

Issue 3  
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# Diversity

## Handbook

**ian williams**  
Looking after Buildings

“Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. These rights and freedoms – based on core principles like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and autonomy – have inspired a range of international and regional human rights treaties. They are relevant to our day-to-day life and protect our freedom to control our own life, effectively take part in decisions made by public authorities which impact upon your rights and get fair and equal services from public authorities.”

“We live in a country with a long history of upholding people’s rights, valuing diversity and challenging intolerance. The EHRC seeks to maintain and strengthen this heritage while identifying and tackling areas where there is still unfair discrimination or where human rights are not being respected.”

**Equality and Human Rights Commission**



erosh is the national consortium for older people’s housing and support and has worked in collaboration with Ian Williams on a new initiative aimed to prepare contractors for sensitive working in people’s homes.

Ian Williams is committed to equality and treating our customers and employees with respect, fairness and dignity. We aim to deliver equality.

The Equality Act 2010 identifies Nine Protected Characteristics to be considered in the provision of services: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex or Sexual Orientation.

This guide is divided into sections focusing on each of the above strands.

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## How to Use This Guide

This guide aims to give Ian Williams' employees and other partners in the supply chain information about the Nine Protected Characteristics, which will help to ensure we continue to provide a sensitive service to all stakeholders.

This handbook includes guidance and information that is relevant when visiting customers in their homes or places of education or work. It is important to note that this guide is provided to raise awareness of key issues surrounding Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex or Sexual Orientation equality which should be guided by common sense. It is important to recognise that because we are all unique and individual, this handbook should be used as general guidance and it is important to remember that each situation and each customer is very different and should be treated as such. This information looks at common issues that should be considered when visiting a person's home, place of work or learning, or when making appointments.

We will make sure that everyone is treated equally according to their unique requirements, and is not excluded from receiving services of the same standard because of their individual characteristics.

**This guide should be used in conjunction with the Equality Training Programmes obligatory for all Ian Williams' employees and supply chain partners.**

## **Understanding Equality**

An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be. The main thrust is about what we can do to create a fairer society that recognises that:

- Equality is an issue for us all
- We don't all start from the same place
- To create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs

## General Guidance

- Always be polite, courteous and treat everyone with dignity and respect. Treat others as you would expect to be treated in your own home or workplace
- Be aware of issues that affect people from the different diversity groups
- Avoid using jargon and slang or terms of endearment when dealing with customers – what you say may have a different meaning to the other person
- Behaviour and conduct should be guided by common sense
- Don't make generalisations or assumptions about groups or individuals
- Tailor the way in which you communicate to meet the needs of the customer
- It is not possible to anticipate every customer's needs but providing clear information about the work you will be undertaking will help the customers identify any potential concerns before the work commences
- If you're not sure about anything just ask the customer. You are less likely to offend someone by asking, rather than making assumptions or guessing.

Age

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# Age

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## Introduction

Life expectancy has risen sharply over the last century, and is expected to continue to rise across almost every population throughout the world. The population as a whole is getting older.

The age of the UK population is rising fast. In the UK, we currently have 11.4 million people aged over 65. This number is expected to rise to 15.5 million in 2030 and 19 million by 2050.

## Definitions

According to the EU, the definition of ‘older people’ is anybody over the age of 50, but people often consider the pensionable age of 65 as the gateway to older age. However, it is becoming increasingly common for people to continue to work beyond the age of 65.

Young people are between the ages of 18 and 25, while children are under 18.

## Discrimination

People can face discrimination in many areas of their lives because of their age. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 provide protection against age discrimination in employment, training and adult education, for people of all ages. Further, The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against employees, job seekers and trainees because of age. This may include because they are 'younger' or 'older' than a relevant and comparable employee. The Equality Act (2010) makes it unlawful for people over the age of 18 to be discriminated against on the grounds of their age when receiving goods and services both public and private. It also places a legal duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity among people of different ages.

**Ageism** means prejudging or making assumptions about people on the basis of their age. It is a major barrier to the well-being, participation and citizenship of older and younger people alike, and can lead to discriminatory treatment. It leads to the stereotyping of older people and is just as wrong as any other form of prejudice, such as racism and sexism.

**Age discrimination** happens when someone is treated less favourably because of their age as a result of another person's attitude or behaviour. It becomes institutionalised when policies, regulations or practices are in place which disadvantage people because of their age. Age discrimination can be direct or indirect, and can include harassment or victimisation.

## Older People

The health of older people is often poorer than that of the rest of the population. An estimated 4 million older people in the UK (36% of people aged 65-74 and 47% aged 75+) have a limiting longstanding illness. This equates to 40% of all people aged over 65. Half of the 10 million disabled people in Britain as outlined by the Disability Discrimination Act are over state pension age. Older people are more likely to be living in poverty than people of working age. Older people are also more likely to live alone and spend more time in their homes.

## Children and Younger People

There are an estimated 12 million children under the age of 15 in the UK, which is nearly a fifth of the population.

In 2003, the Government published a Green Paper called *Every Child Matters* alongside the formal response to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié. Shortly afterwards, the Children Act 2004 became law. More recently, the Government has also introduced The Children and Young Person Act 2008, the main purpose of which is to extend the existing framework of children in care in England and Wales and to make sure the care they receive is well supported, of high quality and tailored to their needs. The Act created the first Children's Commissioner for England in 2004. Welfare and Social Services agencies came together with Ofsted to produce and implement the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

## Vulnerable children and younger people

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 is designed to implement new and more thorough ways in which to carry out checks on those individuals who wish to work with children, older people or any person who is classed as being vulnerable.

## Further Information and Useful Resources

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

[www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

[www.agecymru.org.uk](http://www.agecymru.org.uk)

[www.olderpeoplewales.com](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com)

[www.ageuk.org](http://www.ageuk.org)

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

[www.11million.org.uk](http://www.11million.org.uk)

# Disability

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# Disability

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## Introduction

Replacing The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), The Equality Act 2010 helps to enforce, protect and promote individual rights.

There are around 10 million disabled people in Britain. The prevalence of disability rises with age. Around 6% of children are disabled, compared to 16% of working age adults and 45% of adults over State Pension age. It is important to note that people who are disabled are more likely to be living in social housing than non-disabled people.

The definition of impairment is broad, and can include physical, manual dexterity and mobility problems; sensory impairments; chronic illness or health issues including HIV and AIDS; all learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems.

It includes people with hidden impairments such as epilepsy, asthma, cancer, angina, diabetes, sickle cell anaemia; specific learning difficulties like dyslexia, speech and language impairments; people who identify as 'disfigured'; people of diminutive stature and people with mental ill health such as long term depression, hoarding and OCD tendencies, schizophrenia and psychoses.

This section outlines some disabilities that customers you may meet may have. This is not an exhaustive list and every person's experience of their disability will be different. For further information, please refer to the sources listed at the end of this section.

## Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 is a piece of legislation that promotes civil rights for disabled people and protects disabled people from discrimination. It defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

It makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people, or people who have had a disability, in a number of areas including, employment, access to goods and services, education and transport.

Ian Williams works closely with housing associations and local authority clients to achieve this.

## Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities can take many forms. It includes people without limbs, who have sight loss or deafness, who have difficulty moving or walking, who can't sustain physical effort for any length of time, and so on. People can be born with a condition or conditions can develop over time. Most disabled people today have a condition that has developed, rather than one which they were born with. The challenges that disabled people have in common are not so much about their condition, but have more to do with the barriers that exist in society. Disabled people may find that discrimination, which is often unintentional and indirect, prevents them from having equal access to goods and services and job opportunities. The same is true of other forms of disability.

**Sight Loss and Blindness** These are terms for people who have lost, or have never had some or all of their eyesight. Nearly 2 million people in the UK are blind or partially sighted – that's one person in every thirty. Total blindness is much less common than having some degree of sight loss.

The effect of sight loss varies from person to person. Some conditions such as Macular Degeneration for example, affect a person's central vision but generally tend to leave peripheral (outer) vision mostly unaffected. Cataracts tend to blur people's vision and fine detail such as text becomes hard to read.

In the home and when getting around, people who are blind or have sight loss may rely on their other senses such as hearing and sense of touch to work out where things and places are.

**(d)eafness / (D)eafness** The term deaf (with a lower case d) is used to refer to people who are hard of hearing, who communicate verbally and may have hearing aids or implants to help them to do so. The term Deaf (with an upper case D) refers to people who use British Sign Language (BSL) rather than communicating verbally.

Because BSL is the first language of many Deaf people, their ability to read and write may be lower than would be expected. Deaf people often do not see themselves as being disabled, but as being part of a different culture, which is separate from and different to hearing culture.

**Arthritis** Around 10 million people in the UK have arthritis (inflammation of joints) and it is one of the most common causes of disability among older people. Simple daily tasks

can become difficult because of pain, immobility and loss of strength. Arthritis is the biggest cause of pain and physical disability in the United Kingdom with more than four in five people in constant pain or limited in their scope to perform everyday tasks. For example, 65% of people with arthritis have difficulty making a cup of tea. Arthritis, along with many other mobility problems, impacts upon the way people use their homes and access their environment, when pain is at its most severe.

## Learning Disabilities

People who have a learning disability are sometimes referred to as having 'learning difficulties' which means that they have specific problems with learning as a result of medical problems, emotional problems and language impairments.

Having a learning disability is not an indication of how intelligent someone is. People with learning disabilities have trouble performing specific types of skills or completing tasks alone or if taught in conventional ways. There are different types of learning disabilities, and the level of impact they have on a person's life varies between individuals. Some people with learning disabilities will need part and full time support in their homes, while others will not.

**Down syndrome** is a genetic condition which affects 1 in every 1,000 babies born in the UK. People with Down syndrome learn at a different rate and in different ways to others. Down syndrome also causes some delay in people's physical development and an increased risk of developing other physical disabilities, such as sensory impairments. People with Down syndrome have characteristic facial features.

**Autism** Often referred to as an autism spectrum disorder, due to the condition affecting people in different ways, despite sharing three main areas of difficulty. These areas include social communication, imagination, and interacting socially. Some people require support to live day-to-day, while others will not. 1 in 100 people have a form of autism, and it affects men more than women.

**Dyslexia** Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that affects the skills involved in reading and spelling, but it is not an indicator of intelligence. People with dyslexia might also have problems with language, motor co-ordination, concentration and organisation. 6 million people in the UK have dyslexia.

## Mental Health

'Mental illness' is a broad term covering a range of very different conditions. These range from psychoses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder through to neuroses such as phobias and anxiety disorders.

The term mental health refers to a person's psychological wellbeing. Definitions of mental health and wellbeing are personal and depend upon our individual life experiences and life context. Therefore they can be influenced by our gender, race, religious beliefs, social class, experience of family life, aspirations and beliefs and other factors. It is thought that one in four people in the UK will experience mental ill health at some point in their lives.

**Dementia and Alzheimer's** Dementia is currently believed to affect currently 850,000 people in the UK, and one in six people aged 80 and over have dementia. However, it is important to bear in mind that these conditions don't just affect older people – for example, there are 40,000 younger

people with dementia in the UK. Dementia leads to the deterioration of mental functions of the brain including memory, language and decision making. Alzheimer's is a type of dementia. Symptoms of dementia include memory and language problems, trouble in performing day-to-day tasks and mood or personality changes.

**Depression** This can affect anyone, can take many different forms and is the most common mental health problem in the western world. Major depression can be described as low mood experienced for a long period of time which can involve sleeplessness, fatigue, serious self-neglect, self harm or suicide. Post-natal depression is a type of depression affecting women anywhere between two weeks and two years after childbirth. Seasonal Affective Disorder is another form of depression which some people experience during the winter months, which seems to go away during the rest of the year.

Manic Depression (sometimes called Bipolar Disorder), is different to other forms of depression. It is not as some people think, a condition where people experience mood swings. It is a condition where people experience long periods of feeling depressed and low, followed by periods where people are manic. They might seem excitable or high and might have delusions or false beliefs or hallucinations and behave in an out-of-character way.

Again, it's important to remember that the extent and symptoms of the problem will vary from person to person and will affect the way they live their lives in different ways and the level of support they will need.

**Anxiety** This condition which causes people to experience high levels stress, tension and fear . Often this stress and fear comes with physical symptoms like rapid heart beat, sweating and feeling physically sick or having panic attacks. Anxiety can be a long term problem that is so intense it can prevent people from leading a 'normal life.' It is often brought on by stressful life events. Often people who have anxiety also suffer from depression. Types of anxiety can also include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Where possible, usually with the input from our Resident Liaison Officers (RLO) and Community Health Officers (CHO) we will identify in advance residents who have additional support needs, so that operatives can tap into specialist support to help them carry out their work as smoothly as possible. If you have concerns when working in a home that a customer may need support, you need to pass back this information to the RLO or your manager who will alert the client.

### **OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder)**

People who experience OCD may feel they have no control over certain repetitive thoughts, idea or urges such as contamination for example. These thoughts are often distressing and can cause people serious anxiety which they may try and temporarily relieve by performing the particular rituals such as washing their hands, counting or checking. OCD may cause people to have symptoms of anxiety and panic, including a racing heart, churning stomach, dizziness, shortness of breath, sweating and trembling. The symptoms of OCD can be very distressing and can disrupt a person's day-to-day life. It is important to bear in mind, that when working in people's home, anything that you do will ultimately impact upon their environment and their wellbeing.

**Hoarding** A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner. The items can be of little or no monetary value and usually result in unmanageable amounts of clutter. It's estimated that between 2% and 5% of adults in the UK may have symptoms of a hoarding disorder.

A hoarding disorder can be a problem for several reasons. It can take over the person's life, making it very difficult for them to get around their house. It can cause their work performance, personal hygiene and relationships to suffer, and often, the person hoarding is reluctant or unable to have visitors or even allow tradespeople in to carry out essential repairs. In addition to causing a health risk to the person or visitors, the situation can result in loneliness and isolation.

**Schizophrenia** Schizophrenia affects roughly 1 in every 100 people. It is often wrongly taken to mean that a person suffering from schizophrenia has a split personality, but this is untrue. Schizophrenia is known as a psychotic disorder which means that it causes a person to be unable to distinguish their own thoughts, ideas, perceptions and imaginings and reality. A person with schizophrenia might experience symptoms such as hearing voices or having hallucinations. They may also experience disordered thoughts or memory problems. People with schizophrenia may appear to other people to be confused and they may have difficulty communicating with others.

As with all mental health problems, the impact of these conditions and the way symptoms present themselves will vary from person to person. People with mental health problems may be diagnosed with more than one condition and they may have other disabilities, such as a learning disability. It is important to recognise that people will therefore need different levels of support to live in their own homes and communities.

## Further Information and Useful Resources

- [www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)
- [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)
- [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)
- [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)
- [www.disabilitywales.org](http://www.disabilitywales.org)
- [www.disabilityuk.com](http://www.disabilityuk.com)
- [www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)
- [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)
- [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)
- [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)
- [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)
- [www.ocduk.org/hoarding](http://www.ocduk.org/hoarding)
- [www.nhs.uk/Conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions)

# Gender Reassignment

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# Gender Reassignment

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## Introduction

Gender reassignment is a personal, social, and sometimes medical process by which a person's gender appears to others to have changed. Anyone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender is protected from discrimination under the Equality Act. A person does not need to be undergoing medical supervision to be protected. So, for example, a woman who decides to live as a man without undergoing any medical procedures would be covered.

## Definitions

**Gender:** Is assigned at birth based on the sex of the individual.

**Transgender:** A term used to describe the variety of gender identity. This term can be used to describe people who do not conform to common ideas of gender roles or who have Gender Dysphoria.

**Transsexual:** People (who may or may not have Gender Dysphoria) who have decided to undergo treatment and surgery to change their gender to the one they identify with **or** a person who has decided to live their life in the gender with which they identify, but has decided not to undergo treatment.

## Gender Reassignment

- (1) A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.
- (2) A reference to a transsexual person is a reference to a person who has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

## Legislation

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 first gave transsexual people legal recognition in their acquired gender, following their successful application to the Gender Recognition panel. Transsexual people are also able to marry in their acquired gender, once their change of gender is legally recognised. Anyone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender is now protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

## Discrimination

There are four types of discrimination.

**Direct:** when someone is treated differently and not as well as other people because of their gender reassignment.

**Indirect:** can occur where a workplace rule, practice or procedure is applied to all workers, but disadvantages people who want to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment.

**Harassment:** when unwanted conduct related to gender reassignment causes a distressing, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

**Victimisation:** when an employee is treated unfairly because they have made or supported a claim about gender reassignment discrimination.

## Gender Identity

Research shows that transgender people are often the victims of harassment in their local communities, work or where they live. A recent study revealed that 88% of transgender employees experienced discrimination or harassment in their workplace. When transgender people are harassed in relation to their gender identity. It is a hate crime.

For some transsexual or transgender people their trans-status is personal and they wish to keep it private. Others may be happy to be open about their status. Where a customer has expressed a wish to be recognised by their new status, it's important to address them as such. So if a person has identified themselves as Ms, Mr, Miss or Mrs, that is how you should refer to them.

## Further Information and Useful Resources

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)  
[www.ftm.org.uk](http://www.ftm.org.uk)  
[www.grp.gov.uk](http://www.grp.gov.uk)  
[www.gendertrust.org.uk](http://www.gendertrust.org.uk)  
[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gender-dysphoria/  
Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gender-dysphoria/Pages/Introduction.aspx)  
[www.pfc.org.uk](http://www.pfc.org.uk)

# Marriage and Civil Partnership

  
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# Marriage and Civil Partnership

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## Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against or treat someone unfairly because they are married or in a civil partnership. Gay and lesbian couples are able to register their civil partnerships, giving them many of the same rights as same sex and opposite sex married couples.

Same-sex couples who register as civil partners have the same rights as married couples in a wide range of things including employment and vocational training. Whatever benefits married employees and their spouses are given, must also be given to employees who are in civil partnerships and to their civil partners. This includes survivor pensions, flexible working, statutory paternity pay, paternity and adoption leave, health insurance or time off before or after marriage/registration.

## Same sex marriage

Same sex couples can marry in civil ceremonies or religious ones where the religious organisation allows it. Civil partners who wish to convert their civil partnership into marriage will be able to do so.

## Key points

- Same sex couples who register as civil partners have the same rights as married couples in respect of employment rights
- The Equality Act protects employees who are in a civil partnership, or marriage against discrimination.
- The Equality Act also gives protection from discrimination because of an employee's sexual orientation
- Recruitment and selection policies must not discriminate on the grounds of civil partnerships, marriage or sexual orientation

## Discrimination

There are three main types of civil partnership and marriage discrimination.

**Direct** When someone is treated differently and not as well as other people because they are in a civil partnership or married. For example a married member of the team is not promoted as they will need to travel and the employer feels that the job is best suited to a single person.

**Indirect discrimination** Can occur where a workplace rule, practice or procedure is applied to all workers, but disadvantages people who are in a civil partnership or marriage.

**Victimisation** Treating an employee unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint about marriage or civil partnership discrimination.

## Further Information And Useful Resources

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

# Pregnancy and Maternity

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# Pregnancy and Maternity

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## Introduction

Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate, or treat employees unfavourably because of their pregnancy, or because they have given birth recently, are breastfeeding or on maternity leave

## Discrimination

Discrimination happens when a woman is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy, pregnancy-related illness or she exercises the right to statutory maternity leave.

It is unlawful to discriminate against an employee because they are pregnant or have a pregnancy-related illness. This covers the protected period which finishes when maternity leave ends or when the employee returns to work.

Discrimination because of pregnancy or maternity is automatic discrimination. There is no need for the woman to show that she has been treated less favourably than a male employee, or a female employee who was not pregnant.

There are two main types of pregnancy and maternity discrimination.

**Direct** When a female employee is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy or maternity leave or because she is breastfeeding.

**Victimisation** Treating an employee less favourably than others. For example, this might be because they have made or supported a complaint about pregnancy, maternity or breastfeeding discrimination.

## Further Information And Useful Resources

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Equality and Human Rights Commission's  
#worksforme initiative

# Race

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# Race

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## Introduction

Over the past 10 years, the ethnic minority population has almost doubled and now is at least 8 million people, or 14 percent of the UK population. It is expected to double in the next decades to be between 20 and 30% by 2050.

The 2011 Census showed that almost half (46%, 3.4 million) of the foreign-born population identified with a White ethnic group, a third identified as Asian/Asian British (33%, 2.4 million) and 13% (992,000) identified with Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British.

Religion is often linked to ethnicity or culture, but this isn't always the case and we can't assume that because a person is of a particular ethnicity or race, that they hold particular religious beliefs or values.

## Legislation

Direct discrimination occurs when a person treats you less favourably on racial grounds than he or she would treat, or treats, some other person. The Race Relations Act 1976 defines 'racial grounds' as being on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. Most people think of race discrimination as being less favourable treatment on the grounds of colour or race.

However, discrimination on the grounds of nationality, ethnic or national origins is equally unlawful. Indirect race discrimination is defined in the employment context and several others as being the application of a specific provision, criterion or practice, which places a racial group at a disadvantage, in a way that cannot be justified.

In the autumn of 2010 the Equality Act placed a new duty on public service providers, to actively promote equality of opportunity for people of different ethnicities in the same way as for people of different genders, religion and disabled people.

## Definition

- Irish
- Pakistani
- Indian
- Iranian
- Chinese
- Bangladeshi
- African
- Somali
- Yemeni
- Vietnamese
- Traveller
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers



## Irish

**History** The Irish often go unrecognised and unacknowledged as a minority ethnic group. In 1997, a groundbreaking report by the Commission for Racial Equality found that:

'There was extremely strong resistance to recognition of the directiveness of Irish experience in Britain which results in a lack of acknowledgement of Irish needs and rights, but at the same time there is widespread and almost completely unquestioned acceptance of anti-Irish racism in British society.'

Following this report and after many years of lobbying, the Irish in Britain were afforded the same rights in law as other minority ethnic groups.

The Irish continue to experience racism and discrimination often associated with stereotypes of the Irish. There is also an association of the Irish with violence and terrorism. Many Irish people choose to hide their cultural identity rather than face such prejudice.

**Religion** Though the Irish are as diverse in their religious preference as any other group, the main faith groups are Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. People from the Republic of Ireland are more likely to have been brought up in the Catholic faith. Broadly speaking, religion is more likely to be a feature of cultural and family life than in the indigenous British population.

**Languages** Most Irish people speak English as a first language though there are communities in Southern Ireland that also speak Gaelic. There are moves to increase the use of Gaelic that parallel the way in which the Welsh have reclaimed the Welsh language.

**Naming** Many Irish names are distinctive and recognisable e.g. Kelly, though non-Irish people may well inherit Irish names and Irish people will also have names that are not distinctive. Most distinctive is the prefix 'O', e.g. 'O'Neill' and the tradition of gender specific prefixes that derive from the Gaelic.

**Diet** There are no restrictions on diet within Irish culture and tastes vary greatly.

**Social Customs** Irish people are more likely to have close links with family members both here and in Ireland. There is a greater reliance on family networks for support and a closer involvement with family members socially. Family ties and loyalties are very important.

The Irish follow the Christian traditions with regard to death though there is a strong tradition of a 'wake' or party following the death to celebrate the life of the deceased.

The Irish are also more likely to remember the anniversary of the death of family members and may choose to get together at such times to mark the occasion.

There is a strong tradition of hospitality and welcome within the Irish community combined with an openness to visitors and strangers that is characterised as the ‘craic’ though this has been misrepresented as merely being to do with the consumption of alcohol. There are also strong cultural themes about service to others and charitable work.

St Patrick is the Patron Saint of Ireland and the Irish and others all over the world celebrate St Patrick’s Day on 17<sup>th</sup> March.



## Pakistani

**History** Immigration to the UK began in earnest in the 1950s when people were encouraged by the British Government to come to meet labour shortages in the UK. The first immigrants were mainly male as they intended to earn some money and then return to Pakistan. However many chose to settle permanently and brought their wives and families to live here, establishing a settled community.

**Religion** Most Pakistanis are Sunni Muslims.

### Languages

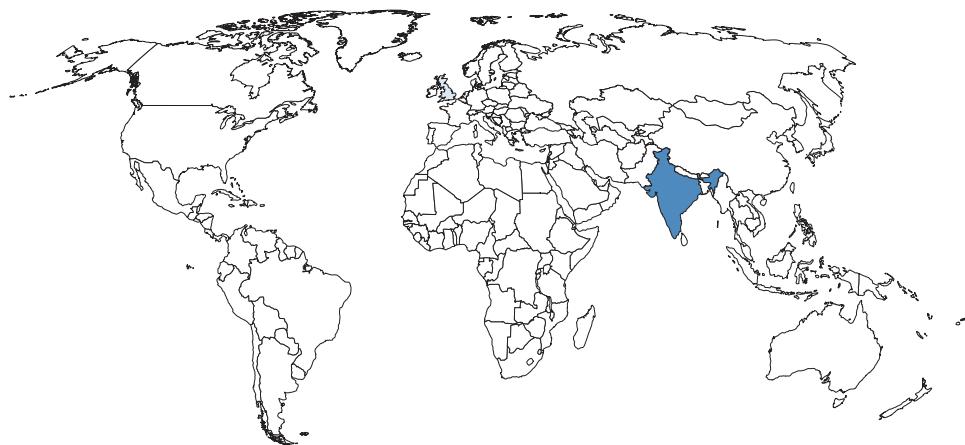
Urdu and English  
Mirpur  
Punjabi (several dialects)  
Pashto  
Sindhi  
Balochi

Many Pakistanis will speak Urdu or Punjabi. Urdu is the main written language. A significant proportion of Pakistanis, particularly women, have difficulties with speaking English and some Pakistanis may be unable to read Urdu.

**Naming** The naming system is complex and has Muslim origins (see Islam sections). A person may use a preferred name and not all members of the family may share a “family name”.

**Diet** See Islam for information. This should be borne in mind when arranging catering for events.

**Social Customs** Family ties are traditionally very important. The male is the head of the extended family (this may include grandparents, aunts and uncles and even neighbours as well as “immediate” family) and the elderly are accorded great respect.



## Indian

**History** There have been Indians in Britain since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The peak of immigration occurred in the 1960s.

**Religion** Most Indians are Sikhs or Hindus, some may be Tamils. Some Tamil Indians may be Christians, Hindus or Muslims. (See relevant religion sections). Some may be Parsees.

### Languages

- English
- Hindi
- Gujerati
- Punjabi
- Urdu (occasionally)
- Tamil

Many Indians communicate well in English although this may be less so for women and older people.

**Naming** Depending on the religion of the person, either the Hindu system or Sikh system may be used. (See relevant sections).

**Diet** Many British Indians are vegetarian. Of those who eat meat, Hindus and Sikhs will often avoid beef. This may be important in arranging catering for events.

**Social Customs** An Indian family is highly valued and families may be extended, although younger generations prefer to live in separate houses from the older relatives.

Indian people may traditionally greet by saying “Namaste” with hands folded in front of the body.



## Iranian

**History** The Islamic Republic of Iran has long been known as Persia. In 1935 the name changed to Iran. Iran means “the land of the Aryans”. It was ruled by a monarchy up until 1977 and changed to the Islamic Republic in 1978.

The Islamic Republic of Iran lies in the Middle East. Iran is the fourth largest country in Asia and has a population of over 60 million.

**Religion** Iran is a Muslim country. The majority of Persians and Azerbaijanis are Shi'ite Muslims. Other ethnic groups are mainly Sunni Muslims. There are also Christians, Baha'is, Jews and Zoroastrians (see relevant religion section).

## Languages

Farsi  
Turkish  
Arabic  
Blochis  
Kurdish  
Torkomans

**Naming** Some Iranian women keep their own family name after marriage, in documents. However as a sign of respect to their husband, socially and verbally they are called and known by their husband's family name. If you are unsure, check which name should be used for record-keeping purposes.

**Diet** Rice forms a staple part of the Iranian diet, either cooked plain or with fresh herbs. Fresh fruit is popular as are fresh greens and herbs. Some Iranians avoid pork. This is important in arranging catering for events and meetings.

**Social Customs** Traditionally, the hierarchy in the Iranian family is ranked in the following order: father, mother, sons and daughters. However this has changed over the years. It is common for Iranian people to avoid eye contact, particularly traditional women. Similarly, shaking hands is not common.

Elaborate greetings and enquires about health are considered good manners, as is drinking tea during a visit.

It is polite for an Iranian person to refuse an offer of food or drink at least once before accepting it.

Iranian New Year (NawRuz) begins on 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> March, during which time gifts are exchanged. This is celebrated by Iranians from a variety of religious backgrounds.



## Chinese

**History** The first Chinese immigrants to Britain came in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and were merchant seamen who settled in ports such as Liverpool and London. A small number of Chinese men came to Britain following the First World War, after they had been recruited by Britain to work as labourers on the Western Front.

With the Second World War large numbers of Chinese people again came to Britain as seamen. Many people were unable to return home following Japanese conquests in China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Economic changes in Hong Kong led to further immigration in the early 1960s. The last significant immigration was the arrival in the 1970s of Vietnamese refugees, many of whom were Cantonese speaking ethnic Chinese people.

Many Chinese people in Britain started out working in a laundry and later moved into catering amongst other professions.

**Religion and Beliefs** Chinese people may be influenced by a variety of beliefs including Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism and ancestor worship. For this reason, specific information on festivals is included here

New Year – follows the lunar calendar and so changes each year, but is usually around the end of January / beginning of February.

Ching-Ming – usually in April

The Dragon Boat – usually in June

The Mid-Autumn – in September

Chung Yung – usually in October

Many Chinese do not like to speak about death. It is believed that a person should be surrounded by their family and preferably at home at the time of their death. They also believe that the body should be kept intact after death.

## Languages

A number of dialects are spoken, mainly:

- Cantonese
- Mandarin
- Hakka
- Hokkien
- Chou

Mandarin is the official language, which is the main written language and leaflets and forms translated into Mandarin can be read by any literate Chinese person, regardless of the dialect spoken.

Older Chinese people in particular often do not speak English fluently.

**Naming** There are often three names, traditionally the family name comes first then the personal names. Some Chinese people add an English personal name in which case the family name will usually be last. There are also variations, in that married women may retain their maiden name or may relinquish their maiden name and adopt their husband's name.

It is respectful to use a person's title (e.g. Mr) and family name when addressing them. It is best to check how names should be recorded for record-keeping purposes.

**Diet** Chinese Buddhists may not eat meat on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Older Chinese people often do not like milk or cheese as these are unfamiliar in a traditional Chinese diet. This may be important in planning events which will include catering.

**Social Customs** Traditional Chinese families are large and extended families (this may include grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as “immediate” family) although this is changing. The man is head of the family and should be accorded respect and addressed using his title.

Respect is important to the Chinese, which means they are often very polite but reserved. Chinese people have respect for authority but will not respect authority which does not show understanding of their traditions. An over-intrusive approach may cause offence.



## Bangladeshi

**History** Bangladeshis began to arrive in the UK sometime after 1945, when the area now known as Bangladesh was still part of India and Pakistan. Immigrants, at the invitation of the British government, came to address the severe labour shortages that the UK was experiencing.

The majority of Bangladeshi people come from the district of Syhlet.

**Religion** Most Bangladeshis are Sunni Muslim. (See Islam section for more details) A minority may be Hindu, Buddhist or Christian.

## Languages

Bengali (or Bangla) many with a Sylheti dialect  
English

**Naming** The naming system is complex and has Muslim origins. It is best to check how they record names for record keeping purposes.

**Diet** See Islam section for details.

**Social Customs** Traditionally Bangladeshi families are very family focussed and live in large extended families (this may include grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as “immediate” family) who live and work together. Marriages may be arranged. However, it is important to remember as with all social customs, these are not always passed through the generations.



## African Caribbean

**History** The Caribbean is made up of a large group of islands speaking many languages, for example English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Creole. Due to the British colonial era, Guyana is also closely linked to the Caribbean, although it is actually a South American country.

Although there was a small community in the UK earlier, the majority of African Caribbean people came to the UK during the labour shortages in the 1950s, when they were encouraged to do so by the British Government.

**Religion** The majority of African Caribbean living in the UK are Christian although some are Rastafarians, Muslim and Hindu. Religion plays a major role in African Caribbean people's lives.

### Languages

English – many are bi-lingual

Creole – a dialect of the Caribbean

African words are in use too

**Naming** See relevant religion sections for information.

**Diet** There are not normally any specialist dietary requirements. Some Rastafarians will only eat 'I-tal' food. See section on Rastafarianism for more information.

**Social Customs** People may live in extended families (this may include grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as "immediate" family) and there is a large proportion of the community who are under 16 years of age. Older members of the community are traditionally shown great respect. Grandparents may play an important role in raising grandchildren. Many African Caribbean people prefer to have their older people living with them or close by so that they can be supported by the family.

Funerals can be large occasions with a wake or 'nine night' held nine days after the death which tend to be held in community centres.



## Somali

**History** Somalia is on the horn of Africa. Somali people were traditionally nomadic and have a long history over thousands of years.

Somalia has had links with Britain for over a hundred years; in the 1880s the northern part of the country became a British colony called “British Somali Land”.

The southern part of the country became an Italian colony in 1908. In 1960 the country gained independence and the two parts merged as the Republic of Somalia.

In 1969 there was a coup resulting in a military dictatorship. Opposition to the dictatorship grew, until civil war broke out in 1988. Government attacks in the north of the country, where opposition was strongest, caused 600,000 people to flee. The war is still continuing.

Somalis have been coming to the UK since the beginning of the twentieth century. This increased in the 1950s and 1960s when people were invited to come to Britain to work.

Many people fleeing Somalia have seen friends and relatives killed and tortured and their homes and villages destroyed. The journey involved a long trek to Ethiopia, where many people lived in refugee camps with a lack of sanitation, food and water and where disease was common.

Many families are divided, with family members left behind in Somalia or Ethiopia.

There are many different clans in Somalia and conflict between them has contributed to the current civil war. These different clans will be represented in the Somali community in this country and so there may be tension between different parts of the community.

**Religion** The majority of Somalis are Sunni Muslims. (See Islam section for more details).

## Languages

Somali

Arabic

English

Italian (may be spoken by a minority)

The Somali language was first written down in 1972 and so some Somali people do not read or write Somali (particularly people who were nomads in Somalia).

**Naming** Both men and women use a system which consists of a first name, followed by their father's name and then their grandfather's name. The family name reflects the clan origins. Women may not change their name on marriage and therefore their name will differ from that of their children and husband. You should check how to record names for record keeping purposes.

**Diet** See relevant Religion section for details.

**Social Customs** Somalis often live in extended families (this may include grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as “immediate” family) with the man as head of the family. Confrontation between men and women hardly ever occurs as roles are often closely defined.

Qat is a plant-based stimulant, used by Somali and Yemeni males, which is normally chewed. It is legal in the UK. Qat is seen as an aid to decision making by Somali men.



## **Yemeni**

**History** Yemen is in the south west corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It is an Arabic – speaking country. Since independence Yemen has experienced a turbulent period including its separation into two states. The country is now reunited, although unrest continues.

Yemeni people began to come to Britain in the 1950s when British engineering firms recruited in Yemen.

**Religion** The majority of the Yemeni community are Muslims – Shias from the north and Sunnis from the south of the country. (See Islam section for more information)

## Languages

Arabic

English

The lack of knowledge of the English language has caused difficulties in accessing services such as housing for some people.

**Naming** See relevant religion sections for details.

**Diet** See Islam section for details.

**Social Customs** The male is traditionally head of the family and families tend to be large. Contacts with Yemen are strong.

The Yemeni community is traditionally self-sufficient and isolated, with an emphasis on support and mutual respect between generations. Families and elders may prefer to live close together, to provide mutual support and help with childcare. However, as with other communities, these traditions are changing.



## Vietnamese

**History** Many Vietnamese came to the UK after the end of the Vietnam War. This included Ethnic Vietnamese people and some Ethnic Chinese people.

**Religion and Beliefs** Ancestor worship is important to the Vietnamese and this may extend to national heroes and heroines. Many Vietnamese are Buddhists and some are Roman Catholics. It is common to combine these belief systems, for example, in Buddhist and Catholic families, there may be a family shrine dedicated to ancestors, often featuring photographs of recently deceased relatives. Set forms of prayer are only used in Catholic families.

## Languages

English  
Cantonese  
Vietnamese  
French (spoken by some older people)

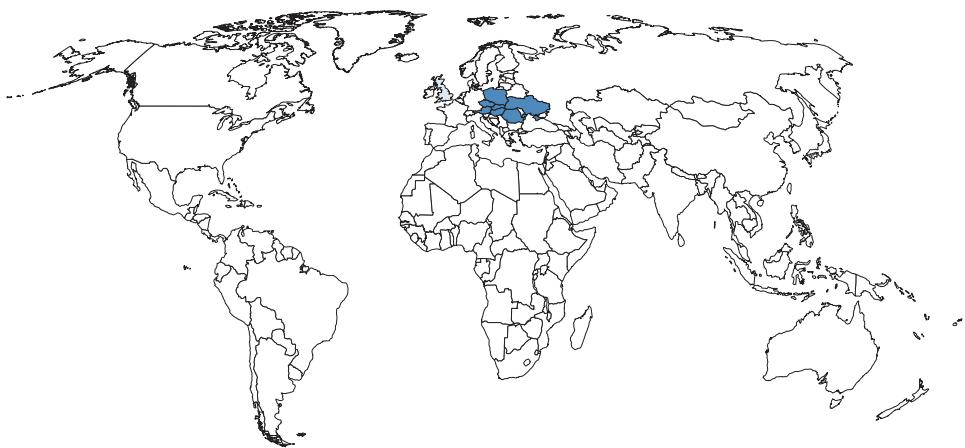
**Naming** Vietnamese names have three parts, a family name, a complimentary name and a personal name. Some Vietnamese in the UK reverse this traditional order, giving the family name last. If in doubt, ask for the family name. Married women do not adopt their husband's family name.

A Vietnamese person should always be addressed by their title (e.g. Mr) and their family name to show respect.

**Diet** Vietnamese Buddhists may have vegetarian days each month. Lamb is not eaten and there is an emphasis on fish, shellfish, poultry and pork. This may be important when organising events including catering.

**Social Customs** The Vietnamese tend to be very family focussed and extended families (this may include grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as "immediate" family) are important. The three generational household is the most important social unit in Vietnam, upon which the care of the sick, the young, the old and the poor depend. These family ties are strong and significant to the Vietnamese people and may explain the extreme sense of loss felt by many Vietnamese in the UK, particularly those who came alone. The head of the household is often male and parents have great influence over their children. Older people are traditionally greatly respected.

When a family member dies, the body is usually kept at home for one to three days. During this time friends and relatives come to pay their respects with offerings of money or food. On the day of the funeral, the coffin is carried in procession to the grave and often a priest or Buddhist monk is invited to come, to pray for the soul of the dead person.



## Traveller Communities

**History** There are approximately 8.5 million Roma/Gypsies in Europe. About 70% of these are in Central or Eastern Europe. There are three main travelling communities – Romanies, Irish travellers and Eastern Roma. Romas were originally from India. The name “Gypsy” comes from the incorrect perception that Romas originated in Egypt.

When Romas came to Europe they came into contact with other groups from Ireland, Spain and Germany. This means that they have complex history, identity and culture.

Romas or Romanies are an ethnic group protected by the Race Relations Act. The term Romany is defined as “A person of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin but does not include members of an organised group of travelling showmen, or of persons engaged in travelling circuses travelling together as such.”

Roma/Gypsies throughout history have experienced persecution and discrimination. Up to half a million died in the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War.

Gypsies have lived in England in substantial numbers since the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is estimated that the nomadic (travelling) population of England is about 90,000 of which 70,000 are gypsies.

**Religion** European Roma may be Roman Catholic and others Muslim.

## Languages

Romani Cant or Gammon

Irish Travellers may speak Shelta

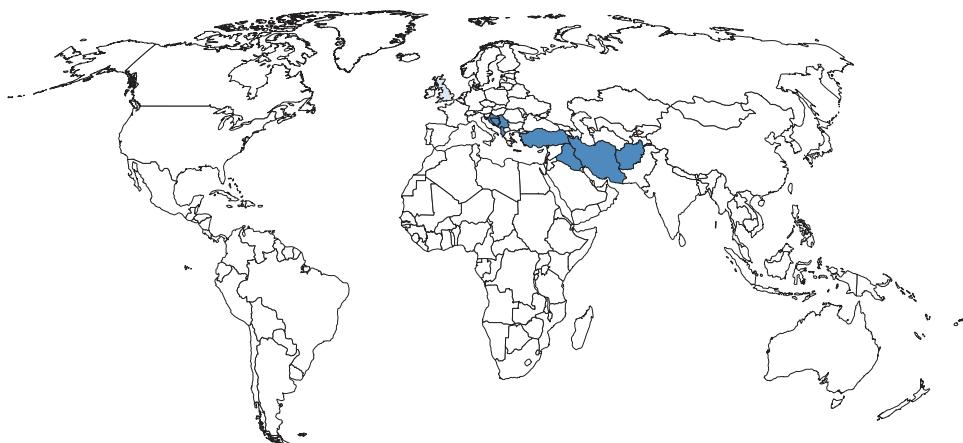
Roma would not be used to non-Roma people. It is likely that the language of the country of origin would be spoken commonly.

Some gypsy travellers may have problems with reading or writing. You should bear this in mind when thinking about how best to communicate with people.

**Naming** No specific information is available at this time.

**Diet** See relevant section on religion.

**Social Customs** Travellers tend to belong to extended families (this may include grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as “immediate” family) and are fiercely independent. This means that their views are poorly represented in the wider community.



## Refugees and Asylum Seekers

As indicated in the previous sections, some BME people in Britain originally came to this country as refugees (for example, Somali people). This section focuses specifically on “newer” refugees.

**Afghan** Afghanistan was a country created by colonial powers and therefore Afghans represent a variety of different ethnic groups. The main groups are Pashtuns who speak Pushto, Tajiks who speak Dari and Uzbeks who speak Uzbek. There are many other smaller ethnic groups and languages. There may be tensions between some members of these groups.

The majority of Afghans are Sunni Muslims, while a few may be Shi'ite Muslim, Sikh or Hindu.

It is customary to shake hands on meeting and taking leave. Among men, embracing is a traditional form of greeting.

The family is very highly regarded. Afghans see family matters as strictly private. People are generally reluctant to share personal and family issues with non family members, including health care professionals, though women may discuss their problems with friends, including non-Afghans.

**Kurds** These come from a variety of nations, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The majority are Sunni Muslims with some Christians and Alevi (non-orthodox Shia Muslims).

Languages spoken include Arabic, Kurdish (one of four dialects) and English. There are likely to be problems living in the UK as English is not the second language of the Kurds and this therefore makes life more difficult.

Despite their variety of nationalities and languages Kurds have a strong sense of their common culture. Kurdish nationalism is often a unifying bond between Kurds, although there are political differences. Kurdish society is clan based and some Kurds may not speak to interpreters if they are from a different clan.

The family is very important in Kurdish society and the male is the head of the household. For most Kurdish men, his family and their lives are private affairs and so visitors should ensure that direct personal questions are not asked. There may be suspicion of perceived intrusion into family affairs.

Kurds value hospitality to strangers and the men will shake hands with strangers. It will be considered rude to refuse hospitality.

It must be remembered that not all Iranian, Turkish or Iraqi asylum seekers are Kurds.



## **Former Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia)**

The majority of people from the former Yugoslavia are Kosovan, which is partly in Serbia and partly in Albania. The majority of Albanians and Kosovans are Muslims but are relaxed about their religious observances. They speak Albanian.

There are smaller numbers of Bosnians who are mainly Muslims and again relaxed about their religion. They speak Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian.

Croatians are mainly Roman Catholics and Serbs are mainly Serbian Orthodox Christians.



## Syria

Syria has been embroiled in a bloody armed conflict for nearly five years. More than 250,000 Syrians have been killed, and 11 million displaced from their homes - more than four million have already left the country. The UK Government has promised to accept 20,000 Syrians over the next five years and is already providing funding so the refugees get access to housing, healthcare and education. 75% of Syrians are Muslims, 13% are Christian and 12% are of different religious sects. Ethnicity in Syria is clear and 90% of Syrians are Arabs. Other ethnic groups include Kurds, Armenians and Assyrians.

Further information and useful resources

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

# Religion or Belief

**ian williams**  
Looking after Buildings

# Religion or Belief

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## Introduction

There are in the region of 170 distinct religions in the UK making it very diverse. In the 2011 Census, Christianity remained the largest religion with 59.3% of the population identifying themselves as Christian. Muslims made up the second largest religious group with 4.8% of the population.

The term religion and belief refers to beliefs and faiths, which depending on a person's interpretation or understanding, will affect the values they hold, how they worship, how they see the world and the way they live their life. Because a person's interpretation is unique, two people of the same religion hold different values and may practice it in different ways.

Religion is often linked to ethnicity or culture, but this isn't always the case and we can't assume that because a person is of a particular ethnicity, that they hold particular religious beliefs or values.

## Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 says you must not be discriminated against because:

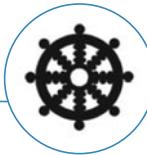
- You are (or are not) of a particular religion
- You hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief
- Someone thinks you are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief. This is known as discrimination by perception
- You are connected to someone who has a religion or belief. This is known as discrimination by association

# Definitions

## Religion

Buddhism  
Christianity  
Catholicism  
Jehovah's Witnesses  
Mormons  
Hinduism  
Islam  
Judaism  
Paganism  
Rastafarianism  
Sikhism  
Bahai Faith

## Buddhism



**Core Beliefs** The religion is based on the teachings of Buddha and aims to achieve enlightenment. There are different traditions within Buddhism. Many members of the Chinese, Vietnamese and Sri Lankan communities are Buddhists.

Buddhists may meditate daily, and use the home shrine or visit a Buddhist centre as a focus for devotion.

**Key Festivals** Buddhist festivals vary with different traditions. However commonly shared festivals are:

*Wesak*: remembering the birth of Buddha when cards are exchanged

*Full Moon Days*: when the teachings of Buddha are remembered and Buddhists may spend time meditating

**Places of Worship** The Buddhist place of worship is called the Vihara.

**Languages Used** There are Buddhists all over the world and so a variety of languages may be spoken.

**Naming** Buddhists tend to have two or more names. The first name may be the family name, followed by the given names.

**Diet** Many Buddhists are vegetarian. Strict Buddhists may also avoid eggs and other animal products such as cheese made with rennet. Some Buddhists may prefer to avoid onions and garlic.

Buddhists may fast as part of their religious practices, for example on some festival days and Full Moon and New Moon days.

**Social Customs** Many Buddhists do not like shaking hands.

**Visiting a Home** In some Buddhist Homes you may find a shrine with a statue of Buddha. You must not touch this. If you need to work in an area used for worship, discuss this with the customer first.

## **Christianity – The Christian Churches**



There are many different traditions within Christianity, and the way in which people practice their faith varies widely.

**Core Beliefs** Christians believe in living according to God's will, as taught by Jesus. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit helps them in doing this.

Christians try to live according to the example set by Jesus. This includes loving others, and also keeping the Ten Commandments found in the Old Testament.

The Christian holy book is the Bible. This is made up of the Old Testament (the Hebrew scriptures) and the New Testament (the account of Jesus' life, and events in the early history of the Christian Church).

Christians may pray every day, and may attend a service on Sunday.

For some Christian traditions, Holy Communion (also called Holy Mass or Eucharist) is very important, particularly at key festivals or when a person is ill. This involves the sharing of bread and wine which has been blessed.

**Key Festivals** The exact date of some Christian festivals varies from year to year, so refer to the calendar that accompanies this handbook.

*Christmas:* A joyful festival when the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated (24th and 25th December)

*Lent:* Remembrance of when Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness; a time which some Christians may use for reflection, prayer and fasting (February or March)

*Good Friday:* Follows Lent, and remembers the death of Jesus on a cross. This is often a solemn time of prayer (March or April)

*Easter:* The Sunday immediately following Good Friday, when the resurrection (coming back to life) of Jesus is remembered. This is a joyful time, when cards and Easter Eggs made of chocolate may be exchanged (March or April)

*Ascension:* Remembers the time that Jesus ascended to heaven. Takes place on a Thursday 40 days after Easter

*Pentecost / Whitsun:* Remembers when the Holy Spirit (often shown as a Dove) came to Jesus' followers (disciples)

**Places of Worship** These can vary widely with different Christian traditions, and may be called a church or chapel. Some Christian groups may meet to worship in someone's home.

**Languages used** Christianity is practised in many countries across the world so there are a wide range of languages spoken by Christians.

**Naming** Christians usually have one or more given names, referred to as 'Christian names', followed by a family name, often that of their father. On marriage, a woman may often take the name of her husband.

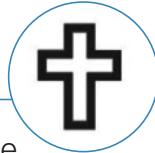
**Diet** Some Christian groups forbid tea and coffee, and alcohol and tobacco. In general there are no restrictions on diet in Christianity. Some Christians may choose to fast during Lent, or may give up certain foods during this time. Some Christians may say a prayer ('Grace') before eating a meal.

**Death** Christians are usually either buried or cremated. People attending the funeral often wear black. The funeral service may take place at the place of worship attended by the person who has died.

**Social Customs** Some Christians may have strong feelings about the significance of marriage, and may, for example, not feel able to live together as a couple before marriage.

**Visiting a Home** Some Christian homes may have religious symbols such as crosses or religious pictures on display. It is important that you don't touch or move these without asking the customer if it's ok to do so.

## Catholicism



The Catholic Church traces its origins to the people (disciples or apostles) appointed by Jesus as the first leaders in the Church. The line of succession from them (in particular the Apostle Peter) is known as the Apostolic Succession. It is maintained up to the present Pope based in Rome. There are over a billion Catholics in the world and 5 million in the UK. Most Catholics in the UK are referred to as Roman Catholics but the Catholic Church in the UK includes Ukraine Catholics, Chaldean Catholics and other eastern and Greek rites that are in union with the Pope.

**Core beliefs** As well as the Ten Commandments of God, the Catholic Church has six commandments of the Church:

- To hear Mass on Sundays and other special days called 'holy days of obligation'
- To fast on specific days
- To observe the sacrament of reconciliation when conscious of having sinned gravely or at least once a year
- To receive the Eucharist at least once a year. If only received once a year, this should be at Easter time
- To support pastors
- To observe the Church's laws on marriage

**Reconciliation** The sacrament of reconciliation includes declaring sins to a priest who can give absolution.

**Social Customs** The Catholic Church says that it does not have the power to dissolve a marriage. Only the death of one of the partners can dissolve it. This means that some

Catholics may be living separately from the person they married but not want a divorce.

**Sacrament of the sick** The Catholic Church has a special sacrament for people who are ill including those who are dying. Some Catholics refer to this as ‘the Last Rites’ for terminally ill patients. This may be relevant when working with older people, particularly in sheltered accommodation.

Catholics may be cremated or buried.

**Visiting a home** Orthodox Catholics may have a home shrine. You must not touch this. If you need to work in an area used for worship, discuss this with the customer first.

## Jehovah’s Witnesses

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The Jehovah’s Witness movement was founded in 1870 in America by Charles Taze Russell. The movement is characterised by members going door to door to share their beliefs. A key tool in this is the Watchtower magazine.

Below are highlighted issues on which Jehovah’s Witnesses have specific beliefs and customs.

**Core Beliefs** Jehovah’s Witnesses take all their beliefs from the Bible which they believe historically is accurate and inspired by God. Jehovah’s Witnesses call the Bible New Testament the ‘Christian Greek Scriptures’ and the Old Testament the ‘Hebrew Scriptures.’ They refer to God as Jehovah.

**Key Festivals** Unlike other branches of Christianity, Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate festivals such as Christmas and Easter. This is because they believe that these festivals have their roots in Pagan festivals and rituals. Jehovah's Witnesses tend to meet on Sundays to worship together, but there is no special significance to this day. They may also meet on other days.

**Places of Worship** This is often called 'Kingdom Hall'.

**Diet** Jehovah's Witnesses may avoid 'taking on blood' i.e. avoid unbled meat. This is similar to the Muslim requirement to eat 'halaal' meat.

**Social Customs** Jehovah's Witnesses may not celebrate birthdays. This is because it is thought that the celebration of birthdays is connected to superstition and horoscopes.

**Visiting a home** No specific requirements on visiting a home have been identified.

## Mormons

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, of which Mormons are members, was founded in America in the 19th Century. It has 180,000 members in the UK.

**Core Beliefs** Mormons believe that their church represents a return to the way that Jesus originally intended the Christian Church to be.

**Key Festivals** Mormons only celebrate two Christian Festivals: Christmas and Easter. They also celebrate

'Pioneer Day' on 24th July. This celebrates the arrival of the first Mormons to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847.

Like most branches of Christianity, Mormons regards Sunday as a day of rest and also the main day of worship.

Monday may be set aside for spending at home with the family in religious study. Families may pray together twice a day.

**Diet** Mormons may avoid tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco, and also soft drinks which contain caffeine. It is important to provide a choice of drinks when arranging refreshments for meetings, including water.

Mormons may fast on the first Sunday of each month, by missing two meals. The money which is saved is given to the Church.

**Social Customs** Mormons may 'tithe' their income, which means giving a proportion (sometimes one tenth) to the Church.

Mormons may avoid swearing and using bad language.

Men and women are regarded as equal in Mormonism. However, women are encouraged to prioritise their homes, husbands, family and childbearing, alongside any career they choose.

**Visiting a home** No specific requirements on visiting a home have been identified.

## Hinduism



Hinduism is the world's third largest religion. The term Hinduism covers a huge variety of different beliefs that originated in India. Over 80% of people in India class themselves as Hindus. There are a variety of different holy books, although the Veda and the Bhagavad Gita are widely revered.

**Core Beliefs** Hindus seek to learn how to be reunited with God. Hindus usually believe in the sanctity of life, and tolerance of others. Hindus believe in reincarnation and that how they live their lives in the present will affect their lives in the future.

Many Hindus perform an act of devotion every day at home where most families will have a personal shrine.

A feature of the Indian Hindu society is the caste system, which ranks people within society according to their occupation, into four main traditional classes. These are *Brahmins*, or priests, *Kshatriyas*, or warriors, *Vaishyas*, or merchants; and *Shudras*, unskilled labourers or servants. At the lowest end of society are the Untouchables. There have been attempts to reform this system, and the concept of 'untouchables' has been abolished by law in India. However, caste identity may still be strong, preventing for example, marriage between people of different castes.

**Key Festivals** The exact dates of Festivals vary from year to year and here months are given as a guide only. Use the festival calendar at the end of this handbook for confirmation.

*Holi* - the death of winter (spring festival - March)

*Rama Navami* - the birth of Rama, seventh incarnation of the deity Vishnu (April)

*Raksha Bandhan* - sisters tie colourful threads (called a Rakhi) round their brother's wrist as a sign of love and protection (August)

*Janamashtami* - the birth of Krishna, eighth incarnation of the deity Vishnu (includes fasting until midnight)

*Navratri* - A month before Divali. To worship Dirga (mother goddess). Nine nights of colourful dance and feasting

*Divali* - Celebrates the beginning of the year in October or November. To celebrate the symbolic reunion of Rama and his wife Sita. Divali cards are exchanged

*Shivaratri* - to honour the deity Shiva

Not all Hindus celebrate the same festivals.

**Places of Worship** The Hindu place of worship is called the Mandir.

**Languages used** As Hinduism is predominant in India, Hindus may speak Indian languages (see section on India). However, Hinduism is practised all over the world, so Hindus may speak a variety of languages.

**Naming** Hindus normally have three names, a personal name first, a complimentary name (which may be joined with their first name) and lastly a family of subcaste name.

Gujerati men use their father's personal name, plus a suffix (-chand) as their middle name. Traditionally, Hindu women take their husband's family name on marriage and use the family name for record purposes as a surname. Many families omit the middle name when registering the birth of a child in the UK.

**Diet** Hindus generally do not eat beef but other dietary requirements may vary. Many Hindus are vegetarian and may avoid all animal products made with animal rennet, and eggs. This should be taken into account when organising events which will include refreshments.

**Death** Hindus generally prefer to die at home as death in hospital causes great distress. Hindus are then cremated. This may be important when working with older people, for example in sheltered housing.

**Social Customs** Families are usually extended (this includes grandparents, aunt and uncles and even neighbours as well as "immediate" family) and the male is often head of the family. Marriages are usually only allowed within castes and divorce is viewed unfavourably. Many Hindus have arranged marriages.

Women may be uncomfortable if alone with a male visitor and they may not wish to shake the hand of a man. This should be borne in mind in arranging home visits. Women usually accompany men in social functions.

**Visiting a home** Some Hindu homes may have a shrine in them. This should be respected.

## Islam



Muslims make up nearly one seventh of the world's population and Islam is practised in many regions including North Africa, the Middle East, parts of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This means that although all Muslims will share the same set of basic beliefs, the way that these are applied to daily life will vary widely according to the culture and tradition in the particular countries.

It is estimated that there are around 1.5 million Muslims living in the UK making it the UK's second largest religion. There are two branches of Islam. Over 90% of the world's Muslims are Sunni Muslims; the remaining 10% are Shi'ite Muslims. This branch of Islam is particularly strong in Iran, and can also be found in Iraq, Libya and Pakistan.

Both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims believe in the Five Pillars of Islam. The differences between the two religions relate to early history of the religion.

**Core Beliefs** The core belief of Islam is to submit to the will of Allah, as set out in the Qur'an. The Five Pillars of Islam set out the essential aspects of the faith which are:

A declaration of faith

Praying five times daily

Almsgiving (giving to the poor and needy)

Fasting during the month of Ramadan, between dawn and dusk

Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime

There are 5 sets of compulsory prayers at dawn, noon, afternoon, evening and nightfall. Prayer times are governed

by the sun and daylight hours and so will vary. It's advisable to ask about prayer times to avoid visiting during these times. Visit [bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam](http://bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam) for a prayer time calculator. Privacy is required for prayer; a separate room is set aside in the home.

**Key Festivals** The Islamic calendar is based on lunar months. The lunar year is ten days shorter than the Solar year. This means that the dates of festivals change each year and over time will fall in different seasons. The dates of festivals are determined by the appearance of the moon.

**Places of Worship** The mosque is the communal building for prayers. Women may not be allowed to enter the mosque. It is usual to remove shoes when entering a mosque. The leader of the Mosque is called the Imam (priest) and may be a useful contact when communicating important information to the community.

**Languages Used** Muslim families in the UK may use several languages other than English, for example:

- Bengali
- Sylheti (spoken only)
- Arabic
- Urdu
- Somali
- Farsi

Arabic is widely used as the language of worship, and also because the Qur'an is written in Arabic.

**Naming** The Muslim naming system is complex, and is different for men and women. Names can include personal names, religious names, and sometimes family names. Muslims usually adopt their father's but not their husband's name.

It can be seen as disrespectful to address a Muslim by their religious name, for example Mohammed, so it's important to ask people what they want to be called.

A woman may have two names - a personal name followed by a title (such as Begum or Bibi) which is reminiscent of Mrs or Miss. It's therefore not appropriate to address a woman as Mrs Begum or Mrs Bibi.

**Diet** Pork and pork by-products are strictly forbidden. Muslims eat Halaal food which includes meat that has been ritually slaughtered and must be cooked using separate utensils. Halaal food should not be stored or cooked with non-Halaal food. It is advisable to provide vegetarian food. This should be spicy, as bland foods are often considered unpalatable. This is important when organising events where food is to be served.

Drugs and alcohol are forbidden and smoking may be restricted.

During Ramadan, Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset. Children, older people and pregnant women are exempt, however children are encouraged to give up snacks and sweets. Remember that people who are fasting will often lack energy particularly in the afternoon, and may want to get home before sunset in order to eat.

**Death** Muslims try to bury their dead within 24 hours of death. This should be borne in mind when contacting or visiting a household where there has been a death.

**Social Customs** In Islam men and women are equal, although their respective roles can be very distinct. There is a strong sense of decorum amongst Muslim women and men should not shake hands with women or vice versa.

Some Muslim women may not feel comfortable being alone with a male who is not a family member and communications may be best through a male family member. Men are technically the head of the household, although in Islam men and women are equal.

Men and women may not gather socially in the same room where there are people from outside of the family present.

Some Muslims may consider making direct eye contact to be rude and therefore may avoid making direct eye contact with other people.

Islam has rules on dealing in interest (e.g. on money). This means that some Muslims may feel unable to take out conventional loans, or have a mortgage or bank account. This may have an impact on the way that Muslims manage their financial affairs.

**Visiting a home** Muslims may often remove their shoes when entering the home, and you may feel it is appropriate to do the same. However, as in all circumstances you need to use your judgement about such matters as health and safety. One option is to carry disposable plastic overshoes with you.

When visiting Muslims, prayer times should be avoided. These vary with the calendar so always check beforehand. If you accidentally visit a Muslim home during prayers you may find that no-one answers the door even though you know someone is home. Avoid visiting during Muslim festivals unless specifically requested to do so or in an emergency.

Women may prefer to have a male family member present during visits, so it may be appropriate to arrange visits in advance so this can be arranged.

Discuss working in rooms designated for prayer with the customer before proceeding. Do not touch or move prayer mats.

## Judaism



Judaism is unusual in that it has some of the characteristics of a race as well as a religion. In order to be Jewish, a person must have a Jewish mother and not be practising any other religion. It is possible for a non-practising Jew to experience racism because of their Jewish origins. It is possible for a non-Jew to convert to Judaism.

**Core Beliefs** Jews believe that God has made an external covenant with them that requires them to live according to the Torah (law). The aim of life is to live according to God's Law as revealed by Moses. Orthodox Jews practise their religion on a daily basis.

According to the 2001 Census there are 259,000 Jewish people in the UK.

**Key Festivals** The Jewish calendar differs from the Western Gregorian calendar. This means that the dates of the festivals vary from year to year:

Rosh Hashanah  
Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)  
Sukkot (Tabernacles)  
Simchas Torah  
Chanukah (Hanukkah)  
Purim  
Pesach (Passover)  
Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)

The main Jewish holiday is the Sabbath which extends from dusk on a Friday to nightfall on a Saturday. On this day orthodox Jews will not use the telephone, write, use electric lights or equipment or travel by car or public transport unless these acts are necessary to save life. These prohibitions also apply to Festival days.

Families at home during Tabernacles (which closely follows the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur) may build a temporary hut roofed with branches and decorated with fruit, in which meals and family activities take place.

Orthodox Jews pray three times a day (morning, afternoon, evening) and prayers should not be disturbed unless it is medically essential. Check for appropriate times to visit to ensure disturbances during festival or prayer times are avoided.

**Places of Worship** The Jewish Place of worship is called a synagogue. The religious leader is called the Rabbi. The Rabbi may be a useful contact in consultation, and in conveying information to the Jewish community.

**Languages Used** English is the main language used in the UK. Yiddish (a spoken language) may be used in the home.

Biblical Hebrew is only used for worship in the UK. Israelis speak modern Hebrew.

**Naming** Jewish names usually consist of one or more given names followed by a family name.

**Diet** Orthodox Jews observe the laws of Kashrut. This means that they may not eat meat and dairy foods together, nor do they eat products that contain non-kosher ingredients. Milk and meat foods are stored and cooked separately and this necessitates two sets of cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery used exclusively for the preparation and eating of kosher food.

Only kosher meat (killed and prepared according to the laws of Kashrut) is eaten. Pork and pork products are strictly forbidden. The consumption of shellfish and fish without scales or fins is also forbidden.

These requirements should be borne in mind when arranging an event where a meal is to be provided. If kosher food is not available, vegetarian food may be acceptable.

Fasting is required on certain days. During the eight days of Passover, Jews refrain from eating bread and wheat products.

**Death** Jewish burials usually take place immediately, either on the same day or the next. The body will not be moved or buried on the Sabbath. The period of mourning lasts for seven days. During this time the family will not be expected to return to work and relatives and friends will visit. This may have an impact on the ending of a tenancy on death, for example.

**Social Customs** Many Jewish people feel a close bond with Jews from around the world, seeing themselves as part of a global Jewish community. The events of Holocaust have had a profound effect on Jewish identity.

**Visiting a home** Discuss working in rooms used for prayer with the customer first. Don't touch or move items of religious significance.

## Paganism

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There are a lot of misconceptions about Paganism. For instance, Pagans are not Satanists, do not practise black magic and do not harm animals or people.

It is estimated that there are between 50,000 and 200,000 Pagans in the UK.

**Core Beliefs** Paganism, or neo-Paganism, is a term which covers a diverse range of beliefs which are often associated with nature and on the traditional religions of indigenous people.

**Key Festivals** Most Pagans celebrate eight festivals during the year. The Pagan seasonal cycle is called the Wheel of the Year. These festival dates vary so check before organising events.

Yule / Winter Solstice	Imbolc
Spring Equinox	Beltane
Summer Solstice	Lughnasadh
Autumn Equinox	Samhain

**Places of Worship** Many Pagan rituals take place outside. There are ancient places which have a special significance, such as Stonehenge.

**Languages Used** Paganism is a western religion so Pagans may speak a variety of languages depending upon their country of origin.

**Naming** Pagans customarily choose, or receive as a gift, a special name which evokes their unique personality and/or powers. Some take a completely new name, while others choose a historic or ethnic version of their given name. People may use their craft names all the time, or only during ritual; some even go through a legal name change.

**Diet** Many Pagans are vegetarian and will often seek to eat a healthy and natural diet.

**Death** In Paganism death is not something to be feared. Funerals may be conventional depending on the wishes of the family and there may be a conventional cremation or burial. There may also be a memorial service.

**Social Customs** Pagans are likely to try to live in a way which respects the environment. Paganism places emphasis on equality of men and women and women often play a central role.

**Visiting a home** Pagan homes may contain altars for the use in rituals, and pagan symbols. These should be treated with respect.



## Rastafarianism

**Core Principles** The term ‘principles’ is used rather than ‘beliefs’. Rastafarianism emerged from Jamaica. It is mainly based on the teachings of Marcus Garvey, which state that Black people had been oppressed by generations of slavery and must return to Africa. Ethiopia is seen as “the Promised Land” and it is believed that Emperor Haile Selassie was the incarnation of God (Jah).

One of the Rastafarian principles is the “Nazarite Vow of Separation” which involves not cutting hair, not eating certain foods and shunning the dead, emphasising life not death. However, in practice some Rastafarians may cut their hair.

### Key Festivals

- Ethiopian New Year’s Day
- Crowning of Emperor Haile Selassie I
- Ethiopian Constitution Day
- Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I
- Marcus Garvey’s birthday

Festival days should be avoided when organising consultation meetings and events.

**Places of Worship** Some Rastafarians may be members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

### Languages Used

- English
- Creole
- Jamaican Patois – a mixture of English, African and other European languages

**Naming** English names are often used.

**Diet** Rastafarians are likely to be vegetarians and will usually avoid pork, alcohol, milk and coffee. Herbal Preparations, such as tea may be drunk. Rastafarians may prefer to eat 'I-tal' food prepared without chemicals. Some will not eat grapes, currants or raisins. These should be taken into account in planning events where food will be provided.

**Death** Rastafarians emphasise life over death; this means that they may not speak about death and may not attend funerals.

**Social Customs** There is no formal marriage in Rastafarianism. Couples who live together are viewed as married.

One of the most well known customs in Rastafarianism is the use of marijuana. Many Rastafarians use a form of the herb called "ganga". Its use is also spiritual, as it is believed to bring about "oneness" with God. However, the use of ganga by Rastafarians is still illegal.

**Visiting a home** No specific requirements on visiting a home have been identified.

## Sikhism



**Core Beliefs** Sikhs aim to enable the soul to re-unite with God, by remembering God in daily life, living truthfully and serving others. The religion was founded by Guru Namak Dev Ji and the holy book, the “Guru Granth Sahib”, is accorded great honour. Sikhs reject the caste system of Hinduism believing that people should be treated equally.

Religious Sikhs follow the five Ks as an outward sign of their religious devotion. These are:

- Kesh – long hair which is never cut
- Kanga – a comb
- Kacha – short pants
- Kara – metal bracelet
- Kirpan – a ceremonial dagger

These 5 items are sacred and should not be disturbed.

**Key Festivals** These are mainly based on the lunar calendar and so change each year. You will need to check precise dates to avoid clashes with meetings or events.

- Guru Nansk's Birthday
- The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur
- Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday
- The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev
- Divali

Collective worship usually takes place on a Sunday.

**Places of Worship** The Sikh place of worship is called the Gurdwara. It is also sometimes called a Sikh temple.

## Languages Used

Sikh families in the UK speak several languages:  
Punjabi (main spoken language)  
Gurmukhi (the written form of Punjabi)  
English

**Naming** Sikhs usually have three names. There will be a personal name and a title (Singh, meaning “lion” for a man and Kaur meaning “princess” for a woman), followed by a family name.

Sometimes Sikhs are reluctant to reveal their family name as a consequence of their rejection of the Caste system, therefore, you should ask for it tactfully if it is needed for record keeping.

A baby may not be named for several weeks after birth.

**Diet** Beef is forbidden but dairy products are important. Many Sikhs are vegetarians. Some Sikhs eat meat slaughtered to a special rite (Chakard or Chattka) but they will not eat Halal meat. It may be advisable to provide vegetarian food, but avoiding eggs and cheese made with rennet. This should be taken into account in organising events where food will be provided.

**Death** A dying Sikh may require a relative or reader from the local temple or another practising Sikh to recite hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib for them. If there are no family members to tend the person after then the local Sikh temple must be consulted before any further action is taken. Sikhs are always cremated and their ashes scattered in running water, such as a river or sea or even a lake.

Mourning varies in length; a long and full life, with many offspring, grandchildren and great grandchildren may be a cause for celebration. A premature death may be likely to call for a period of full mourning. Funeral rites, with a procession to the crematorium, are of great social significance. After the funeral, the adults of the family may gather together to read the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib, which may take up to two weeks.

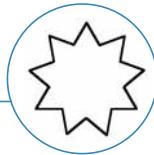
**Social Customs** Sikh women may feel more comfortable if spoken to in the presence of a family member, as modesty is important. Sikh men may be gravely embarrassed if asked to remove their Kachia or turban and baptised Sikhs may refuse to accept work which requires them to remove their turban or cut their hair. Similarly, girls may not be permitted to wear skirts, and if skirts are part of a uniform they should be allowed to wear Shalwar (loose fitting trousers) underneath.

**Visiting a home** Some homes may have a shrine to the Guru Granth Sahib and shoes should be removed when entering this room and heads should be covered. Bear in mind health and safety considerations in the removal of shoes; one option is to carry disposable plastic overshoes.

Prayer and some festival times may vary, so if any appointments are being made they should avoid these times.

If refreshments are offered, it is seen as polite to accept a little, however you should use your judgement and if you do not wish to accept, refuse politely.

## The Bahá'í faith



The Bahá'í faith, dating back from 1844, is the youngest of the world's monotheistic (belief that there is only one God), religion and is the most widespread religion in the world. Its purpose is to unite people of the world in one common faith and cause.

**Core Beliefs** The faith's founder, Baha'u'llah, an Iranian nobleman whose name translates as 'the Glory of God', spent much of his life in exile. The Bahá'í writings also state that all the great religions come from one divine source.

Baha'i's believe that Baha'u'llah is the most recent in the long line of prophets and messengers of God – including Moses, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad. Baha'u'llah has brought teachings that address the particular moral and spiritual challenges of the modern world. He also states that there will be further messengers of God in the future.

Followers of the faith believe that there will be lasting world peace only when major injustices such as racism, gender inequality, and poverty are resolved through the work of governments, civil society and individuals. Baha'i's take no sides in the political controversies of the day. It is an organised religion whose aim is to unify the human race.

**Key festivals** Key festivals when work should be suspended are:

- Naw-Rúz (New Year) Festival of Ridván (21<sup>st</sup> March)
- First Day of Ridván (21<sup>st</sup> April)
- Ninth Day of Ridván (29<sup>th</sup> April)
- Twelfth day of Ridván (2nd May)
- Declaration of the Báb (23<sup>rd</sup> May)
- Ascension of Baha'u'llah (29<sup>th</sup> May)
- Martyrdom of the Báb (9th July)
- Birth of the Báb (20th October)
- Birth of Baha'u'llah (12 November)

**Places of worship** Followers of the faith meet every 19 days for worship, at the moment in each others' homes, as there are no temples in the UK.

**Diet** Some, but not all Baha'is are vegetarian or vegan. Alcohol is also avoided. This should be borne in mind when planning catering for events. Like some other beliefs Baha'is also observe fasting at certain times of year. The fasting period lasts for 19 days in the run up to Naw-Ruz

**Visiting a home** Baha'is pray daily, however there are no special requirements for prayer. But Baha'is are expected to wash before they pray. If you need to interrupt the water supply, always inform the customer first. Discuss working in rooms used for prayer with the customer first. Don't touch or move items of religious significance.

## Discrimination

In the workplace, discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief can take a number of forms, such as harassment which includes 'banter' or name calling, even where no offence is intended. It may also take other forms, such as deciding not to hire somebody because they are of a particular religion or belief.

Indirect discrimination is more subtle. This might include for example not allowing a person to take an extended period of leave at a certain time of the year to observe holy days. In the provision of services, direct discrimination could include refusing to provide a service to someone because they are of a particular belief or making disrespectful comments about a customer's religious dress. Indirect discrimination might include offering services on a particular day, which might disadvantage people of certain beliefs who are unable to take advantage of these services on this day due to religious practices.

All forms of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief whether direct or indirect, intentional or accidental are against the law.

## Further information and useful resources

[www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion)

[www.interfaithwales.org](http://www.interfaithwales.org)

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

Over the next few pages, we've prepared an indicative Religious Festivals Calendar by month. Please note that the timing of some of these festivals change year by year so please check with your business manager for up to date information.

# Religious Festivals

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Looking after Buildings

## JANUARY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Makar Sankranti</b> Makar Sankranti is one of the most important festivals of the Hindu calendar and celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere. Visits are made to old friends and relatives and old quarrels are forgiven
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Epiphany</b> Celebrates the visit of the wise men (the magi) to the infant Jesus. In the East, where it originated, the Epiphany celebrates the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. (Catholics and Episcopalians celebrate this separately. Also known as Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day).)

## JANUARY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival (Orthodox)</b>	Most Orthodox churches use the Julian rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar. As a result, they celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches. There are special thanksgiving services in churches, gifts are exchanged and a special meal is eaten
<b>Rastafarian Festival</b>	<b>Ethiopian Christmas Day</b> Rastafarians believe Ethiopia to be their spiritual homeland, and a place to which they want to return. Christianity became the official religion of Ethiopia in 330AD and this is a day to acknowledge the life and work of Jesus
<b>Shinto Festival</b>	<b>Oshogatsu</b> Shinto New Year, one of the most popular occasions for shrine visits.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>10th Tevet</b> An important Jewish fast day.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Tu B'Shevat</b> The Jewish New Year for trees - For religious accounting

## JANUARY

FAITH	Festival
	<p>purposes all trees have their anniversaries on this festival, regardless of when they were planted. Children plant trees on this day, traditionally a cedar for a boy, a cypress for a girl.</p>
<b>Shinto Festival</b>	<b>Seijin Shiki (Adults' Day)</b> Japanese who have reached legal adulthood (20 in Japan) in the previous year attend a shrine to give thanks.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) was the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus. He instituted the Five Ks and established the Order of the Khalsa. The birthday of this Guru is often celebrated with readings from the Scriptures and a procession of flags from gurdwaras.

## FEBRUARY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Buddhist Festival</b>	<b>Parinirvana - Nirvana day</b> Mahayana Buddhist festival marking the anniversary of Buddha's death. Pure Land Buddhists call the festival "Nirvana Day".
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Milad un Nabi (Shia)</b> Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Muslims celebrate this 5 days earlier. Some Muslims do not approve of celebrating the birthday, and regard doing so as a religious innovation.
<b>Chinese Festival</b>	<b>Chinese New Year</b> A most important event in the Chinese calendar, New Year is everyone's birthday. The old year is driven out with cymbals and fireworks and houses are decorated with paper and painted red for good luck.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Mahashivratri</b> Mahashivratri is a Hindu festival dedicated to Shiva, one of the deities of the Hindu Trinity.

## FEBRUARY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Buddhist Festival</b>	<b>Magha Puja</b> Fourfold Assembly or Sangha Day. Marks the day Buddha addressed a meeting of 1250 arahants
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Vasant Panchami</b> Dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning and Brahma's wife. The festival marks the beginning of Spring.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Candlemas</b> Marks the day when Jesus was presented in the Temple. Candles for use in churches are usually blessed on this day. It coincides with Groundhog Day (USA)
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	The first day of Lent for Western Christian churches. Lent is the season marking the time Jesus spent in the wilderness.

## MARCH

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St David's Day</b> Saint David, or Dewi Sant as he's called in the Welsh language, is the patron saint of Wales.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Nineteen Day Fast (start)</b> During this period Baha'i's go without food or drink from sunrise to sunset.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Shrove Tuesday</b> Also called Pancake Day and Mardi Gras. The British name of "Pancake Day" comes from the tradition of making pancakes to use up all the food that could not be eaten during Lent.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday</b> The first day of Lent for Western Christian churches. Lent is the season marking the time Jesus spent in the wilderness.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Holi (Hindu )</b> The Hindu spring festival. One of the most colourful Hindu festivals. Holi begins with a bonfire to celebrate the death of Holika, the demon of winter.

## MARCH

FAITH	Festival
	On the next day, the festivities include throwing handfuls of coloured powder, or spraying people with coloured water, so that all become equal in celebration.
<b>Shinto Festival</b>	<b>Hina-matsuri - Festival of Dolls</b> Celebrates daughters in the family
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Mahashivratri</b> Mahashivratri is a Hindu festival dedicated to Shiva, one of the deities of the Hindu Trinity.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St Patrick's Day</b> St Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Beginning of Lent (Orthodox)</b> The start of the “Great Lent” for Orthodox Christians. This day is called Clean Monday, and occurs seven weeks before the Orthodox Easter

## MARCH

FAITH	Festival
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Purim</b> Purim commemorates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination by the courage of a young Jewish woman called Esther.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Hola Mohalla (Lunar Calendar)</b> Hola Mohalla is three day festival of military exercises and mock battles, together with religious discussions and devotional music, at Anandpur Sahib on the day after Holi.
<b>Pagan Festival</b>	<b>Spring Equinox</b> Spring Equinox celebrates the renewed life of the Earth that comes with the Spring
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Naw-Ruz</b> Baha'i New Year
<b>Zoroastrian Festival</b>	<b>Jamshedi Noruz (Fasli)</b> Zoroastrian New Year's Day in the Fasli calendar.
<b>Zoroastrian Festival</b>	<b>Khordad Sal (Fasli)</b> The birthday of Zoroaster, celebrated on this date in the Fasli calendar. Also known as the Greater Noruz

## APRIL

FAITH	Festival
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Ugadi (Yugadi)</b> Ugadi (literally 'the start of an era') is the New Year festival for Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in southern India. It occurs on the first day of the month of Chaitra.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Swaminarayan Jayanti</b> This day marks the birth of Lord Swaminarayan for followers of the Swaminarayan tradition.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Rama Navami</b> Birthday of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu and the hero of the Ramayana
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Vaisakhi</b> The Sikh New Year Festival, which also commemorates the founding of the Khalsa by the tenth Guru (Guru Gobind Singh) in 1699. Also spelled Baisakhi.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Nanak (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> The founder of the Sikh religion was born on 14 April 1469. This festival is also

## APRIL

FAITH	Festival
	currently celebrated according to the Lunar Calendar, but this may change.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Hola Mohalla (Nanakshahi Calendar)</b> Hola Mohalla is currently celebrated according to the Lunar Calendar, but this may change.
<b>Jain Festival</b>	<b>Mahavira Jayanti</b> The birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar and the “founder” of modern Jainism
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b> The sixth and last Sunday of Lent. Marks the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the start of Holy Week
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Hanuman Jayanti</b> This festival marks the birth of Hanuman, the Monkey God.

## APRIL

FAITH	Festival
<b>Buddhist Festival</b>	<b>Theravada New Year</b> New Year festival for Theravada Buddhists, celebrated for three days from the first full moon day in April
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Fast of the Firstborn</b> Observed only by firstborn males, on the day before Passover. This fast celebrates the survival of Jewish firstborn sons from the 10th Plague of Egypt.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) was the ninth of the Sikh Gurus.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Angad Dev (Nanakshahi calendar) (Sikh )</b> Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552) was the second of the Sikh Gurus.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Passover (1st day)</b> The start of the season of Passover when Jews commemorate the liberation of the Children of Israel who

## APRIL

FAITH	Festival
	were led out of Egypt by Moses. Work is not permitted on the first two and the last two days of Passover.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Maundy Thursday</b> Christians remember Maundy Thursday as the day of the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and established the ceremony known as the Eucharist.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Ridvan - first day</b> The start of a 12 day festival when Baha'i's celebrate the day when Baha'u'llah said that he was the prophet predicted by the Bab. The most important Baha'I festival.
<b>Rastafarian Festival</b>	<b>Anniversary of Haile Selassie's visit to Jamaica</b> Marks the date Haile Selassie I visited Jamaica in 1966. Haile Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia. Rastas believe Haile Selassie is God, and that he will return to Africa members of the black community who are living in exile.

## APRIL

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Good Friday</b> Good Friday is the Friday before Easter. It commemorates the execution of Jesus by crucifixion.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St George's Day</b> Saint George is the patron saint of England.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Easter (Orthodox)</b> Orthodox Christians celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ - his return from death after the Crucifixion. The most important Christian festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Easter Sunday (Western)</b> Christians celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ - his return from death after the Crucifixion. The most important Christian festival. Most years Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter on a different date.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Passover (Final day)</b> The eighth and final day of Passover. Note that Passover lasts for seven days in Israel.

## MAY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Ridvan - ninth day (Bahai)</b> Marks the arrival of Baha'u'llah's family at the Ridvan garden.
<b>Chinese Festival</b>	<b>Ching Ming</b> A festival in honour of the dead. Tombs are swept and cleaned, new trees are planted and offerings are made of food, flowers and incense.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Yom Hashoah</b> The Jewish Holocaust Memorial Day. The date is chosen as the closest date (in the Jewish calendar) to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Ridvan - twelfth day</b> Marks Baha'u'llah's departure from the Ridvan garden.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Arjan Dev (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) was the fifth of the Sikh Gurus
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Yom Hazikaron</b> A day of remembrance on the day preceding Israel's Independence Day.

## MAY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Yom Ha'atzmaut</b> Israel's Independence Day
<b>Buddhist Festival</b>	<b>Wesak or Buddha day</b> The most important of the Buddhist festivals. It celebrates the Buddha's birthday, and, for some Buddhists, also marks his enlightenment and death.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Declaration of the Bab</b> The Bab was the Forerunner of Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i faith. His mission was to prepare the world for the coming of Baha'u'llah and he declared it in the evening of May 22 1844.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Amar Das (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Amar Das (1479-1574) was the third of the Sikh Gurus.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Ascension of Baha'u'llah</b> Anniversary of Baha'u'llah's death in 1892 near Akka, Israel.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Yom Yerushalayim</b> Jerusalem Day

## JUNE

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Ascension Day</b> Ascension Day marks the last earthly appearance of Christ after his resurrection. Christians believe Christ ascended into heaven. It is celebrated 40 days after Easter.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Ascension Day (Catholic Church in England and Wales)</b> Ascension Day is normally celebrated 40 days after Easter. The Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrates it on the following Sunday instead.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Shavuot (1st day)</b> Shavuot is a two-day festival that marks the time when the first harvest was taken to the Temple. Also known as the Festival of Weeks. Work is not permitted for the duration of the festival.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Pentecost - Whitsun</b> The seventh Sunday after Easter, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and the birth of the Christian Church.

## JUNE

FAITH	Festival
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Sikh Guru and the first Sikh martyr. He also compiled all of the past Gurus' writings into one book, which is now the Sikh holy scripture: the Guru Granth Sahib.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Trinity Sunday</b> The first Sunday after Pentecost. Christians meditate on the nature of God as "Three in one".
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>All Saints' Day (Orthodox)</b> This day honours all saints, known and unknown, of the Christian church. Western churches celebrate All Saints Day on November 1
<b>Pagan Festival</b>	<b>Summer Solstice - Litha</b> Longest day of the year

## JUNE

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Corpus Christi</b> Roman Catholic festival celebrating the “real presence of Christ in the Eucharist”. The festival falls on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Corpus Christi (Catholic Church in England and Wales)</b> Corpus Christi falls on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrates it on the following Sunday instead.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St Peter's Day</b> Observed by Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches. One of the oldest saints' days.
<b>Chinese Festival</b>	Dragon Boat Festival is one of the major holidays. This summer festival was originally a time to ward off bad spirits, but the Dragon Boat Festival is now a celebration of the life of Qu Yuan, a Chinese Poet who drowned himself to protest against official corruption. During the festival rice dumplings are eaten and the famous dragon boat races are held

## JULY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Hargobind (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) was the sixth of the Sikh Gurus.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Martyrdom of the Bab</b> Anniversary of the Bab's execution in 1850 in Tabriz, Iran.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St Swithin's Day</b> Swithin (or Swithun) was a Saxon bishop in the 9th century. Legend has it that the weather on his feast day, 15 July, will determine the weather for the next 40 days.
<b>Buddhist Festival</b>	<b>Asala - Dharma Day</b> The anniversary of the start of Buddha's teaching - his first sermon , "The Wheel of Truth", after his enlightenment.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>17th Tammuz</b> An important Jewish fast day.
<b>Zoroastrian Festival</b>	<b>Jamshedi Noruz (Qadimi)</b> Zoroastrian New Year's Day in the Qadimi calendar.

## JULY

FAITH	Festival
<b>Rastafarian Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Haile Selassie I</b> Haile Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia. Rastas believe Haile Selassie is God, and that he will return to Africa members of the black community who are living in exile.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Har Krishen (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Har Krishan (1656-1664) was the eighth of the Sikh Gurus.
<b>Zoroastrian Festival</b>	<b>Khordad Sal (Qadimi)</b> The birthday of Zoroaster, celebrated on this date in the Qadimi calendar.

## AUGUST

FAITH	Festival
<b>Pagan Festival</b>	<b>Lughnasadh - Lammas</b> A harvest festival and one of the Pagan festivals of Celtic origin which split the year into four.
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Ramadan (start)</b> Ramadan is the Muslim month of fasting.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Transfiguration</b> Orthodox Christian feast commemorating the sudden emanation of radiance from the person of Jesus that occurred on the mountain.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Tisha B'Av</b> A solemn day that commemorates a series of tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the years, many of which have coincidentally happened on this day.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Raksha Bandhan</b> Raksha Bandhan is the Hindu festival that celebrates brotherhood and love. “Raksha Bandhan” means a thread for protection.

## AUGUST

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b> A largely Roman Catholic festival celebrating their belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken body and soul into heaven.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Dormition of the Theotokos</b> An Orthodox festival that commemorates the death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ's mother. Dormition means "falling asleep".
<b>Rastafarian Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Marcus Garvey</b> Commemorates the Birthday of Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican politician born in 1887 who predicted the crowning of a King in Africa, and instigated the 'Back to Africa' movement.
<b>Zoroastrian Festival</b>	<b>Jamshedi Noruz (Shenshai)</b> Zoroastrian New Year's Day in the Shenshai calendar.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Janmashtami - Krishna Jayanti</b> The Janamashtami festival marks the birth of Krishna, the most highly venerated God in the Hindu pantheon.

## AUGUST

FAITH	Festival
<b>Zoroastrian Festival</b>	<b>Khordad Sal (Shenshai)</b> The birthday of Zoroaster, celebrated on this date in the Shenshai calendar.
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Eid-Ul-Fitr</b> The end of Ramadan when Muslims celebrate the end of fasting and thank Allah for His help with their month-long act of self-control.

## SEPTEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b> Roman Catholics celebrate the birth of the Virgin Mary.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Feast of the Birth of Mary</b> Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches celebrate the birth of Mary, mother of Jesus.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Nativity of the Theotokos</b> Orthodox Christians celebrate the birth of the Virgin Mary
<b>Rastafarian Festival</b>	<b>Ethiopian New Year</b> The start of the New Year in Ethiopia is recognised because Rastafarians believe Ethiopia to be their spiritual homeland, and a place to which they want to return.
<b>Pagan Festival</b>	<b>Autumn Equinox</b> This day is celebrated when day and night are of equal duration.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Navaratri (start)</b> Navaratri (nine nights) symbolises the triumph of good over evil and marks the start of autumn.

## SEPTEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Michaelmas/St Michael's Day</b> A feast day in honour of the archangel Michael. Michael is one of only two angels mentioned by name in the Bible (the other being Gabriel.)
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Rosh Hashanah (1st day)</b> Jewish New Year. A two-day festival during which work is not permitted.
<b>Chinese Festival</b>	<b>Mid Autumn Moon Festival</b> The night is spent watching the harvest moon, eating moon cakes and listening to poems and stories about the moon and the goddess and hare who live in it.
<b>Chinese Festival</b>	<b>Birthday Confucius / Teachers Day</b> China's great philosopher, born in about 551 BCE, who taught respect for parents and elders and reverence for ancestors

## SEPTEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Ganesh Chaturthi</b> A ten day festival in honour of Ganesh, the elephant-headed god, remover of obstacles. Clay images of the god are set up for this festival, after which they are broken in water.
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Lailat-ul Qadr</b> Falling on the 27 <sup>th</sup> night of Ramadan, this 'Night of Power' commemorates the first revelation to the Prophet of the 'Qu'ran', the holy words of Allah. The night is spent in remembrance of Allah and in prayer.

## OCTOBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Fast of Gedalliah</b> Fast in memory of the assassination of Gedalliah Ben Achikam, the Governor of Israel during the days of Nebuchadnetzar, King of Babylonia.
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Dussera</b> Celebrates Lord Rama's victory over the evil demon Ravana.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Yom Kippur</b> Day of Atonement - the most solemn day of the Jewish year.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Ram Das (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Ram Das (1534-1581) was the fourth of the Sikh Gurus.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Sukkot</b> Sukkot or The Feast of Tabernacles, commemorates the years that the Jews spent in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, and celebrates the way in which God took special care of them under impossible conditions.

## OCTOBER

FAITH	Festival
	Sukkot lasts for seven days, and work is not permitted on the first two days
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Hoshanah Rabbah</b> The 7th day of Sukkot.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Shemini Atzeret</b> Shemini Atzeret can be translated as “the assembly of the eighth (day).” In Israel the festival is combined with Simchat Torah.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Birth of the Bab</b> Celebrates the birth of the precursor of the founder of the Baha’i faith.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Simchat Torah</b> Simchat Torah means “Rejoicing in the Torah.” This holiday marks the completion of the yearly cycle of weekly Torah readings.
<b>Jain Festival</b>	<b>Paryushana</b> The most important Jain festival, it consists of eight (Swetambara) or ten (Digambara) days of intensive fasting and repentance. A time of reflection.

## OCTOBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Hindu Festival</b>	<b>Diwali</b> Diwali, the festival of lights, is the most popular of all the festivals from South Asia. It is an occasion for celebrations by Hindus as well as Jains and Sikhs.
<b>Jain Festival</b>	<b>Diwali</b> Diwali, the festival of lights, is the most popular of all the festivals from South Asia. It is an occasion for celebrations by Hindus as well as Jains and Sikhs.
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Diwali</b> For Sikhs, Diwali is particularly important because it celebrates the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Hallowe'en (All Hallows' Eve)</b> The night before All Saints' Day (All Hallows' Day). Its origins date back over 2000 years to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. It was celebrated as a Christian festival by the 8th Century.

## OCTOBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Pagan Festival</b>	<b>Samhain (Hallowe'en)</b> Samhain (pronounced 'sow'inn') marks the Feast of the Dead. Many Pagans also celebrate it as the old Celtic New Year (although some mark this at Imbolc).
<b>Chinese Festival</b>	<b>Chung Yeung</b> Heeding a friend's premonition, the scholar Huan Ching escaped death by climbing to a high place on the ninth day the ninth moon. The day is celebrated by climbing hills and flying kites

## NOVEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>All Saints' Day (Hallowmas, All Hallows')</b> All Saints' Day (also known as All Hallows' Day or Hallowmas) is when Anglicans and Roman Catholics honour all saints, known and unknown, of the Christian church. Orthodox churches celebrate it on the first Sunday after Pentecost
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>All Souls' Day</b> All Souls' Day is an opportunity for Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic churches to commemorate the faithful departed. They remember and pray for the souls of people who are in Purgatory. All Souls' Day is celebrated on 3 November if the 2nd is a Sunday.
<b>Rastafarian Festival</b>	<b>Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I</b> Haile Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia. Rastas believe Haile Selassie is God, and that he will return to Africa members of the black community who are living in exile. It's an all day celebration.

## NOVEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Eid-Ul-Adha</b> Festival of Sacrifice marking the day after Arafat. The Day of Arafat is the most important day in the Hajj ritual. This is a four day holiday
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Birthday of Guru Nanak (Lunar Calendar)</b> This festival may be celebrated by some on the date fixed by the Nanakshahi calendar: April 14. The distinctive Sikh communal kitchen - 'langar' - where all could eat together, whatever their caste or status, was his idea
<b>Multi Faith Festival</b>	<b>Armistice Day</b> Marks the end of the First World War on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. At 1100 on this day people in the UK pause for 2 minutes of silence to remember those who gave their lives in past conflicts.

## NOVEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Birth of Baha'u'llah</b> Celebrates the birth in 1817 of the founder of the Baha'i faith
<b>Sikh Festival</b>	<b>Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Nanakshahi calendar)</b> Guru Tegh Bahadur was the ninth Sikh Guru and is honoured as a champion of religious freedom. He was executed in 1675 for refusing to convert to Islam.
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Day of the Covenant</b> This minor festival celebrates the covenant of Baha'u'llah. Baha'is also mark the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on this day.
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Al-Hijira</b> Islamic New Year. Marks the migration of the Prophet Mohammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina

## NOVEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Advent Sunday</b> The beginning of the ecclesiastical year on the Sunday closest to November 30. Advent is the season before Christmas - In Western Christendom, four Sundays are included. In Eastern Christendom, the season is longer and begins in the middle of November
<b>Bahai Festival</b>	<b>Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha</b> Marks the death of the son of Baha'u'lláh. This is a minor holy day and work is not suspended.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St Andrew's Day</b> Saint Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, Greece and Russia. The flag of Scotland is the Cross of St. Andrew. St Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was originally a fisherman and became the first Apostle.

## DECEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Muslim Festival</b>	<b>Ashura</b> Islamic holy day observed on the 10th of the Islamic month of Muharram. Shi'ite Muslims regard it as a major festival marking the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Hussein.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Feast of the Immaculate Conception</b> Celebrated by Roman Catholics who remember Mary's conception as being without sin, therefore, immaculate.
<b>Buddhist Festival</b>	<b>Bodhi Day</b> On Bodhi day some Buddhists celebrate Gautama's attainment of enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, India.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St Lucy's Day</b> Saint Lucy's Day or the Feast of St. Lucy is marked by Catholics and Orthodox Christians and also celebrated by members of the Lutheran Church.

## DECEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>10th Tevet</b> An important Jewish fast day.
<b>Jewish Festival</b>	<b>Hanukkah</b> Hanukkah is the Festival of Lights and marks the restoration of the temple by the Maccabees in 164 BCE. Hanukkah is celebrated at roughly the same time as Christmas, but there is no connection at all between the festivals. Hanukkah is an eight day festival, with an extra candle being lit on the special Hanukkah candlestick on each of the eight days.
<b>Pagan Festival</b>	<b>Winter Solstice - Yule</b> Yule is the time of the winter solstice, when the sun child is reborn, an image of the return of all new life born through the love of the Gods. Within the Northern Tradition Yule is regarded as the New Year.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b> The day before Christmas Day and the beginning of the time when Christians remember the birth of Jesus, over two thousand years ago.

## DECEMBER

FAITH	Festival
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b> The day when Western Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with thanksgiving services at churches, gifts being exchanged a special meal eaten
<b>Secular Festival</b>	<b>Boxing Day (Secular )</b> The day after Christmas Day. A secular festival.
<b>Christian Festival</b>	<b>St Stephen's Day</b> St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is celebrated on this day by Roman Catholics. The day is also called the Feast of Stephen.

# Sex

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# Sex

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## Introduction

The definition of Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. Of the UK population according to the last census, there were 31 million men and 32.2 million women. Despite the fact there have been laws to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of their gender for many years, sex discrimination is one of the most common forms of discrimination experienced in the UK today, particularly by women.

The Equality Act 2010 says you must not be discriminated against because:

- You are (or are not) a particular sex
- Someone thinks you are the opposite sex. This is known as discrimination by perception
- You are connected to someone of a particular sex. This is known as discrimination by association

In the Equality Act sex can mean either male or female, or a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls.

# Discrimination

There are four main types of sex discrimination.

**Direct Discrimination:** this happens when, because of your sex, someone treats you worse than someone of the opposite sex who is in a similar situation.

**Indirect Discrimination:** this happens when an organisation has a particular policy or way of working that applies in the same way to both sexes but which puts you at a disadvantage because of your sex.

**Harassment:** there are three main types of harassment: when someone makes you feel humiliated, offended or degraded; sexual harassment or ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’; when someone treats you unfairly because you refused to put up with sexual harassment.

**Victimisation:** this is when you are treated badly because you have made a complaint of sex related discrimination under the Equality Act. It can also occur if you are supporting someone who has made a complaint of sex discrimination.

Often discrimination on the grounds of gender is indirect, unintentional and goes unnoticed, but it is still unlawful. However, direct discrimination still happens. In the workplace this can range from offhand comments which were not intended to offend to outright discrimination such as deciding to employ a man over a woman, or offering training to male employees over female ones, because a female might become pregnant. In service delivery, this can take other forms, such as speaking directly to a male customer when a couple are present, and addressing the man as though they are the decision maker.

Indirect discrimination might include refusing to be flexible about appointment times, because female customers who live alone are nervous about having a stranger in their home.

## Further Information And Useful Resources

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

# Sexual Orientation

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# Sexual Orientation

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## Introduction

The Government estimates between 5-7% of the population identify as being lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB). However it is important to note that national surveys like the census doesn't ask people for information about their sexual orientation so this figure is only an estimate.

## Definitions

Sexual orientation is a term used to describe how an individual chooses to identify their sexuality, that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual. Lesbian, gay, bisexual is often shortened to LGB, or the single word 'gay' by service providers and policy makers. However it's important to remember that the attitudes and experiences of people are unique and the level of shared identity among LGB is different for each individual. No one would suggest that heterosexual (straight) people are all alike, so sharing a minority sexual orientation doesn't necessarily mean you share anything else about your life.

It's also important to remember that a person's own definition of their sexual orientation is not fixed and may change over time.

**Gay** – having sexual orientation to members of the same sex

**Lesbian** – a woman whose sexual orientation is to women

**Gay man** – a man whose sexual orientation is to men

**Bi-Sexual** – referring to a man, or woman whose sexual orientation is to people of both sexes

**Heterosexual** – referring to a man, or woman whose sexual orientation is to people of the opposite sex.

## Legislation

Most of the legislation put in place to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation is fairly new.

The Equality Act 2010 says you must not be discriminated against because:

- You are heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual
- Someone thinks you have a particular sexual orientation. This is known as discrimination by perception
- You are connected to someone who has a particular sexual orientation. This is known as discrimination by association

In the Equality Act, sexual orientation includes how you choose to express your sexual orientation, such as through your appearance or the places you visit.

## Discrimination

There are four main types of sexual orientation discrimination:

**Direct:** someone treats you worse than another person in a similar situation because of your sexual orientation

**Indirect:** this happens when an organisation has a particular policy or way of working that applies to everyone but which puts people of your sexual orientation at a disadvantage.

**Harassment:** in the workplace this can occur when someone makes you feel humiliated, offended or degraded. Outside the workplace, if you are harassed or receive offensive treatment because of your sexual orientation, this may be direct discrimination.

**Victimisation:** this is when you are treated badly because you have made a complaint of sexual orientation related discrimination under the Equality Act. It can also occur if you are supporting someone who has made a complaint of sexual orientation related discrimination under the Act.

Discrimination can be direct, indirect, deliberate or accidental. This can be down to the actions of individual people or it can be due to policies or procedures which intentionally put people at a disadvantage because they are LGB.

Harrassment in and around the home is a common cause of housing problems for LGB people. Homophobic behaviour can take many forms, from verbal and physical attacks, to offhand comments, which although not meant to cause harm or offense may be offensive to some people, for example using the word 'gay' in a negative way or using dated terms to describe people by their sexual orientation which have offensive undertones, such as 'homosexual.'

When working in people's homes it is important to remember that you can't assume anything about a person's sexual orientation or how they live their life. Not everybody is open with their sexuality and they have a right to respect for their wishes to keep their sexual identity private.

## Further Information And Useful Resources

Stonewall: [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)  
[www.stonewall.org.uk/cymru](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/cymru)  
<http://www.lgf.org.uk/>  
LGBT Excellence Centre:  
[www.ecwales.org.uk](http://www.ecwales.org.uk) Wales

Practical advice  
and information  
for every job

ian williams

Looking after Buildings

# Practical advice and information for every job

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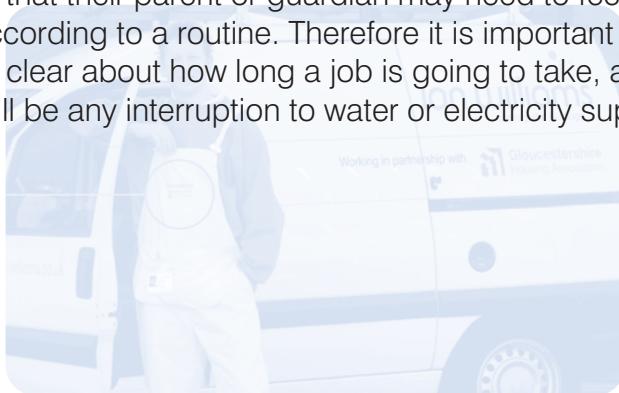
## Age

When compared with the rest of the population, older people are more likely to have certain disabilities, such as sight loss, deafness, mobility problems and certain mental health problems.

**Some older people might not feel comfortable** being in their home with a person they do not know. It is important to try and be flexible with appointment times, so that it can be arranged for a friend, carer or a family member to be present. Always carry identification with you and introduce yourself by name.

**Often you will be asked** to work in properties where there are children. If there are no adults present in the property while you are working, you should not carry out the work and should let someone know about the issue straight away and leave immediately.

**Where there are very young children** in a property, consider the fact that their parent or guardian may need to feed their child according to a routine. Therefore it is important that you are clear about how long a job is going to take, and if there will be any interruption to water or electricity supplies.



## Disability

Sensory impairments like sight loss, blindness or deafness will affect the way people communicate. Bear this in mind and change the way you communicate with people according to the situation.

Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) usually have English as a second language. Writing things down for people won't always help. Be prepared to use gestures to communicate or if you need to contact your manager so that a BSL interpreter can be arranged if necessary.

People who are blind or have sight loss may rely on their memory or sense of touch to work out where things are in their homes. If anything is moved around in their home without them knowing about it while you are working, this can cause a problem. For people who have some sight loss, turning off or dimming the lights can also cause a problem.

People who are hard of hearing may be startled by sudden drilling or banging in their homes, unless they are told about it. Also, they will be unaware if you have left the property, even for a short period unless you tell them.

People with mobility problems or people who use a wheelchair may have their homes and the items within them specially adapted or set out in a certain way, to make sure they can fully access it. If furniture or fittings are moved around, or if equipment and tools are brought into the home, this may cause access problems.

Be mindful of where you park your van, especially where there are disabled parking spaces reserved for residents.

Parking on kerbs can cause a problem for people with sight loss or mobility problems.

**Often people with a learning disability** will have a relative or a carer who supports them in their home. It is important to remember where a person with a learning disability is a tenant you should try to communicate with them directly, because it is their home that you are working in. Their relative or carer will support them if necessary.

**People with certain mental health problems** may also have communication needs. You may find that you may need to repeat some information or ask questions in a different way. Remember that mental health problems are ‘invisible’ and you cannot always tell just by looking at someone if they have a mental health problem.

**Some people who have a disability** use assistive technology to help them carry out day-to-day tasks. You should bear this in mind if you need to interrupt the power supply at the property while carrying out work.

## Gender and Gender Identity

**Some women** (and some men) might not feel comfortable with being alone in the house with a stranger, for any number of reasons. It's important to be flexible about appointment times so that a friend or a family member can be there if necessary. Always be sure to carry identification and introduce yourself by name.

- Is the card in date?

**Not all women are comfortable** with people using terms of endearment e.g. love, darling etc. It's important to be mindful about the way you address customers and ensure that you are professional and courteous.

Where a person has identified themselves as Miss, Mrs, Ms or Mr you should address them as such. If you're not sure how to address someone, it is better to ask than to guess. Any form of discrimination against transgendered people or people of any gender, whether or not it is intentional is illegal and completely unacceptable. Be mindful of the language you use in people's homes.

## Sexual Orientation

Even where it is unintentional, any behaviour which discriminates against LGB people is against the law. Be aware of the kind of language you use and the things you talk about with or around customers. You won't know just by looking at someone that they are LGB. Even if they are not, using terms like 'gay' in a negative way, if offensive to others is still a form of discrimination.

## Ethnicity

Where people who are from a minority ethnic background speak English as a second language, or don't speak much English at all, you'll need to think about ways to communicate with the customer. This may mean changing the speed at which you speak or how you phrase things. It might even mean you have to call your manager to arrange for an interpreter to call, either in person, or over the phone to help you.

Body language, or the way we communicate with each other physically is different in different cultures. In some cultures it's not acceptable to shake hands with people. In others it's not acceptable to make lots of eye contact. In fact, in some cultures this is seen as rude or disrespectful. Try not to be

offended if a person's body language appears to be rude or seems unfamiliar to you.

**In some cultures it is common** for extended families to live together. This may mean that Grandparents or other elders live in the same house as their children and their grandchildren. Because of this, some properties will be busy places so you'll need to be extra clear with some customers about what you will be doing and where you will be working, so that everyone is made aware.

**In some cultures it is usual** to remove your shoes before entering the home. Obviously you may not be able to take off your PPE for health and safety reasons. Explain this to the customer if they ask you to take off your shoes. Wearing plastic shoe covers might be a good compromise.

## Religion or Belief

**In some faiths, it's not always acceptable** for a man who is not a family member to be alone with a woman. Some customers may have separate communal areas for men and women in the house. It's important to bear this in mind when arranging appointments. If a woman will be alone in the house, it is important to be flexible about times.

**Different religions or faiths** celebrate holy days or festivals throughout the year. We know that Christmas is a bad time to arrange appointments. The same can be said of holy days in other faiths, as they are likely to be busy times, where friends and family are celebrating or going to places of worship. It's important to bear this in mind when scheduling appointments or planned works. For more information about other religious festivals and holy day's

celebrated by people who live in our properties, you can refer to **www.bbc.co.uk/religion** to view a multifaith calendar.

In many faiths, people practice their religions or worship in their homes as well as visiting their local church, mosque or temple for example. Often this will happen at the same times each day. For some, this might involve praying and for some this will also involve other rituals like washing before prayer. People may have rooms or parts of the house which are only used for prayer and worship.

It's important when working in people's homes to consider that they may need to access certain parts of the home to pray at certain times. They may also need to have an available water supply if they wash before they pray. If you need to access a part of the home to carry out work or turn off the water supply it's important to discuss this with the customer first.

In some people's homes it's not acceptable to touch or move items of religious importance, such as prayer mats, books or shrines. Ask the customer before moving any items around in their property. If you need to bring tools and materials into the property, agree a place to store them before you start work.



## Language and Communication – Dos and Don'ts

Do...	Don't...
Try rephrasing things or speaking more slowly, if you are having difficulty communicating	Raise your voice unless you are asked to by the customer
Speak clearly, facing the customer when you talk to them	Cover your mouth or speak too quickly
Be prepared to write things down if necessary or use gestures to explain things	Assume that because someone can speak English that they can read it. Don't assume that because someone has answered a question in English that they fully understand what you're saying
Contact your manager to arrange for an interpreter, if you are still not able to communicate effectively with the customer. You can use a language identification card to find out what language the customer speaks before you do this.	Ask or allow a child who is present who appears to speak more English than their parent or guardian to interpret for you.
Refer to the customer by their name and use their title, i.e. Mrs, Ms, etc. Ask for their first name not their 'Christian' name if you need it.	Don't use words to refer to the customer by particular characteristic, i.e. black man, Muslim woman, disabled man, etc
Be friendly and polite	Get involved in discussions where talking about personal opinions might cause offence to some people, i.e. politics, etc or use offensive language or negative terms
Feel free to ask relevant questions about customers, which relate to the requirements of the job you are doing	Ask irrelevant or inappropriate personal questions
Always make an effort to speak directly to the customer who's name is on the job list	Talk to directly a customers support worker or their interpreter if they have one, unless you're asked to
Be confident in asking questions if you need to	Don't guess or make assumptions about what a customer's needs are

## Conduct and Behaviour – Dos and Don'ts

Do...	Don't...
Call ahead whenever possible to let the customer know when to expect you	Arrive late without letting the customer know first
Carry your I.D and take time introduce yourself and any colleagues to the customer by name	Offer to shake the customer's hand when you meet them - Wait to be offered.
Let the customer know what you are doing, where you will need to work, and how long you expect the job to take	Work in a property where there are no adults present
Let the customer know if you're leaving the property for any reason for any period of time	Leave without telling the customer, or leave their property unsecure
Tell the customer if you need to interrupt their, gas, electricity or water supply and let them know when you reconnect it	Turn off any utilities or unplug anything without telling the customer what you are doing
Take time to make the customer aware of any drilling, etc, you will be doing beforehand	Make assumptions or generalisations about the customers culture or lifestyle based on first impressions
Agree with the customer a place in the property to store tools and materials before you start work	Touch or move any furniture or any other items without informing the customer
Carry shoes covers with you and ask the customer if they would like you to wear them	Remove your boots or other PPE if you need to wear it for the job you're doing. If the customer asks you to do so, politely explain why you need to wear it.
Clear up any rubbish or spillages as quickly as possible	Leave anything lying around which could cause an obstruction or a hazard
Call your manager and let them know you if need to leave a job, where you have concerns about your own safety	Put yourself at risk



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