhs believe that death is a natural transition, not an end. While preserving life is important, prolonging life unnaturally through excessive intervention is not required if recovery is impossible.

Decisions about treatment or withdrawal of care should be made with compassion, dignity, and family discussion, ideally supported by Sikh chaplaincy or faith advisors if desired.

Section 7

Communication Team, Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Chaplaincy and other considerations

Communication Team

Each NHS trust has its own communications team responsible for managing media relations, internal communications, digital content, and public engagement.

The Communication Teams are encouraged to work closely with the EDI team and Chaplaincy to create inter faith calendars to promote diversity and inclusion.

Some useful sites to find FREE downloadable interfaith calendars:

- Gateway Empowerment Institute
[2025-2026 Interfaith Calendar — Gateway Equity Institute](#)
- The Inter faith Network
[Religious festivals - Resources - The Inter Faith Network \(IFN\)](#)
- Spiritual Health Association
[SHA 2025 Calendar - Spiritual Health Association](#)

Equality Diversity and Inclusion - other considerations

Spiritual observances / annual leave requests

Ward Managers and Leads must be mindful of spiritual observance or holy days when some staff may wish to request time off in order to attend the associated ceremonies or festivals. A practical step for NHS organisations to take is to display a multi-faith event calendar and year planner so that, where appropriate, preparation and cover can be organised in advance.

Employees should make requests for such leave well in advance, to allow managers to support their requests where it is reasonable and practical to do so. Where several requests are made for leave on the same day, managers should hold discussions with staff to seek mutually acceptable compromises and solutions. Employers may want to be proactive in reminding managers and those responsible for rotas of upcoming significant dates that may impact on staffing and/or attendance of patients.

It should be noted that the dates of some religious festivals are not known until quite close to the day such as Eid al Adha and Eid al Fitr, because the dates depend on lunar phases and change from year to year. Again, discussion and flexibility on both sides can hopefully lead to a satisfactory outcome. At the same time, consideration should be given to those who do not hold any specific religion or belief, so that they are not unduly disadvantaged by any arrangements made. Managers may wish to keep a record of who has been granted leave in these cases, and how decisions have been reached.

Offering prayers whilst at work

Many religions also require time during the day for prayer or meditation. It is good practice to provide a room for this purpose, designated for use by all members of staff for the specific purpose of prayer or quiet contemplation.

Flexibility around time allowed for prayer and ablutions can be best achieved by discussion with the person concerned, as individual needs can vary. Being flexible with the times of normal

break periods can often lead to acceptable solutions. It is important to remember that most individuals have had a great deal of experience at fitting such needs around the ordinary call of work. It is essential that all such arrangements conform to the organisational policy and are seen as transparent and fair to all employees.

Dietary requirements

Many religions or beliefs have specific dietary requirements. For this reason, those bringing food into work may need to store and heat it separately from other food. For instance, some Hindu staff members may not want to store vegetarian products alongside meat products, and Muslims will not wish their food to be in contact with pork or with anything that may have been in contact with pork. These are all very real issues for those concerned, and employers should be ready to discuss and reach acceptable solutions.

In some religions, it is a requirement to fast for a certain period of time. Consideration should be given to ways of supporting staff during these periods, but employers should also be careful to ensure that excessive extra duties are not placed on other staff which could cause conflict or claims of discrimination.

Religious Dress Code

Cultural dress codes based on religion or belief should be considered sympathetically unless there are justifiable reasons, such as health and safety issues, for not permitting certain items of clothing.

Upon death considerations

In some religions, a long period of mourning is required when a person dies – for instance, in Hinduism the period of mourning is 13 days,

In Islam some widows observe an extended mourning period of four months and 10 days.

Chaplaincy

Chaplains in the NHS provide a range of services, including:

- **Spiritual and Pastoral Care:** Offering a compassionate, non-judgmental presence to patients and staff, providing a space for reflection and emotional support.
- **Religious and Non-Religious Support:** Facilitating religious rites and ceremonies, such as prayer, communion, and end-of-life rituals, as well as offering support to those with no religious affiliation.
- **Crisis and Bereavement Support:** Assisting individuals and families during times of trauma, loss, or significant life changes.
- **Staff Support and Wellbeing:** Providing emotional and spiritual support to NHS staff, contributing to their resilience and well-being.

The NHS Chaplaincy teams are usually made up by multi-faith Chaplains. NHS England has established guidelines to ensure that chaplaincy services are inclusive and meet the diverse needs of patients and staff. These guidelines emphasise person-centred care, respect for all faiths and beliefs, and the importance of chaplaincy in supporting holistic health. The UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy (UKBHC) provides standards for chaplaincy services, offering a framework for quality and

accountability. Whilst these guidelines are voluntary, they are recommended to ensure the same practices are followed throughout NHS trusts in England.

Section 8

Useful contacts

- **Faith Requirements Resource Pack** - A Guide for Hospital Staff to Improve Patient Care is a very useful, comprehensive guide to the requirements of patients from different faiths: www.mfghc.com/resources/resource_74.pdf
- **Check Up!** is a guide to the special healthcare needs of ethnic religious minority communities, produced by Diversiton in partnership with the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum: www.diversiton.com/downloads/checkUp.pdf
- **ACAS** has developed *Religion or Belief and the Workplace*, a useful guide for employers and employees: www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/f/l/religion_1.pdf
- **The Employers Forum on Belief** has a very useful website with interesting real-life case studies and good practice examples from its members: www.efrb.org.uk
- **The General Medical Council** page on religion or belief gives valuable information and other links to useful material www.gmc-uk.org/publications/valuing_diversity/beliefs_religion.asp
- **The Inter-Faith Network for the UK:** www.interfaith.org.uk
- **BBC page on religion and ethics:** www.bbc.co.uk/religion/