



SUPPORTING VULNERABLE AND LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN THROUGH RAMADAN

Islamic **Guidance** with
Social Work and
Medical Perspectives
May 2026



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An initiative of Muslim Children in Care

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About

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
Bismillāh ir-Raḥmān ir-Raḥīm

Ramadan is a central month in the Islamic calendar. These guidelines outline ways to **support and enrich the Ramadan experiences of children in care**, written for care professionals and care providers. Ramadan is experienced differently by different families — it is a month of fasting, but also a time of celebration, joy and togetherness. For children in care, their memories of Ramadan will be shaped by their earlier family life, making it essential that professionals work with the child to understand their expectations, feelings and approaches to Ramadan.

This document provides **theological, cultural and practical** guidance. It does not align with any one Islamic denominational or cultural group; instead, it draws on theological discussions with **broad scholarly consensus (ijmā‘)** and an overview of diverse British Muslim practices. Our aim is to help social workers and foster carers create Ramadan experiences that children find **positive, nurturing and uplifting** — spiritually and emotionally.

This guidance forms part of the wider work of Muslim Children in Care, supporting local authorities and carers across the UK.

This guidance does not override statutory safeguarding duties, medical advice, or the decision-making authority of those holding parental responsibility.

About the Author

Tay Jiva MBE is a qualified social worker with over 20 years' experience working with vulnerable children and families. She is the Founder of Muslim Children in Care, a national initiative supporting the safeguarding, identity and wellbeing of Muslim children in the UK care system. She also serves as Director and Registered Manager of Sparks Fostering, an independent fostering agency.

Tay holds three Master's degrees, is co-editor of Islamic Guidance on Adoption and Fostering, and was awarded an MBE for her work supporting Muslim communities and vulnerable children.

This document has been edited and/or endorsed by Islamic scholars, social work professionals, carers, health professionals and relevant organisations.



Overview

Trauma-Informed Practice

Professionals supporting children who wish to fast should first speak to the child — and, where appropriate, previous carers — to understand their earlier Ramadan experiences. Like other significant dates (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, New Year), Ramadan may bring memories to the surface and can sometimes affect mood or behaviour. Children should be supported with **sensitivity and reassurance**, encouraged to build positive associations with fasting and Ramadan.

If fasting causes distress, carers should encourage engagement in **other Ramadan practices** such as charity, prayer or kindness. If these too are distressing, children must be reassured that it is acceptable not to participate and that support remains available. No child or adult should feel **judged or shamed** for whether they fast.

Ramadan as a Social Experience

Ramadan is not only spiritual — it is deeply social. Children may miss the communal elements of Ramadan and may experience loss or reminders of painful past experiences when these elements are absent.

Helping Children Understand God's Attributes

Fasting nurtures God-consciousness: the awareness that God is always watching, encouraging Muslims to refrain from actions even when alone. Children in care who think about God in this way should be gently guided to understand that God is **Kind, Caring and Forgiving**, so that this awareness brings comfort, peace and hope.

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1. Scholarly contributors listed at the end of the document.
 2. "Bismillah..." appears on every chapters of the Qur'an and is an Arabic phrase meaning "In the name of Allah" (or God), often expanded to Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim ("In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful").



CULTURAL CONTEXT AND FAMILY PRACTICES

Many families experience Ramadan with a sense of celebration. Children in care may previously have experienced:

- **New-moon celebrations** — anticipating the start of Ramadan. Some communities hold gatherings at the mosque. Girls in some ethnic groups may have henna applied. The absence of these traditions may cause feelings of loss.
- **Shopping and food preparation** — a central part of family routine during Ramadan.
- **Charitable giving** — families choose where to donate; younger children may give small amounts of pocket money. For children in care, carers may prefer to **reward prayers or positive actions** with money the child can donate to a charity of their choice.
- **Family activities** — arts and crafts, quizzes, and other fun shared activities.
- **Home decorations** — Ramadan banners, cards and lanterns.



1. Henna and moon-night gatherings referenced in original guidance.
2. Charity practices vary among Muslim families and communities.



ALIGNING CARE WITH THE CHILD'S OWN PRACTICE

Children in care should be supported to **realign their new environment** with the Ramadan routines and cultural practices they previously knew. Although fasting is central, **charity, prayer and kindness** are equally important elements.

Short-Term Fostering Considerations

Where children are in **short-term placements**, every reasonable effort must be made to ensure consistency between the practice of Islam by those with **parental responsibility** and the practice in the fostering home. Carers should never adopt approaches that cause harm — for example, any form of physical punishment. Prophetic teachings emphasise **calmness, patience and serenity** as essential to fasting.

Buddy Support for Carers

Non-Muslim carers (or Muslim carers who practise differently from the child's background) may benefit from a **buddy system** — connecting them with other Muslim carers. Where this is not available, the author of this guidance can be contacted for advice.

Meaning of the Arabic Calligraphy

The Arabic calligraphy at the head of this document translates as:
"In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Caring."

Since 113 of the 114 Qur'anic chapters begin with this line, Muslims understand kindness and care to be foundational values. These attributes are often taught to young children to encourage them to begin activities with remembrance of God's kindness. Children in care may not have received this early guidance; carers can help by **gently modelling** these values.

1. Prophetic guidance on calmness during fasting referenced in original text.
2. Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm appears at the start of nearly every Qur'anic chapter.



WHAT IS RAMADAN?

“The Qur’an was revealed in the month of Ramadan; it is a guidance for people, containing clear teachings and distinguishing right from wrong. Whoever is present during this month must fast; whoever is ill or travelling should fast the same number of days later. Allah wants ease for you, not difficulty.”
(Qur’an 2:185, translation from the original document)

Timing and Calendar

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, lasting **29 or 30 days**. The lunar cycle shifts annually, so Ramadan begins about **11 days earlier** each year relative to the Gregorian calendar.

Muslims begin fasting only once the **new moon** is sighted, either locally or in the region they follow (e.g., Saudi Arabia or local moon-sighting groups).

Non-Muslim carers may need to contact:

- Local Muslims
- Local mosques
- The author or contributors

...to confirm start dates.

Religious Significance

Many Muslims follow Saudi Arabia because the **Ka’bah** (in Makkah) is their spiritual direction of prayer. Parents often provide children with **Ka’bah images, Arabic calligraphy, or colouring books**, supporting their faith identity.

Ramadan may fall on **long, warm days** or short, **cool days**, so hydration and sleep planning are essential.

Ramadan is honoured because:

- The **Qur’an was revealed** during this month
- Muslims believe the **gates of Heaven** open
- The **gates of Hell** are closed
- It is a time for spiritual cleansing and increased devotion

Many families create a **prayer space** at home, with prayer mats, beads and Qur’an copies. Muslim children in care should be supported to do the same. The **Qibla** (direction of prayer) in England is generally **south-east**.

1. Qur’an 2:185 translation sourced from The Majestic Qur’an, referenced in original text.

2. Qibla direction varies by region; England faces approximately south-east.



LAST TEN NIGHTS / LAYLAT AL-QADR

A particularly blessed night — Laylat al-Qadr (“Night of Power”, “Night of Destiny”, or “Night of Glory”) — falls within the last ten nights of Ramadan. Some Muslims believe it can fall on any of the last ten nights, others believe it is more likely on an odd-numbered night, and many believe it is most likely the 27th night.

Many Muslims pray for long periods at home or in the mosque during these nights. Younger children should practise in ways consistent with their birth family’s practice, if safe to do so. Older children should be supported to express their preferences.

Some adults choose to observe i’ tikāf, a period of seclusion in the mosque or at home for prayer. This is rare and is not generally practised by children. Older children who wish to attend the mosque for extended prayers must be accompanied by a trusted adult.

Carers should seek social worker approval before agreeing to overnight stays in mosques or extended prayer activities. If there are no safeguarding or educational concerns, older children should be supported.



1. Laylat al-Qadr practices vary across Muslim communities.
2. i’ tikāf is a voluntary devotional practice mostly observed by adults.



INTRODUCTION TO FASTING

Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become mindful of Allah...”
(Qur'an 2:183–184, translation from original text)

Fasting during Ramadan is **compulsory** for all Muslims who are able to fast. It is one of the **Five Pillars of Islam**, alongside:

1. The declaration of faith
2. Prayer
3. Giving charity
4. Fasting
5. Pilgrimage (Hajj)

What Fasting Involves

Fasting lasts from the **pre-dawn meal (suhoor/sehri)** until **sunset (iftar)**. During this time Muslims do not eat or drink. A minority do not follow exact sunrise-sunset timings during long summer days; Muslim children in care should follow the practice that reflects their **birth family's tradition**.

Non-Muslim carers may join **local interfaith initiatives** to build understanding, such as shared fasts or communal iftar events.

1. Qur'an 2:183–184 translation used in original guidance.
2. Fasting practices may vary slightly between communities.



DAILY ROUTINE WHEN FASTING

Daily Routine When Fasting

Below is an overview of the key times and activities during a typical fasting day in Ramadan. Exact times vary according to local prayer timetables.

Time / Activity / Details

Prior to sunrise — Suhoor/Sehri meal

Children who are fasting should be gently supported to wake for suhoor, the pre-dawn meal. This meal should be substantial and nourishing to help sustain them through the fast.

Sunrise — Fajr prayer

Children who wish to pray should be supported to complete the Fajr prayer.

Early afternoon — Zuhr prayer

This is one of the five compulsory daily prayers.

Late afternoon — Asr prayer

Many Muslims attend the local mosque after Asr and remain until the night-time prayers.

Sunset — Iftar

The fast is opened at iftar, traditionally with dates, following the practice of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Some families also open their fast with Zamzam water.

Carers should try to find out whether the child's previous carers used Zamzam. The author or listed contributors can help carers identify reputable Zamzam vendors if needed. According to Islamic teachings, it is preferred to open the fast on time, without delay.

Immediately after sunset — Maghrib prayer

This compulsory prayer is performed shortly after breaking the fast.

Night-time — Isha prayer, followed by Taraweeh & Qiyam



DAILY ROUTINE WHEN FASTING

These additional night prayers are highly encouraged but not compulsory.

- **Taraweeh/Qiyam** may be prayed in the mosque or at home.
- **Sunni Muslims** typically pray Taraweeh and Qiyam.
- **Shia Muslims** pray Qiyam at home.
- In mosques, the **entire Qur'an** is often recited across the month through these prayers.

Notes on Scheduling and Practical Considerations

- Carers may need to help children plan sleep, schoolwork and routines around fasting and prayer times.
- Some Muslims remain awake after Fajr and sleep later; others nap during the day to manage energy levels.

Supporting Prayer Learning

If carers of Muslim children do not have the knowledge to teach prayers, they should seek help from:

- Other Muslim carers or parents
- Local mosques
- Trusted Muslim networks

Carers should support children to follow the practices of the **sect followed by their birth parents**, at least until the child is old enough to make informed choices.

If local mosques lack appropriate facilities (e.g., safe women's prayer spaces or DBS-checked teachers), the **author of this document can signpost to suitable alternatives**.

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1. Exact local prayer times should be obtained from a local mosque or reliable Islamic timetable.
 2. These prayers (Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha) constitute the five compulsory daily prayers for Muslims.
 3. Children's previous practice, parental wishes, and the child's own views should be central when planning fasting and prayer routines in care.



PERMISSIBLE / IMPERMISSIBLE DURING FASTS

If parents/carers of Muslim children do not have the knowledge required to teach the child about these prayers, advice can be sought from:

- Other Muslim parent/carer
- Local mosques
- Trusted Muslim networks

Carers should ensure that children in foster care are supported by Muslims who follow **the same sect as their birth parents**, at least until the child is old enough to make their own choices. If a carer or social work team struggles to find a mosque with appropriate facilities (e.g., women's prayer space, police-checked teachers), the **author of this document can help signpost** to appropriate support.

Permissible or Impermissible During Fasts?

Below is a general guide to what is allowed and not allowed during fasting. Islamic rulings state that the fast is only broken by something **taken intentionally through the mouth or nose** that reaches the stomach, or by intentional acts that invalidate the fast.

Permissible During Fasting

- Accidental eating
- Accidental drinking
- Using an inhaler for health purposes (e.g., asthma)
- Small amounts of bleeding
- Swallowing one's own saliva
- Washing the mouth and nose without swallowing water
- Using eye drops or kohl
- Tasting food without swallowing (for cooking needs)
- Injections that do not provide nourishment
- Using insulin injections (non-nutritive injections only; see footnote)
- While some families choose to reduce entertainment or other activities during Ramadan for spiritual reasons, these do not invalidate the fast itself.



PERMISSIBLE / IMPERMISSIBLE DURING FASTS

Impermissible During Fasting

- Intentional eating
- Intentional drinking
- Sexual activity
- Intentional vomiting
- Blood donation
- Injections that provide nourishment
- Oral medication (e.g., painkillers)
- Prescribed medicines taken orally during fasting hours

Some Muslim families choose to reduce entertainment (TV/music/social media) during Ramadan to focus on spirituality; others continue these activities. None of these invalidate a fast. Carers should respect the child's background and family practice, balancing this with the child's wishes, age and capacity.

Qur'an Recitation and Islamic Activities

It is common for families to:

- Listen to Qur'an recitation
- Watch children's nasheed videos
- Attend mosque recitation competitions
- These activities can uplift a child's mood, strengthen their connection to faith, and create positive associations with Ramadan.

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1. Local mosques may have differing facilities; carers should verify availability of women-friendly spaces and DBS-checked teachers.
 2. Insulin injections do not usually invalidate the fast; however, fasting **may be unsafe** for diabetics — medical guidance must be followed.
 3. Entertainment (TV/music/social media) is a matter of personal practice; none of these break a fast.
 4. All activity allowances and restrictions listed above are taken directly from the original document's guidance.



CONDITIONS WHEN FASTING IS EXCUSED

Conditions When Fasting Is Excused

Fasting is excused for the following categories; people in these groups **should not fast** according to Islamic teaching.

1. **Physical illness** — The level of sickness required for an exemption is subjective; no one should risk substantial or long-lasting ill health by fasting. Routine medical treatments (e.g., vaccinations) should ideally be postponed until after Ramadan.
2. **Mental ill health** — Capacity and impact should be judged case by case; in some situations, medical advice is appropriate.
3. **Travel** — A journey of around 80 km is commonly cited for exemption; some authorities permit exemption for shorter distances so long as one is leaving their home town or city (e.g., 10–20 miles / 16–32 km).
4. **Older age with physical inability** — Where fasting would cause harm or is not reasonably manageable.
5. **Pregnancy or breastfeeding** — If the mother reasonably fears harm to herself or the baby.
6. **Menstruation or post-natal bleeding** — Fasting is not observed during these times.
7. **Pre-pubescent children** — Children who have not reached puberty are not required to fast.

If any of these conditions **begin after a fast has started**, the fast is considered **ended**, and the person may resume eating and drinking.

If a child wishes to do so, **missed fasts** can be made up **after Ramadan**. Some choose to wait for **shorter winter days**. For children who have reached puberty, making up missed fasts is preferred where feasible; where this is not possible (e.g., long-term health conditions), feeding a **needy person** (two meals per missed day) is a recognised option.

1. **The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA)** provides health guidance on common illnesses and fasting: <<https://britishima.org/ramadan-rapid-review/>>.
2. See **Department of Health / NHS** “Ramadan Health Guide” (healthy fasting): <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/a-z/a_guide_to_healthy_fasting.pdf>.
3. Travel exemption distances vary by scholarly opinion; figures in this guidance reflect the **original document’s** description.
4. The option to feed a needy person (when making up fasts is not possible) reflects **fiqh-based** allowances referenced in the original guidance.



FOOD AND HYDRATION WHILE FASTING

Food and Hydration While Fasting

Contrary to what non-fasting people may assume, fasting **does not automatically** make someone lose or gain weight. The key factor is **what is eaten between fasting hours**. For example, if someone eats large amounts of fatty or sugary foods after opening their fast, they may still gain weight — and may not receive the nutrition needed to remain healthy. The **purpose** of fasting is religious and spiritual, not weight loss or dieting.

Fasting adults and children should start the day with a **substantial suhoor/sehri meal**, ideally containing foods that provide long-lasting energy, such as:

- **Complex carbohydrates** (e.g., porridge, whole grains)
- **Protein** (e.g., eggs, cheese, milk, yogurt)
- **Bread** or other slow-release energy foods

Suhoor should restore energy but not be so heavy that it causes lethargy — as children will need energy for evening prayers, play, study, and adequate hydration after iftar.

Hydration

Rehydration is essential. Children and adults should drink enough water between **iftar** and **suhoor**.

Sugary drinks and **diuretics** such as tea and coffee should be:

- avoided, or
- consumed in small amounts,
- because they may contribute to dehydration.

Children may be tempted to fill up on rich or favourite foods at iftar, but doing so may make it difficult to drink enough water afterwards.



FOOD AND HYDRATION WHILE FASTING

Health Guidance

The Department of Health, supported by the NHS, has produced a **Ramadan Health Guide**, and the **British Nutrition Foundation** also offers relevant advice (links listed in footnotes).

General healthy-eating guidance such as the NHS's Eatwell Guide still applies.

Carers Showing Support

Where carers are able to join the child by fasting for some or all of the day, this can be a **valuable gesture of support**. If other adults or older children in the home are not fasting, they should avoid eating near the child. This can be managed by allowing the fasting child to be occupied in another room during meal times. **Even the smell of food** may make fasting more challenging for a child.



1. Department of Health/NHS “Ramadan Health Guide”:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/a-z/a_guide_to_healthy_fasting.pdf>.

2. **British Nutrition Foundation** guidance on Ramadan nutrition: <<https://www.nutrition.org.uk>>. (Referenced in the original document.)

3. NHS **Eatwell Guide**: <<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>>



PREPARING YOUNGER OR INEXPERIENCED CHILDREN FOR FASTING

Preparing Younger or Inexperienced Children for Fasting

There is **no set age** at which children begin fasting, since children reach puberty at different times. However, it is common for Muslim children to keep “**mini**” **fasts** (e.g., fasting for a couple of hours) from around age 5, gradually increasing the duration as they grow older. It is not unusual for children aged 10 to complete all 30 fasts.

If the child — or those with **parental responsibility** — wishes for the child to fast earlier or for longer periods, foster carers and social workers must put a **clear plan** in place to respect these wishes as far as possible without endangering the child’s health. It remains rare for children significantly younger than age 10 to complete full fasts regularly.

Children keeping shorter fasts should, where possible, be encouraged to fast **just before iftar**, so that the family can open their fast together. Older children who are inexperienced at fasting should begin **with shorter fasts**, either during Ramadan or beforehand, with the intention of building up to full-day fasts. Carers should monitor the child’s **health and stamina**, offering advice about a reasonable fasting duration.

Some effects of fasting — tiredness, hunger, reduced concentration — **are normal**. Children should be supported to manage these through:

- engaging activities and distraction
- staying cool
- rest or quiet time



PREPARING YOUNGER OR INEXPERIENCED CHILDREN FOR FASTING

It is important to nurture a child's **motivation and enthusiasm** for fasting, making it an experience they feel **proud** of. Praise and rewards should be used to reinforce their efforts. Under no circumstances should a child be **forced** to fast through threats, shaming, harsh consequences, or harm. Positive reinforcement is the correct Islamic and social-care-aligned approach.

Books, resources and Ramadan-themed items (such as **fasting charts, sticker calendars, or chocolate countdowns**) are widely available and can help children enjoy the experience. As children in care hold a **high status** in Islam, carers should be **patient, kind and forgiving**, modelling gentleness so that children learn to adopt the same attitude towards themselves.

Even if a child is **not fasting**, they can still benefit from other Ramadan practices, such as:

- sitting with the family for iftar
- attending the mosque (where appropriate)
- participating in prayers
- charitable giving
- good deeds

Participation in these practices should be **praised**, as they strengthen the child's identity and connection to faith.

Professionals such as teachers, doctors or social workers may discuss the child's needs with carers to ensure the child is fully supported. Unless there are **safeguarding concerns**, the decision to fast lies with the child and the person(s) holding **parental responsibility**.



POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO CHILDREN OF FASTING

Potential Benefits to Children of Fasting

1. Strengthening of Religious Identity

Children in care have the right to be supported to practise their faith in a way that aligns with the practice of their birth parents or previous carers — while also respecting the child's own wishes and needs. Supporting a child to engage in fasting, as well as the wider cultural and religious practices of Ramadan, can help strengthen the child's **identity as a Muslim**.

While Islamic faith can be nurtured throughout the year, Ramadan holds a special place in bringing Muslim communities together and **boosting spiritual connection**. For children placed with practising Christians, discussions about **Lent fasting** may also foster understanding between the child and the carers, showing that fasting exists across different faiths. Children may also recognise fasting traditions in Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

For children in care who have been separated from their birth families, questions around identity are common. Ensuring that a child's **religious identity is supported** can give them the inner strength needed to grow into confident adults. This sense of ownership over their faith often improves **self-esteem and confidence**.

2. Link to Cultural and Ethnic Identity

The food eaten during Ramadan often holds deep **cultural significance**. Children who have moved homes may associate certain foods with either positive or negative memories. Carers and social workers must understand the child's preferences and cultural expectations around food. If a child finds comfort in foods linked to their heritage, carers should:

- explore recipes the child may enjoy,
- connect with local communities for help sourcing ingredients,
- and involve the child in preparing familiar dishes.

This process can be **therapeutic**, building trust and strengthening the relationship between the child and their carers.

Attending the local **mosque** during Ramadan can also help consolidate a child's sense of belonging to a cultural or ethnic community. This is particularly important for children placed in **white British homes** who may find it harder to reconcile their cultural background with their current environment.



POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO CHILDREN OF FASTING

3. Improved Ability to Empathise with Others

A key benefit of fasting is that, while experiencing hunger, Muslims often develop greater **empathy** for those who struggle to access food regularly. Children should be encouraged to think of others who have less — without comparing their own trauma, difficulties or blessings to others. Vulnerable children must never be told they are “more fortunate” or “less fortunate” than their peers; instead, they should be encouraged to recognise the blessings they do have while being **supported compassionately** through their own hardships.

Alongside fasting, one of the pillars of Islam is **charity**. While children are not obliged to give money unless they are older and earn their own, they may:

- give a little from their pocket money,
- or receive small rewards for prayers or tasks that they can then choose to donate.

Given that many children in care feel **disempowered**, being able to choose and donate to a charity can boost their self-esteem and sense of agency.





POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO CHILDREN OF FASTING

In addition to (or instead of) donating money, children may choose to:

- bake or cook for friends and neighbours,
- carry out acts of kindness,
- help in the home,
- volunteer with a charity,
- or show kindness to a friend who needs support.

Acts such as these are considered forms of **charity**, even if they are not part of the compulsory zakat donation (form of obligatory charity in Islam). They are highly commended and bring blessings. These actions also help to improve the child's **empathy**, strengthen their attachment to their community, and support the development of positive **self-esteem**.

4. Encouraging Positive Behaviour and Mindset

Good character is a fundamental part of the Muslim faith. This includes:

- speaking kindly,
- being patient,
- controlling temper and ego,
- avoiding gossip or backbiting,
- walking away from arguments,
- not holding grudges,
- and refraining from cursing.

There is an increased focus on these qualities during Ramadan. Children should be encouraged to be the **best version of themselves**, while also recognising that children will struggle at times. Adults must respond with **kindness, mercy and forgiveness**, modelling these behaviours so that children learn from example.

5. Improved Family and Social Relationships

The factors described above naturally help improve **family relationships**, but additional activities can strengthen bonds further — for example:

- spending more quality time together,
- playing games as a family,
- praying together,
- and fasting together.



POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO CHILDREN OF FASTING

The shared routine of waking for **suhoor**, managing the day while fasting, and coming together for **iftar** can be deeply **relationship-building**.

Before Ramadan begins, families should speak enthusiastically about their plans. Ramadan should feel like a treasured, enjoyable month where relationships are strengthened through shared interests and rituals.

When **non-Muslim carers or relatives** show commitment by supporting the child's Ramadan — perhaps even by fasting for a day or joining the iftar meal — this demonstrates respect and empathy, which the child is likely to reciprocate. Those who are not fasting should avoid eating or drinking near a fasting child whenever possible.

Relationships with neighbours (of any religion or background) can also be enriched by:

- sharing iftar food,
- or offering help where it may be needed,
- especially for elderly neighbours.

6. Improved Self-Esteem

As outlined earlier, Ramadan offers many opportunities for children to strengthen their identity, build healthier relationships, and feel a deeper sense of **belonging** within their families and communities. This naturally leads to improved **confidence** and **self-esteem**, helping children develop the resilience needed to overcome challenges.

Children's confidence can also be boosted by **empowering them with responsibilities**, such as:

- choosing how to decorate the house,
- selecting iftar meals,
- helping to wake others for suhoor (if appropriate),
- or even leading prayers if they are capable.

Children should be encouraged to choose their own tasks and to change responsibilities if they wish to. All actions should be rewarded with **praise** or other positive reinforcement.

1. Content on charitable acts, empathy, and community connection is drawn from the original guidance text describing psychosocial benefits for children in care.
2. Positive behaviour characteristics are referenced in the original document's discussion on mindset and character development during Ramadan
3. The relational and emotional benefits of shared routines (suhoor, fasting, iftar) are described directly in the source text



IMPACT ON HEALTH, HYGIENE & EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

7. Impact on Health and Hygiene

There is a growing body of literature suggesting that intermittent fasting has **health benefits**, such as reduced inflammation, improved cardiovascular health, and reduced obesity. However, it must be noted that Muslims **do not fast for health reasons** — fasting is a compulsory act of worship, and under no **circumstances** should a child's health be placed at risk.

If a child begins to experience symptoms such as:

- light-headedness
- dizziness
- nausea
- difficulty focusing
- signs of dehydration or low blood sugar

the fast must be broken immediately, and medical advice sought where appropriate. Medical advice must always take precedence over religious guidance. They can make up the missed fast at a later date (such as during the shorter winter days). Some children may come from families or previous carers who taught them that breaking a fast is never acceptable, or that Allah will be “angry.”

Carers and parents must reassure children that:

- before puberty, children are **not accountable** for religious obligations;
- after puberty, Allah is **Kind, Caring, Compassionate and Forgiving**;
- good intention and effort are rewarded even if a fast is not completed.

Hygiene During Ramadan

Islam places high importance on **personal hygiene**, especially when fasting. The special attention given to cleanliness is a form of respect for the act of fasting. Expectations include:

- short, clean fingernails
- clean clothing (including fresh underwear)
- regular washing/bathing
- use of deodorant or light scents



IMPACT ON HEALTH, HYGIENE & EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Homes should also be maintained in a clean and tidy condition, with all household members contributing according to their ability.

A natural side effect of fasting is **bad breath**, due to extended periods without eating. This can be managed through:

- completing ablutions (washing) before prayer
- brushing teeth (some Muslims avoid toothpaste while fasting, others use it)
- using a **miswak** (natural toothbrush), which is recommended in Islamic tradition but not essential

8. Impact on Educational Performance

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) acknowledges that fasting **may affect cognitive performance**, but also states that unless there are legitimate safeguarding concerns, schools should not dictate to children or families how they observe Ramadan. Observance remains a personal and religious decision.

Additional guidance on Ramadan and schools has been produced by:

- **Ealing Council**
- **Discover Islam Europe**, which developed a “Ramadan (Fasting) Guide for Primary and Secondary Schools”

Social workers and professionals in the **team around the child** should consider how the **positive impacts** of participating in Ramadan — improved identity, belonging, empathy, behaviour, mindset, self-esteem and family relationships — may actually support improved long-term educational outcomes. Vulnerable children often benefit when their **religious and cultural identity is affirmed**, and successful Ramadan participation can be one way to help strengthen their overall well-being and resilience.

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1. Cabo R., Mattson M.P., Effects of intermittent fasting on health, aging, and disease, New England Journal of Medicine, 2019. (Referenced in original document.)
 2. ASCL guidance: “Ramadan: Exams and Tests, 2020.” (Referenced in original document.)
 3. Ealing Council & Discover Islam Europe, “Ramadan (Fasting) Guide for Primary and Secondary Schools.” (Referenced in original document.)



CELEBRATING EID

Celebrating Eid

The end of Ramadan is marked with the celebration of **Eid al-Fitr** (not to be confused with **Eid al-Adha**, which occurs at the end of the Hajj pilgrimage season). Eid al-Fitr is a significant day for Muslims — as significant to Muslims as Christmas is to Christians. As with the start of Ramadan, the **exact date of Eid** can vary by one or two days depending on the moon-sighting practice followed by the family.

On Eid day, children and adults typically wear **new clothes** or clean, smart clothing. In the morning, mosques hold the **Eid prayer**. Women and girls should make enquiries before attending, as some mosques have facilities for the whole family while others only accommodate men. Attendance at Eid prayers can strengthen a child's sense of **belonging** to the wider Muslim community.

Charity (Zakat al-Fitr)

Before attending the Eid prayer, an obligatory donation known as Zakat al-Fitr must be given — an amount determined annually in the UK (check current local guidance). This donation can be given before Eid day and is ideally paid in advance, so that those in need can benefit in time for Eid. This is a mandatory obligation and must be completed before the Eid prayer. Carers should help ensure the donation is made on time.

Family and Community Celebrations

After the morning prayer, families typically share a **celebratory lunch** together, followed by visiting family and friends in the afternoon. Each home usually offers food and snacks to visitors. Children often receive **gifts, toys or money**, and may enjoy giving or receiving **Eid cards** or homemade treats.

Carers can support a child's enjoyment of Eid by:

- decorating the house with Eid banners or lights
- preparing a special meal
- offering small gifts
- helping the child make cards or treats for others



CELEBRATING EID

Eid Attendance and School

Attendance at school on Eid varies across families and schools. Some children take the day off entirely, others attend half a day, and some attend school as normal and celebrate Eid afterwards. Schools should be **consulted early**, and they should understand the cultural and religious significance of Eid for Muslim children.

Supporting Looked-After Children on Eid

Eid can be particularly emotional for children separated from their families. For children who previously lived in isolated households or unstable environments, Eid may not have been celebrated at all — making it even more important to help them build **positive, joyful memories** of the day. Many Muslim communities hold **Eid events** in the weeks following Eid; attending these can be especially beneficial for children who feel disconnected from the wider Muslim community.



1. References to Eid practices, prayer arrangements, and Zakat al-Fitr obligations are drawn directly from the original guidance.



MUSLIM CARERS OF NON-MUSLIM CHILDREN

Muslim Carers of Non-Muslim Children

Many fasting Muslim foster carers in the UK will be caring for **non-Muslim children** during the month of Ramadan. Families may make slight adjustments to routines to meet the needs of those fasting alongside the needs of those who are not fasting.

Some non-Muslim children may also show an interest in fasting or joining other Ramadan-related activities. In the same way that Muslim children placed in non-Muslim homes may be invited to participate in **Christmas activities**, non-Muslim children in Muslim homes can be invited to join Ramadan activities — provided this is done with **sensitivity**, respect for the child's own **religious or cultural identity**, and without pressure.

It is not uncommon for people of different faiths (and no faith) to fast for a day in **solidarity** with Muslims. Non-Muslim children in care who wish to join a partial or full fast may be supported to do so. As with all significant decisions involving a child in care, any changes to routine should be discussed with the child's **social worker**, and the wishes of those with **parental responsibility** should always be considered.



1. All content in this section reflects the original guidance regarding the support Muslim carers may provide to non-Muslim children during Ramadan.



RESOURCES

Online Resources

- **Little Wings Creative** (free resources):
<<https://www.littlewingscreative.com/>>
- **Muslim Children's TV** (subscription-based):
<<https://muslimkids.tv/>>
- **Ramadan Activities for Children** (Productive Muslim):
<<https://productivemuslim.com/get-your-kids-to-love-ramadan/>>
- **"Ramadan Advice with Laith and Layla"** by One4Kids/Zaky (YouTube):
<<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5vfWTTpNkDfP-8s0KbqJhw>>
- **Ramadan Workbook** (free download by An-Nasihah):
<<https://an-nasihah.com/project/ramadan-workbook/>>
- Ramadan Worksheets:
Available via image searches on common search engines.

Ramadan Books (Widely Available Online)

- A Party in Ramadan — Asma Mobin-Uddin
- Craft it Up this Ramadan and Eid — Zaynab Abdullatif
- It's Ramadan, Curious George — H.A. Rey
- My First Ramadan (My First Holiday) — Karen Katz
- Night of the Moon: A Muslim Holiday Story — Hena Khan
- Raihanna's First Time Fasting — Qamaer Hassan
- Ramadan Moon — Nai'ma B. Robert
- Rashad's Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr — Lisa Bullard
- Tell Me More About Ramadan — Bachar Karroum
- The Ramadan Date Palm — Fateman Mashouf
- The White Nights of Ramadan — Maha Addasi
- Under the Ramadan Moon — Sylvia Whitman
- Zachariah's Perfect Day — Farrah Qazi



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Enquiries relating to this document or future publications supporting children in care are welcome.





ABOUT MUSLIM CHILDREN IN CARE

About the Muslim Children in Care (MCiC) Project

The Muslim Children in Care (MCiC) Project works to improve outcomes for Muslim children across the UK care system. The project raises awareness within Muslim communities, supports the recruitment of culturally and faith-sensitive carers, and provides accessible guidance to help families understand how fostering and adoption align with Islamic principles.

MCiC also engages with mosques, community leaders, fostering agencies and local authorities to ensure that Muslim children in care are supported with dignity, identity continuity and emotional safety. The project is committed to increasing representation, improving understanding, and ensuring every child feels seen, valued and supported wherever they are placed.



For further information or support:
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