

GUIDE ON RELIGION AND BELIEF IN THE ARMED FORCES

Foreword

The Ministry of Defence is committed to creating a culture that:

- encourages and welcomes people throughout society to join us, and remain with us, to make their distinctive contributions and achieve their full potential;
- is free from harassment, intimidation and unlawful discrimination; and
- ensures each individual is treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

Our aim is to create an environment free from discrimination, prejudice, fear or misunderstanding, which can damage operational effectiveness.

This guide shows how we put this into practice in relation to religion and belief. It also seeks to explain how the new Equality Act 2010 applies to service in the Armed Forces and employment in the MOD Civil Service and to increase awareness of some of the most commonly practised religions and beliefs in the UK today.

The Guide is intended for use by personnel at all levels, whether Service or Civil Service, so that they are aware of, understand and comply with the Equality Act and with our diversity and equality policy.

While the information contained in it is as accurate as possible, it should not be seen as a definitive statement of law or as an authoritative or comprehensive guide on religions or beliefs. It should be read in conjunction with other Service and MOD Civil Service guidance and personnel/administrative instructions on diversity and equality and on dealing with complaints of discrimination, harassment or bullying. Further sources of information and advice can be found on page 44.

CONTENTS

	Page
Guidance on Religion and Belief in the Armed Forces	
Our Diversity Policy	4
The Equality Act 2010	4
How Religion and Belief are Defined in the Act	5
Unlawful Behaviour	5
Positive Action	7
Exemption for National Security	7
Making a Complaint	7
Potential Conflict between Religious belief and the Equality Act	8
Religious Observances at Work	8
Handling Requests	9
Time off and Facilities for Prayer	9
Requests for Leave for Religious Festivals/Holidays	9
Time off for Bereavement	10
Dress	10
Dietary Needs	10
Fasting	10
Meeting the Spiritual Needs of Personnel	11
Conscientious Objection	11
Death in Service	11
Emergency Burial	11
Collection of Information on Religion and Belief	12
Annex A - Religious Dress in the Armed Forces	12
Annex B - Frequently Asked Questions	14
Annex C - Brief Introduction to Major Religions Practised in the Armed Forces:	16
Baha'i	16
Buddhism	17
Christianity	20
Hinduism	24
Islam	26
Jainism	30
Judaism	31
Other Ancient Religions	34
Rastafarianism	35
Sikhism	36
Zoroastrianism (Parsi)	40
Non-Religious Beliefs and Non-Belief	41
Annex D - Further Information	44
Other Useful Numbers	45

GUIDE ON RELIGION AND BELIEF IN THE ARMED FORCES

Our Diversity Policy

1. The MOD's diversity policy is to create a workforce, uniformed and civilian, that is drawn from the breadth of the society we defend, that gains strength from that society's range of knowledge, experience and talent and that welcomes, respects and values the unique contribution of every individual. Our mission is to breakdown all barriers of discrimination, prejudice, fear or misunderstanding, which can damage operational effectiveness. Equality and diversity is not a policy we pursue just because the legislation requires us to. We pursue the policy simply because it is morally right and because it makes excellent business sense. We encourage people throughout society to join us, and remain with us, to make their distinctive contributions and achieve their full potential. We will not tolerate any form of intimidation, humiliation, harassment, bullying or abuse. We will ensure each individual is treated fairly, with dignity and respect regardless of their religion or belief or if they have no religion or other belief. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that this is put into practice.

2. Our policy is that religion is a private life matter lived out by individuals and communities within the public arena. In order to recognise and harness individual difference and to remove any barriers which might prevent people from joining the Armed Forces or MOD Civil Service, we endeavour to give those who wish to do so the opportunity to practise their religious observances wherever possible subject to vital considerations of operational effectiveness, health and safety and business needs. It is important that in applying this policy the needs of individuals are balanced with those of their colleagues and the organisation as a whole.

The Equality Act 2010

3. The Equality Act aims to harmonise and extend existing discrimination legislation including the Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations in order to provide a simpler, more consistent and more effective legal framework for preventing discrimination.

The Act includes pre-existing laws protecting everyone from discrimination because of their religion or belief including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and members of other religions, as well as humanists and atheists.

The Act creates a single equality duty requiring public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations – the duty will replace the existing race, disability and gender equality duties, and extend to age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Putting a new duty on public bodies

4. The Equality Act puts a duty on public bodies to consider the needs of people with different religious and philosophical beliefs when designing and delivering services.

How Religion and Belief are Defined in the Equality Act and case law

5. The criteria for determining what is a “philosophical belief” are that it must be genuinely held; be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available; be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour; attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance; and be worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others. So, for example, any cult involved in illegal activities would not satisfy these criteria.

Unlawful Behaviour

6. The Armed Forces will not tolerate any form of harassment, victimisation or unlawful discrimination. The law has protected people from such treatment on the grounds of sex or race for many years. Under the Equality Act individuals have similar protection on the grounds of religion and belief.

7. **Discrimination** can be direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. It can apply to job applicants and service users as well as Service personnel.

8. **Direct Discrimination** is unlawful except in very limited circumstances (see paragraph 9 below) and occurs when someone is treated less favourably than others because of their actual or perceived religion or belief or lack of it, whether the intention was to discriminate or not.

9. The Act recognises that there may be some very specific and limited circumstances in which direct discrimination would be justified. This is where there is a **genuine and determining occupational requirement** for a certain jobholder to be of a particular religion or belief and it is proportionate to apply such a requirement. This is likely to be of very limited application in the Armed Forces. Service Chaplains are an example of posts where being of a specific religion is a determining factor and constitutes a genuine occupational requirement.

10. **Indirect Discrimination**, which is unlawful unless justifiable, occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is applied which, although applied to all personnel, has the effect, or potential effect of disadvantaging people of a particular religion or belief compared with other persons. An example could be selection criteria which seem fair because

they apply to all but which inadvertently disadvantage those of a particular religion or belief.

11. Indirect discrimination is lawful only where if it can be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. To justify it, an employer must be able to show that there is a legitimate aim for the practice, policy etc (e.g. maintaining operational effectiveness or health and safety) **and** the practice is a proportionate means of achieving that aim (i.e. that it is necessary and there is no alternative means available which would be less discriminatory).

12. Care should be taken to ensure that policies and practices do not have an unintentional adverse impact on those of a particular religion or belief. If they do, commanding officers/line managers should consider whether reasonable changes might be made. The summary of the main features of some of the most commonly practised religions or beliefs in Annex C will aid understanding and help to avoid unintentional discrimination.

13. **Harassment** is unlawful. It occurs when a person engages in unwanted behaviour on the grounds of religion or belief, whether actual or perceived, which has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

14. Such behaviour as use of nicknames, teasing or name-calling relating to an individual's religion or belief may constitute harassment irrespective of the intention. Other examples of harassment include:

- physical or verbal threats or abuse, including derogatory or stereotypical remarks, use of offensive or inappropriate language when describing an individual's religion or belief.
- unwelcome, intrusive or persistent questioning about an individual's religion or belief (real or assumed).

15. Harassment in any form will not be tolerated and should be challenged. For many people religion is a private matter and seemingly innocuous comments or questions about an individual's religion or belief may be viewed as intrusive or offensive. It should not be assumed that, because an individual does not object to language or behaviour, they consent to it.

16. **Victimisation** is unlawful. It occurs when an individual is subjected to a detriment because they may have made a complaint or intend to make a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence or intend to give evidence relating to such a complaint. Labelling someone a troublemaker, denying them promotion or training opportunities or ostracising them would constitute victimisation.

Positive Action

17. Positive discrimination is not permitted but the Act does allow employers to take steps in limited circumstances to redress the effects of previous inequality of opportunity. This is sometimes referred to as positive action and could include giving particular encouragement or providing specific training for individuals from religions or beliefs who are in a minority in the workplace. However, decisions on recruitment, career progression and selection for training and promotion must always be on merit, regardless of religion or belief.

Exemption for National Security

18. The Act contains an exception for anything done to protect national security provided this can be justified. This is likely to be very narrowly construed and legal advice should always be sought if it is thought that a discriminatory measure should be taken to preserve national security.

Making a Complaint

19. **Internal grievance/redress of complaint** All personnel have a right to complain about any matter that affects them personally, without fear of victimisation and with confidence that their complaint will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and resolved as quickly as possible. They should ensure that they are aware of what steps they may take if they feel they have been discriminated against, harassed or victimised. The procedures are set out in JSP 763, The MOD Harassment Complaints Procedure, and JSP 831, Redress of Individual Grievances: Service Complaints. JSP 763 provides a unified approach to dealing with complaints of harassment and bullying whether in the Royal Navy, Army, RAF or the MOD Civil Service. JSP 831 provides guidance on the procedures to follow in order that statutory complaints (Service Complaints) raised by Service personnel and former Service personnel are handled and resolved in accordance with legislation, using a process that is efficient, fair and transparent. The right to redress is a statutory right for Service personnel.

20. If individuals feel that they have been harassed or treated unfairly on the grounds of their religion or belief, they should if possible make it clear to the person concerned that his or her behaviour is unwelcome and should stop. Before making a formal complaint, individuals may wish to consider taking advice from their immediate superior/line manager or speaking to someone else such as the unit Equality and Diversity Adviser (EDA), Chaplain or Medical Officer or the local Welfare Officer/Families Service. Service personnel can also contact the appropriate Service Confidential Helpline for advice. Details of other contact/advice points will be available in the guidance or Regulations mentioned above and in unit admin orders.

21. **Access to Employment Tribunal** Under the Act, Armed Forces personnel have the right to submit complaints of discrimination, harassment or

victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief to an Employment Tribunal. Before a Serviceman or Servicewoman can make an application to an Employment Tribunal, a complaint covering the same issue must first have been submitted (and not withdrawn) using the internal Redress of Complaint procedures. Because of this requirement, a Service complainant has six months from the day on which the matter of complaint occurred to make a claim to an Employment Tribunal, as opposed to three months in the case of civilians. Further advice can be obtained from Single Service administrative instructions and from Service guidance booklets.

22. An individual pursuing an Employment Tribunal claim can name their employer or the perpetrator or both as respondents to their claim. As such, culpable individuals as well as the Service or Department can be held liable for discrimination and be required to pay compensation.

Potential Conflict between Religious Belief and the Equality Act

23. In 2003 the Government also introduced Regulations covering discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation at the same time as those on religion or belief. These were subsumed into the new Equality Act. Potential conflicts may arise where the provisions in the Act regarding religion appear to infringe the rights given to an individual under the same legislation with regard to sexual orientation, or vice versa. The right for everyone to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace applies irrespective of sexual orientation as well as of religion or belief. In cases where an individual claims that his or her behaviour towards a gay, lesbian or bisexual colleague is founded on religious conviction, the protection from discrimination and harassment afforded by the Act on sexual orientation would be likely to take precedence over the right to religious expression. This means that personnel of any religion cannot refuse to work with someone on the grounds of their sexual orientation whatever their religion or belief (and vice versa).

Religious Observances at Work

24. Religious belief is treated as a private matter but, recognising the unique and demanding circumstances of Service life, the Armed Forces aim to facilitate and support individuals' spiritual needs. The Armed Forces make every effort to respect and accommodate religious or belief requirements subject to vital considerations of operational effectiveness and health and safety. However, individuals may need to be flexible, particularly when this is in the interests of their own safety or that of their colleagues.

25. Commanding Officers and line managers should consider whether policies, rules or procedures indirectly discriminate against staff of particular religions or beliefs and, if so, whether changes might be made. Most needs will require little or no change.

26. Service personnel should not be compelled to attend religious services

of a belief different to their own. Neither should those who indicate that they have no religious belief be compelled to attend.

Handling Requests

27. The Act does not say that employers must provide time off or facilities to enable personnel to meet religious observances in the workplace. However, reasonable requests must be considered objectively and met wherever practical. Indeed, blanket policies or refusals may constitute indirect discrimination unless justifiable as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (e.g. where the granting of leave for a religious holiday would substantially impact on a unit's or department's need).

Time off and Facilities for Prayer During the Working Day

28. Some religions require their followers to pray at specific times during the day (see summary in Annex C). Although the Act does not specifically require the provision of time and facilities (such as a quiet room) for religious or belief observance in the workplace, it is MOD policy to make such provision where circumstances allow. Individuals should discuss their needs with their Commanding Officers or line managers and every effort should be made to accommodate such needs. Time off for religious observances such as a prayer session during exercises or operations may have to be delayed or deferred due to unit activities. Wherever practicable, areas for worship or contemplation should be made available in all MOD Buildings and Service establishments, including ships and submarines. Personnel will normally be expected to use break times for their religious observances.

Requests for Leave for Religious Festivals/Holidays

29. Many religions or beliefs have special festivals or spiritual observance days and an individual may request annual leave to celebrate festivals or attend ceremonies. Commanding Officers and line managers should make every effort to allow individuals time-off to celebrate religious festivals or holidays.

30. Requests for annual leave for religious festivals or holidays need to be considered objectively and Commanding Officers and line managers should bear in mind the need to avoid indirect discrimination. Care should be taken to ensure that, where there are numerous requests for leave at the same time, decisions on who should or should not be allowed leave are made according to fair and objective criteria with a mind to the need not to indirectly discriminate. It is important not to make assumptions on the basis of an individual's religion or perceived religion (for example that non-Christians will be prepared to work during the Christmas holiday period).

31. The practice of operating a holiday system whereby the unit closes for specific periods when all personnel must take leave may be indirectly discriminatory in preventing individuals taking leave at times of specific religious significance. However, such indirect discrimination will not be

unlawful if it can be justified as legitimate and proportionate for operational reasons.

32. Individuals should give as much notice as possible when requesting leave and bear in mind that a number of their colleagues may request leave at the same time.

Time off for Bereavement

33. Normal compassionate leave arrangements will apply for attending funerals of close family.

Dress

34. The Armed Forces recognise that individuals with specific religions or beliefs generally welcome the opportunity to wear clothing with significance to their religion or belief. This is reflected in the Services' dress regulations that take account of cultural and religious differences such as permitting individuals to wear items of religious significance and Muslim women to cover their arms, legs and head in all aspects of their work. More detailed information on religious dress in the Armed Forces can be found at Annex A. For operational and health and safety reasons, members of the Armed Forces may have to be flexible in some circumstances. However, the Armed Forces' policy is to ensure that any such restrictions regarding clothing to be worn in an operational environment are genuine requirements on grounds of operational effectiveness or health and safety. General dress codes which conflict with religious or belief requirements may constitute indirect discrimination under the Equality Act unless they can be justified.

Dietary Needs

35. The Armed Forces make every effort to cater for all special religious dietary requirements, and vegetarian options or Halal or Kosher meals can be provided in Service Mess facilities. However, preparation of Kosher food, by Mess staff, in strict observance of the Jewish faith cannot be guaranteed. This also applies to the preparation of Halal food with regard to the Muslim faith. Vegetarian, Halal and Kosher Operational Ration Packs are normally readily available for operations and exercises. However, in some circumstances or operations it may not be possible to guarantee this. Sikh Service personnel require an alternative meat selection to the Halal or Kosher option.

Fasting

36. Some religions require their followers to undergo extended periods of fasting (e.g. Muslims fast during Ramadan). In the Armed Forces fasting should normally be allowed although there may be some operational circumstances when the physical demands on an individual are high and fasting would be hazardous and inappropriate. Care should be taken to ensure that permitting an individual to undertake a fast does not place unreasonable burdens on other personnel.

Meeting the Spiritual Needs of Personnel

37. Commissioned Armed Forces Chaplains, both full-time and Reservist, are currently drawn from the main Christian denominations to which the majority of Service personnel belong. They have a responsibility to provide spiritual and pastoral care for all Service personnel and their families, both for those within their own denomination and faith and for those who profess no religious affiliation. Additionally there are civilian, part-time, Officiating Chaplains to the Military (OCM), who provide support on a local level. The Armed Forces have appointed external religious leaders from the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths, to advise on matters specific to those faith groups. Five full-time Civilian Chaplains to the Military (CCM) have also been appointed from these religions, with the role of caring for their own faith groups, providing internal advice to MOD and raising awareness of their faith traditions within the Armed Forces. They are administered through the Royal Army Chaplains Department (see page 44). Consideration is currently being given to appointing geographically dispersed OCMs from each of these latter groups.

Conscientious Objection

38. Armed Forces personnel have a liability to deploy with their units worldwide. There are well-established appeal procedures for Service personnel who, during their service, develop a genuine conscientious objection to further military service. A member of the Armed Forces who develops an objection to future military service should make that objection known to his or her commander.

Death in Service

39. Visiting/Assisting Officers who provide assistance and advice to families in cases of death in service should take account of any specific requirements relating to the religion or belief of the bereaved and of any funeral, burial or cremation arrangements which may arise as a result. Advice should be sought from casualty staff, Service Chaplains or Service Religious Advisers where appropriate. In circumstances where death occurs in combat or operations, bodies of the deceased will normally be repatriated to the UK.

Emergency Burial

40. Chaplains on front line duty carry an emergency order of prayers for the five main minority faith groups (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) as well as Christianity. This is to permit the battlefield burial of deceased Service personnel in the extremes of a combat situation where repatriation may not be feasible. Repatriation is the usual course of action.

Collection of Information on Religion and Belief

41. The Equality Act does not require the collection of data on the religion or belief of personnel. However, it recognises that this may help organisations to understand individuals' needs and help them make provision for those needs. The Armed Forces record the religion of all personnel for this reason and for casualty reporting purposes. This information is held on JPA and is protected by Data Protection Regulations.

ANNEX A

RELIGIOUS DRESS IN THE ARMED FORCES

1. All Service personnel are required to wear standard pattern uniforms and adhere to Service clothing policy and instructions. However, the Armed Forces recognise the need to observe specific codes of dress in accordance with particular religious beliefs. For operational and health and safety reasons, members of the Armed Forces may have to be flexible in some circumstances. More detailed information on religious dress can be found in single-Service Dress Regulations.

Sikhs

2. The Armed Forces are committed to supporting all individuals who are keen to practise their faith. Sikhs are able to wear the 5Ks: Kara (iron or steel bangle), Kesh (uncut hair), Kanga (small comb), Kachera (special design knee length underwear) and Kirpan (small sword); male Sikhs can also wear a turban. However, some constraints regarding the wearing of a turban and keeping facial hair uncut do exist:

Some trades require specialist headgear to be worn, especially in operational circumstances. Examples of this are Commanders' helmets in armoured fighting vehicles, combat helmets, breathing apparatus (full hood) for fire fighters, and flying helmets for aircrew in some types of aircraft. Male Sikh personnel can normally wear a patka (small turban) under specialist headgear.

Muslim and Sikh Men

3. Muslim men may wear neatly trimmed beards. Sikh men can wear their beards, and their hair long in the Sikh tradition. They are also required to keep their beards neat. In the case of the latter, those who are fully practicing Sikhs and are required to keep their hair, including facial hair uncut, may keep their uncut beard folded and tied under the chin.

a. **Aircrew** Muslim personnel may modify their beards as necessary. Sikh Service personnel may wear a patka (small turban) underneath their headgear. However, for some trades wearing a patka

(small turban) is not always compatible, Further advice on this matter can be obtained from the Sikh Chaplain to the Armed Forces. (see page 45)

b. **Respirator** Where a respirator is worn, an effective seal is necessary in order to meet Health and Safety requirements.

Muslim Women

4. Muslim women are allowed to wear uniform trousers, rather than a skirt and may wear a hijab (headscarf) except when operational or health and safety considerations dictate otherwise. Long sleeve shirts are also available with most forms of Service dress. Tracksuit bottoms may be worn for sport. All Service personnel are required to achieve a basic swimming standard as part of their training. Although every effort will be made to ensure that these tests take place in an all female environment, it should be stressed to female Muslim applicants that this will not always be possible.

Jewish Men

5. A male member of the Jewish faith may wear a dark plain or patterned yarmulke whenever he removes other headdress.

Jewish Women

6. Orthodox Jewish women will wish to dress modestly and may not want to wear trousers, short skirts or short sleeves; some may wish to keep their heads covered by a scarf or a beret.

Buddhists

7. Buddhists are allowed to wear either a string or prayer bracelet on their neck or on their wrist (usually on the right hand) as a sign of protection with or without a symbol like the image of the Buddha or dharma chakra (an eight-spoked) wheel attached to it.

ANNEX B

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1 Is it acceptable to discuss religion and belief in the workplace?

A1 Yes – provided personnel understand the distinction between reasonable discussion and offensive behaviour. Staff should be aware that if offence is reasonably taken, this may be considered to be harassment and therefore unlawful.

Q2 Does the law provide that a prayer room must be made available for those who ask for it?

A2 No – but the law does impose an obligation on an employer to give reasonable consideration to requests for facilities for religious observance. The Armed Forces' policy is to provide facilities for prayer wherever possible.

Q3 Do the Armed Forces rules on dress and personal appearance breach the Equality Act?

A3 No. The Armed Forces regulations on dress are as flexible as possible and are designed to accommodate the religious dress requirements of all personnel. Personnel are normally allowed to dress in accordance with their religion but there are some circumstances when, for operational, occupational or health and safety reasons, some compromises may have to be made on the part of the individual.

Q4 Can personnel from other faiths be required to take time off for Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter?

A4 Block annual leave is given primarily to coincide with school holidays and follows UK national practice, with the result that Christmas and Easter normally fall within block leave. Leave is also given for bank holidays on the basis of the days being national holidays and not religious festivals. The practice of operating a holiday system whereby the unit closes for specific periods when all personnel must take leave may be justifiable where the policy is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim such as operational or business efficiency.

Q5 Why should personnel from other faiths be required to use annual leave for their religious festivals?

A5 With the exception of those festivals which fall within national public holidays, members of all faith groups, including Christian, are expected to use annual leave for religious festivals.

Q6 Are personnel allowed time for prayer during the working day?

A6 Personnel would normally be expected to use break time for prayer, but this is a matter for discussion between the individual and their Commanding Officer/line manager.

Q7 How do the Armed Forces propose to reconcile their policy to accommodate different religious beliefs when the tenets of some religions appear to conflict with the Armed Forces' diversity policy on sexual orientation?

A7 The right for everyone to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace applies irrespective of sexual orientation or religion or belief. In cases where an individual claims that his or her behaviour towards a gay, lesbian or bisexual colleague is founded on religious conviction, the protection from discrimination and harassment afforded by the Regulations on sexual orientation would be likely to take precedence over the right to religious expression. This means that personnel of any religion or belief cannot refuse to work with someone on the grounds of their sexual orientation, and vice versa.

Q8 How do we meet the spiritual needs of personnel from other faiths?

A8 Since 2005 there has been Full time Civilian Chaplains available for Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh faiths.

Q9 In meeting the needs of those with specific religious requirements, does this not disadvantage others who have no such requirements?

A9 No – The Armed Forces' policy is to respect those with no religion or beliefs as much as those with deeply held religious convictions. In operating its diversity policy, the Armed Forces, like any employer, will at times be required to balance the needs of different individuals. The MOD will always seek to provide the best outcome for individuals and the Service in any situation whilst operating within the law.

ANNEX C

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS PRACTISED IN THE UK

Listed below are some of the most commonly practised religions and beliefs in the UK. This list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only. Not all members of each religion follow all the practises and observances or will want time off for each and every festival or holiday. The information in this brief introduction has been drawn from a variety of sources including the guidance issued by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) (See link below) and the Armed Forces' Chaplaincy Departments and Religious Advisers.

www.acas.co.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=107&p=0

RELIGIONS

BAHA'I

The number of Baha'is in the UK is very small; approximately 6000. Most are converts from other religions or are former agnostics or atheists.

Beliefs and Practices

At the heart of the Baha'i faith is the conviction that humanity is a single people with a common destiny. Baha'u'llah taught that there is one God who progressively reveals His will to humanity. Each of the great religions brought by messengers of God – Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed – represents a successive stage in the spiritual development in civilisation. The Baha'i faith has no clergy or sacraments, and no public rituals. Bahai's pray and study daily in private, but also have a strong community life, with meetings for prayer, study, and the moral and spiritual education of children and young people. These meetings are open to everyone.

Baha'is believe that Baha'u'llah, as the most recent divine Messenger, has brought teachings that address the moral and spiritual challenges of the modern world. The goal is to develop the innate noble characteristics of every human being, and to prepare the way for an advancing global civilisation.

Baha'is should say one of three obligatory prayers during the day. Prayers need to be recited in a quiet place where the Baha'i will wish to face the Qiblah (the shrine of Baha'u'llah, near Akka, Israel). Baha'is are required to wash their hands and face before prayers.

Festivals

Baha'i festivals take place from sunset to sunset.

During the Baha'i Fast (2 March – 20 March), Baha'is refrain from eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset. There are exemptions from fasting for sickness, pregnancy, travel and strenuous physical work.

- The most important Baha'i festival is **Rivdan** (21 Apr – 2 May) which includes three holy days:
 - 1st Day of Ridvan 21 April
 - 9th Day of Ridvan 29 April
 - 12th Day of Ridvan 2 May

Other festivals:

- **Naw-Ruz** (Baha'i New Year) 21 March
- **Declaration of the Bab** 23 May
- **Ascension of the Baha'u'llah** 29 May
- **Martyrdom of the Bab** 9 July
- **Birth of the Bab** 20 October
- **Birth of Baha'u'llah** 12 November

Diet

As a matter of principle most Baha'is do not take alcohol. Otherwise there are no dietary restrictions.

Dress

There are no specific dress regulations.

Rites of Passage

Burial should take place as soon as possible after legal formalities and funeral arrangements can be put in hand. The body should be transported no more than one hour's journey from the place where the person died, so funerals take place relatively close to the place of death. Baha'is have no specific period of mourning.

BUDDHISM

There are about 150,000 Buddhists in the UK according to the 2001 Census.

Beliefs and Practices

Buddhism is based on the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama, an enlightened one (Buddha) whose ministry was in 5th century Before Christian Era (BCE) India. Buddhism offers a practical path of self-transformation. Through

practice Buddhists develop virtue, wisdom and compassion and can experience peace and release from the suffering and stress inherent in all human life.

Buddhists believe that all actions bring results in accordance with the motives and intentions of the action. Good actions motivated by generosity, compassion and wisdom lead to good results. Many Buddhists believe that ultimately, at the end of life, the quality of an individual's actions during their lives will condition rebirth in a new life.

Buddhism stresses love for all living beings and respect for all forms of life and emphasises self-discipline and meditation. Buddhism represents a way of life informed by moral rules of conduct and the establishment of good social relationships. Wisdom and compassion lie at the heart of Buddhism and in addition to their cultivation through generous and skillful action, are cultivated through various forms of meditation. These include chanting, mindfulness, loving-kindness and calming meditations amongst others.

The main traditions in Buddhism are Theravada (the earliest form now practised in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia), Mahayana (a later form practised in China, Vietnam, Japan, Korea and Mongolia) and Vajrayana (practised in Tibet). All major Buddhist traditions are represented in the UK.

Buddhist temples are places of teaching, religious observance and meditation. During religious observances, often led by a monk, nun or Buddhist priest or cleric, meditation and chanting are usually practiced, incense may be burned and a teaching, discourse or sermon given to those attending. In some traditions, fasting after midday is undertaken at each new and full moon.

Festivals

There are many festivals, some of which are more important than others. They are celebratory in character rather than obligatory religious observances. Different traditions in Buddhism celebrate different festivals.. Festivals follow the lunar calendar and therefore do not take place on the same day each year.

The most important Buddhist festivals are:

THERAVADA FESTIVALS:

- **Magha Puja (February-March)**
Celebrates the mission and foundational teachings of the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

- **Vesak or Wesak Buddha Day** (April – May) Celebration and commemoration of the life of the Buddha – his birth, enlightenment, and death or parinirvana.
- **New Year celebrations** (mid-April)
Buddhist rededication ceremonies.
- **Asalha Puja/Dhammacakka Day** (July)
Celebrates the Buddha's renunciation and First Sermon.
- **Pavarana** (October)
Marks end of the traditional three-month rains retreat, the making of alms and offerings, and monastic blessings of the laity.
- **Kathina Ceremony** (November)
Communal offering of new cotton cloth to the Sangha (the monastic community) for the purpose of making new robes.
- **Loi Krathong** – Festival of Lights (November)
Ornately decorated leaf boats are set adrift in rivers symbolizing a casting away of ill-fortune.

MAHAYANA FESTIVALS

- **Nehan** (15 February) (Japan)
Celebration of the Buddha's enlightenment.
- **Avalokitesvara/Kuan-yin's Birthday**
Celebrates the deep and abiding compassion of this immensely popular bodhisattva or Buddhist saint.
- **Hanamatsuri** (8 April) (Japan)
Celebration of the Buddha's birth.
- **The Buddha's Birthday** (May) (China), overseas Chinese, UK
Popular communal ceremonies to celebrate the birth of the Buddha.
- **Ullambana/Festival of the Hungry Ghosts** (China, and overseas Chinese)
Commemoration of the ancestors, offerings to departed spirits.
- **Rohatsu** (8 December) (Japan)
Commemoration of the Buddha's death or parinirvana

VAJRAYANA FESTIVALS

- **Tibetan New Year celebrations** (February)
- **Tsong-kha-pa**
Commemoration of one of the great monastic founders of Buddhism in Tibet.
- **Mon-1am/Great Prayer Festival**
Part of the traditional New Year celebrations.

Diet

Some Buddhists are vegetarian or occasionally so at the time of certain festivals. Vegetarianism is held in high regard and considered to be consistent with the spirit of the teachings.

Dress

There are no specific rules relating to dress but some Buddhists may prefer to wear clothing which conforms to their belief in non harm (e.g. not wearing leather clothing or shoes). Some Buddhists may wear string bracelets or prayer beads; they are normally white or yellow in colour and worn on the right wrist, and are considered spiritual.

Rites of Passage

Weddings are civil rather than religious ceremonies but services of blessing usually follow in the temple or elsewhere. Funerals usually focus on a reflection on the transitions of life. Bodies can be either buried or cremated.

Meditation

Most forms of Buddhism teach a variety of mediation practices. These include chanting, mindfulness, loving-kindness and calming mediation as well as visualization practices. Most Buddhists aim to include periods of meditation in their daily lives and appreciate quiet spaces for this practice.

Personal Conduct

All forms of Buddhism encourage skilful personal conduct. A widely used set of precepts found in the earliest Buddhist scriptures and used today in many major Buddhist traditions advocate:

- Within the context of the Armed Forces, avoiding unnecessary harm to living beings.
- Avoiding taking what is not given.
- Avoiding lying and harmful speech and communication.
- Avoiding irresponsible, coercive and manipulative sexual gratification.
- Avoiding intoxication and drunkenness.

CHRISTIANITY

There are over 40 million people in the UK belonging to a Christian denomination according to the 2001 Census.

Beliefs and Practices

Christianity is the largest and most widespread religion in the world. It is comprised of three main groupings: Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. As with other religions, these differences can amount to deep divisions, resulting in the growth of separate denominations. At the centre of Christianity is the belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the World, with followers modelling their lives on his teaching and example. Christianity is a faith with a great sense of mission.

Christianity's Holy Book is the Bible, made up of a collection of books, written over a thousand-year period. The first part is the Old Testament which covers the history of Judaism and Hebrew thought. The New Testament has twenty-seven books including four Gospels, describing the life and teachings of Jesus. Admission to full membership is marked by Baptism or Christening (a ceremonial washing with water) and Confirmation (a profession of faith)

The predominant Christian denomination in England and Wales are the **Church of England** and the **Church of Wales**. Both are part of the Anglican Communion of Churches. The **Church of England** is the established Church in England alone. Anglicanism has a broad range of traditions, the two main ones being as follows: one emphasizing a Catholic "High Church" style of worship and teaching, the other "Low Church" evangelical teaching, having more in common with other Protestant denominations. In Scotland the national Church is the **Church of Scotland**. The Anglican Church in Northern Ireland is known as the **Church of Ireland**.

The **Roman Catholic Church** is characterised by a special devotion to the Mass which affirms the belief that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus symbolizing his sacrificial death. The head of the Roman Catholic Church is the Pope and the leadership of the church is centered in Rome.

The **Orthodox Churches** have expanded from their largely national based origins to include a broad-based British membership. Their worship and liturgies are characterized by their ornate nature. They share similar major festivals with other Christian Churches but the dates may differ.

The different Protestant churches reflect the diverse ways in which the Scriptures have been interpreted over time. These churches include:

Baptists Baptism, by profession of faith, follows a personal decision made as a teenager or adult. There is less ministerial hierarchy, and a methodical approach to Bible study and prayer meetings and the personal value and experience drawn from conversion.

Methodists Emphasis is placed on a methodical approach to life, based on scripture with an emphasis on the ministry of the whole community of Methodists.

Pentecostals Baptism by profession of faith, follows a personal decision made as a teenager or adult. There is a methodical approach to Bible study and prayer meetings and the personal value and experience drawn from conversion. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the ability to speak in an unlearned spiritual language, and interpretation of tongues, healing, prophecy and other spiritual gifts are an important aspect of the faith.

Plymouth Brethren Committed to an urgent evangelism driven by the expectation of the Second Coming.

Presbyterians Great emphasis is placed on orderly, dignified worship and strong preaching led by the elders, who are ordained ministers or lay people. The Church of Scotland is Presbyterian in worship and organisation.

Quakers There is no clergy or set form of service. Worshippers stand up to speak, through the guidance of God's Spirit. There is a very strong sense of community amongst the believers.

Salvation Army An evangelical movement, respected for its social work. Organised on military lines, with a strong musical tradition.

United Reformed Church The union of the English Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. Presbyterian in worship and order.

Modern Religions

Other traditions incorporating elements of Christianity include:

- **Unitarians** Affirmation of God as one person, rather than the Trinity doctrine of 'Three in One'. Tolerance, freedom and reason unite members.
- **Christian Scientists** Christian Scientists believe in redemption through positive thinking, faith healing and self-help. Jesus is viewed as one whose perfect obedience to God enabled him to transcend the illusion of sin and suffering. Through following Christ's example the individual can be released from death and suffering.
- **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)** Mormons believe that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are the word of God and that God reveals himself through prophets in the present day.
- **Jehovah's Witnesses** Dedicated to Jehovah (God) and his laws, and spreading the message through home visits. High moral standards based on Bible principles.

Christianity is a very diverse faith and it is practised throughout the world. For these reasons, no general customs can be identified outside the key Christian festivals.

Festivals

There is great variation in the rituals and practice of the Christian Church, with all using prayer in private or public. There are a large number of Festivals and Holy Days in the Christian Year, of which the most important are:

- **Advent** This four week period leading to Christmas Day is a time of preparation for the birth of Jesus at Christmas and his Second Coming as Saviour and King. It is regarded as the start of the Christian year.
- **Christmas Eve/Christmas Day** (24 & 25 December) Celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. The giving of presents recalls the gift from God of his son, Jesus. The singing of carols in Church signifies peace and goodwill to all. Feasting is important and homes are decorated.
- **Ash Wednesday** Start of Lent – a day of fasting and abstinence for many Christians (February/March - date set by lunar calendar).
- **Lent** This period of forty days, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, is a period for fasting and restraint in preparation for the celebration of Easter. It recalls the period Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and the forty years the Jews spent as slaves before returning to their homeland.
- **Maundy Thursday** A day when Christians commemorate the Last Supper which Jesus shared with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion (March/April – date set by lunar calendar).
- **Good Friday** This day, leading to Easter, recalls the anniversary of Jesus' crucifixion as the means of redemption and salvation for all believers. Jesus' sacrifice meant that all believers would be forgiven and reconciled to God (March/April – date set by lunar calendar).
- **Easter Sunday** This major festival commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It reflects the joy of the risen Christ, following the sadness of Good Friday (March/April – date set by lunar calendar)
- **Pentecost** Celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples. It is regarded as the birth of the Christian Church and represents the power of God in the life of believers. Special services may be held.

In addition, there are a number of "holy days of obligation" (e.g Ascension Day) when Christians may wish to attend a church service.

Diet

There are no specific dietary rules. Fasting may be required during Lent as a form of spiritual discipline. For Roman Catholics, meat may not be eaten on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday.

Dress

There are no specific dress regulations.

Rites of Passage

Funerals normally take place within a week or two of death. Christians may be either buried or cremated.

HINDUISM

There are some 560,000 Hindus in the UK according to the 2001 Census. The majority of Hindus in the UK originate from India, East Africa, Fiji, Trinidad and other Caribbean islands.

Beliefs and Practices

Hinduism is the world's third largest religion with over one billion adherents. Out of these billion followers, about 905 million live in India.

Hinduism is often referred to as Sanatan Dharma by its practitioners. The term refers to a Sanskrit phrase, which means "the eternal law". Hinduism's vast body of scriptures is divided into 'Shruti' (which means revealed) and 'Smriti' (which means 'remembered'). These Hindu scriptures discuss theory, philosophy, and mythology, and provide information on the practice of the Hindu dharma. The fundamentals of Ayurveda can be found in Hindu scriptures called Vedas, which are considered as the ancient Indian books of wisdom. The Hindu scriptures refer to celestial entities or the deities as Devatas(gods) and Devis (goddesses).

Most Hindus believe that the spirit or soul which is referred to the true "self" of every person and called as the Aatman, is eternal. Karma is a concept in Hinduism which explains causality by means of a concept in which beneficial effects are derived from good deeds of the past and harmful effects are a consequence of the immoral or harmful deeds in the past, thus creating a cycle of actions and reactions throughout a person's reincarnated lives.

Classical Hindu thought accepts four important objectives of human life, known as the purusharthas, which include dharma (righteousness), artha, (livelihood, wealth), kaama (sensual pleasure) and moksha (liberation,

freedom). There are four methods of yogas for Hindus which have been laid down by sages as the means to reach spiritual goals. These methods or paths are Bhakti Yoga (the path of love and devotion). Karma Yoga: (the path of right action). Raja Yoga: (the path of meditation) and Gyaan Yoga: (the path of wisdom). Hindu practices generally involve seeking awareness of God and seeking blessings from Devas and are meant to help one think of divinity in every life. Hindus engage in worship of the God which is referred to as pooja. The popular Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana serve as both religious scriptures and a rich source of guiding principles of philosophy and morality.

Hinduism has a system and iconography, which is used to represent the sacred in art, architecture, literature, and worship. Some of the popular symbols and icons in Hinduism are the syllable Aum or OM and the Swastika. Hindus advocate the practice of Ahimsa (non-violence) and respect for all life

The Hindu temple is known as the Mandir where worship is individual and congregational. Hindus can be monotheists, polytheists, atheists or pluralists.

Hindus also believe the world is periodically recreated through the God Vishnu. There have been nine incarnations of this God and the seventh – Rama- and the eighth – Krishna – are the forms most worshipped by Hindus. Other popular Gods include Siva, his son Ganesha, Kali and Hanuman. Some devout Hindus pray at least twice daily. Hinduism includes class (varna) distinction which puts people in different social groups. Historically, Hindus cannot change or leave their class or marry outside it, although some of the class rules have been relaxed. Hindu society is broken down into four main social groups:

Brahmin - The priestly caste who teach and perform religious ceremonies, and encourage others to learn religious duties.

Kshatriya - The military caste, who protect society and govern, rule and administer a country towards a disciplined life.

Valshiya - Who engage in business, commerce and agriculture.

Shudra - The manual labourers.

Festivals

Hinduism is a diverse religion and not all Hindus will celebrate the same festivals.

Main festivals are:

- **Holi** (Spring Festival) (March)
- **Diwali** (Diwali) (late October/early November) (five day celebration marking the start of the Hindu New Year)
- **(Dusheshra)** (aka **Vijayadashmi**) (September/October)

Others include:

- **Makar Sakranti** (14 January)
- **Maha Shiva Ratri** (February)
- **Ramnavami** (April)
- **Rakshabandham** (August)
- **Janmashtami** (August)
- **Ganesh Chaturthi** (August/September)
- **Navaratri** (September/October)
- **Karava Chauth** (October)

Diet

The eating of meat is forbidden, particularly beef, since the cow is a sacred animal. Many Hindus are strictly vegetarian and will not eat fish or eggs. The drinking of alcohol is regarded as taboo.

Dress

Traditional clothing for women includes the *Sari*, *Shalwar* (loose fitting trousers) and *Kameez* (a loose fitting trouser suit). Hindu men cover themselves from waist to knee and wear *Kameez/Kurta/Dhuti* (long tunic) on special occasions. Hindu women will often wear a bindi which is a red spot worn on the forehead. Many married Hindu women wear a necklace (mangal sutra) which is placed round their necks during the marriage ceremony and is in addition to a wedding ring.

A few orthodox Hindu men wear a small tuft of hair (shikha) similar to a ponytail but this is often hidden beneath the remaining hair. Some also wear a clay marking on their foreheads known as a talik.

Rites of Passage

There are celebrations marking pregnancy, birth and the first haircut. The wedding ceremony is very colourful. The majority of adult Hindus are cremated. This takes place within 24 hours of death. Eldest sons may also shave their heads as a sign of grief. Several ceremonies take place before cremations and traditionally elder sons light funeral pyres. Prayers are conducted by Hindu priests in homes and at crematoriums. Sometime after cremations ashes are collected and scattered in sacred rivers. The family stays indoors for 10-13 days of mourning.

ISLAM (MUSLIMS)

There are about 1.6 million Muslims in the UK according to the 2001 Census. The majority of Muslims in the UK have their origins in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Islam is a multi-racial and multi-cultural faith and the main

languages spoken in the UK are Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Arabic, Swahili and Turkish.

Beliefs and Practices

The word Islam means 'to submit to God' and followers of the religion are called Muslims – 'one who is faithful to God' or Allah (the Arabic word for God). Islam is a way of life, governing not only religious practice and morality, but social relationships, marriage, divorce and kinship, besides economic and political relationships among Muslims.

Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad was the final messenger of God who began to preach the message of Islam in 610AD. He was well known and respected in his community and had become famous as *As-sadiq* and *Al-ameen* – The Truthful and Trustworthy. The meaning of Islam to a Muslim is the acceptance of and obedience to the commandments of God which He revealed to His last Prophet, Muhammad.

Islam for a true Muslim is about living a clean life; revolving around fairness and equity; encouraging honesty and truthfulness; refraining from arrogance and boastfulness; and, inculcating humility and modesty into every aspect of one's life. Spirituality, moral development and continual appraisal of oneself are an important virtue for Muslims as are living in harmony with family, friends and the society at large.

Islamic beliefs and practices are based upon The Holy Qur'an or Koran (the Holy book of Islam). Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims are guided by the Qur'an and the separately recorded sayings (Hadith) and traditions (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad was the final messenger of God and His vicegerent on earth and in their daily lives and practices attempt to follow his example. The two main sects are Shi'a and Sunni.

The Mosque or *Masjid* is the Muslim place of worship and can act as a community activity centre. All mandatory congregational prayers are held in a Mosque. Muslims are encouraged to perform all their daily prayers at the Mosque. However, if they cannot get to a Mosque they perform their prayers where they can e.g. at home or work.

Friday is the main day of communal worship for Muslims. The day holds great virtues and blessings and expresses a sense of community amongst Muslims.

Muslims adhere to five essential Islamic practices:

The Profession of the faith (Shahada) The words "There is no God but One God, and Muhammad is the Messenger and Servant of God" are known as a declaration of faith and recited with sincere 'intention' by the true believer.

Other important articles of faith include:

- Belief in angels
- Belief in all Abrahamic divinely revealed books i.e. Torah, Gospels and the Psalms of David
- Belief in all monotheistic Prophets i.e. Adam, David, Abraham, Solomon, Jacob, Joseph, Jesus etc.
- Belief in Predestination – that God has the knowledge of all that will happen but that does not stop people from making choices
- Belief in the Day of Judgment

Prayer (Salah) Muslims are required to pray five times each day. Exact times vary but generally take place at dawn, midday, late afternoon, after sunset and late evening. Each prayer time takes about 15 minutes to perform and can take place anywhere clean and quiet though ideally all prayers should be performed in congregation at the Mosque. Muslims may cover their heads and require a prayer mat and the Qur'an to pray; ritual washing of hands, face and feet in running water forms part of the preparation. Friday midday prayers are the main communal prayers of the week and are particularly important to Muslims and may take a little longer. Friday prayers must be said in congregation usually at the Mosque.

Almsgiving (Zakah) Islam stresses the moral obligation to share wealth with the less fortunate. Muslims are required to pay an annual percentage of their savings to charity. This can be done at any time of the year however some prefer to give extra charity and pay Zakah during the Ramadan festival which gives Muslims the chance to share the pain of hunger and poverty.

Fasting (Sawn) During Ramadan, Muslims fast for thirty days between dawn and sunset. A complete recitation of the Qur'an is conducted during the month at special nightly congregational prayers called Taraweh. During daylight hours Muslims are not allowed to eat or drink. All adult Muslims, except the infirm, very elderly and pregnant women, are required to fast. Fasting is seen as an expression of discipline and thanksgiving to Allah. It is a time when Muslims renew their connection with God, revitalize their spirituality and reform any bad habits. Therefore Muslims will increase their devotions during this month.

The Pilgrimage (Haj) Adult Muslims who have the means to do so have to make a pilgrimage, known as the Haj, to Mecca at least once during their lifetime. Children will also make the pilgrimage but it is not compulsory for them to do so. The pilgrimage commemorates the life of Abraham and his exceptional commitment to God. It is an opportunity for Muslims to undertake a journey solely for God to Islam's holiest place. The pilgrimage resembles one's fragility and meekness as the created before God, the Creator. It is a revolutionary practice for many Muslims who see it as a once in a lifetime occasion to experience the greatness and majesty of God in a unique environment. When a

Muslim undertakes the Haj, an absence of at least two weeks should be expected.

Festivals

The dates of Muslim festivals are based on the Islamic calendar (lunar) and vary from year to year.

- **Ramadan**, which takes place in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is a particularly significant time for Muslims. Fasting is required between dawn and sunset.

Muslims celebrate two main festivals of the Islamic calendar:

- **Eid-al-Fitr** - to mark the end of Ramadan **Eid-al-Adha** – a three day festival which takes place two months and 10 days after Eid Al-Fitr.

As well as Ramadan and the two Eids Muslims also celebrate the following:

- **Muharram Mourning** - 10 days of ritual mourning for Shia Muslims in remembrance of Imam Hussain's (pbuh) martyrdom, leading up to Yaum Ashoorah.
- **Yaum Ashoorah** – 10th Muharram - An Important day for all Muslims in commemoration of Moses' success against Pharaoh but also of great significance and reverence for Shia Muslims; as on this day Prophet Muhammad's grandson Imam Hussain - who is in the Shia chain of successors of the Prophet - was martyred in Karbala (Iraq). Fasting on these days is recommended.
- **Eid Mawlid-Al-Nabi** - The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday. Many Muslims will celebrate this day.
- **Laylah Al Israa Wal-Miraj** – Prophet's Night Journey to the Heavens. Commemorates the night the Prophet was ascended to the heavens and returned back to the world via the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
- **Laylah Al Baraat** – Night of Forgiveness and Salvation. An evening of special prayer and devotion.
- **Laylat Al Qadr – Night of Power**. The most blessed night of the year, occurs during the last ten nights of Ramadan. Most of the night will be spent in individual or communal worship and devotion. The first revelation of the Holy Qur'an occurred on this night. Some may also observe such dedication during the odd nights (21, 23, 25...) of the last ten nights of Ramadan.
- **Yaum Al Arafat – The Day of Arafah**. The central day of the annual Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca. It is the day prior to the major Eid-Al-Adha Festival (Festival of Sacrifice). Some Muslims who are not at the pilgrimage may fast on this day.

Diet

No alcohol, tobacco or narcotic drugs (other than those taken for medicinal purposes) are allowed. The Qur'an also forbids eating anything from a pig,

which is considered an unclean animal. Any food derived from a carnivorous animal is also forbidden. Meat that is consumed must be slaughtered by the Halal method. Contact with non-Halal products will render it non-Halal therefore Halal meat should be stored away from and not cooked with non-Halal food. Most fish are permissible and do not require any special method to make it Halal.

Dress

Modesty and correct behaviour between men and women are considered very important. Muslim men may wear traditional caps and long shirts as a sign of modesty and adherence to Islam. Keeping a beard is also important for many Muslim men.

Muslim women may wear a headscarf known as a *hijab* and some may also wear a long gown over their clothes called *abaya* or *jilbab* for additional modesty. The *niqab* (veil) may also be worn by some Muslim women.

Rites of Passage

Shortly after birth prayers are said in the baby's ears to confirm faith in God. Muslims circumcise male children in infancy or when a little older. Marriage is a sacred and virtuous contract. Burial must take place as soon as possible after death. Cremation is strictly forbidden. Ritual washing and shrouding of bodies are carried out at Mosques or Muslim undertakers. Prayers before the funeral may be offered at the Mosque or the cemetery. Communal mourning periods of up to 3 days follows this.

JAINISM

It has been estimated that there are between 25,000 to 35,000 Jains in the UK. The majority of the small Jain community in the UK can trace their historical and ethnic origin to the Gujarat and Rajasthan areas of India.

Beliefs and Practices

Jainism is a religion without a belief in a creator god. Rather, there is akasha (infinite space) within which there is a finite area called loka (the universe). This is made up of an infinite number of jiva or atmas (sentient beings) and pudgalas (non-sentient material atoms). The key principle of Jainism is ahimsa, or non-violence, which covers the avoidance of all physical or mental harm to any living being.

Jains are required to worship three times daily, before dawn, at sunset and at night.

Festivals

The main Jain spiritual festivals are:

- **Oli** - Eight days of semi-fasting twice a year when some take one bland, meal during day time (April and October).
- **Mahavira Jayanti** - Birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira (April).
- **Paryusan** - For eight days Jains fast, observe spiritual rituals, meditate and live a pious life taking only boiled water during day time (August/September).
- **Samvatsari** - The last day of Paryushan when Jains ask for forgiveness and forgive one another (September).
- **Diwali (Diwali)** - Death anniversary of Lord Mahavira, includes a two-day fast and listening to the last message of Mahavira (October/November).

Diet

Jains practice avoidance of harm to all life. They are, therefore, strict vegetarians although some may take milk products. Many also avoid root vegetables. Jains do not eat between sunset and sunrise, and do not drink alcohol.

Rites of Passage

Cremation will take place as soon as practical after death (usually three to five days). There is no specified mourning period.

JUDAISM

There are about 270,000 Jews living in the UK according to the 2001 Census, with the majority belonging to the Orthodox branch led by the Chief Rabbi. The progressive Jewish community is divided into Reform, Conservative/Masorti and Liberal Judaism.

The Jewish community have a proud record of service in the British Armed Forces. During World War Two over 60,000 served and more than 2,500 lost their lives. Jews still serve today albeit not in such great numbers. Judaism advocates peace and no prayer – whether Synagogue worship or Grace after Meals – is recited without a prayer for peace featuring prominently. However, it is permissible to bear arms in self-defence or in a just cause.

Beliefs and Practices

Judaism is over 4,000 years old and is the forebear of Christianity and Islam. Jews believe there is only one God. Their most important sacred text is the Torah which is part of the Hebrew Bible, written and studied in Hebrew. The

Jewish Bible is the Old Testament as the New Testament is not accepted by Jews. The Torah is substantiated by “Oral Law” contained in the Talmud. Orthodox Judaism believes in the concept of a Messiah who has not yet revealed himself. When the Messiah comes, peace will reign on earth and the dead will be resurrected. Until the resurrection, souls of the dead go to Heaven- if they deserve to.

Congregational prayers are said in the Synagogue. All synagogues have at least one “Scroll” of the Torah which is handwritten on parchment and is read from on the Sabbath and festivals. Such scrolls are the holiest artifacts in Judaism and worn out Scrolls are buried in a cemetery! Devout Jews pray three times a day. When praying, Jews face towards Jerusalem, the holiest city for Jews. The holiest site is the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem which formed the outer wall of the ancient Temple.

Orthodox Jews wear a skullcap and a prayer shawl known as Tallit, along with Phylacteries (Tefillin) which are small leather boxes holding quotations from the Torah- also worn for prayers.

Saturday is the Sabbath day (from sunset on Friday until nightfall on Saturday). As the Sabbath represents God’s day of “rest” following the Creation as detailed in Genesis devout Jews may not perform "creative" work on that day, including activities such as travel (except by foot), commercial transactions, use of the telephone, shaving and writing. Cooking is also forbidden and food must be cooked in advance and where necessary kept warm .All Sabbath laws are suspended in situations of “life and death”- e.g. in battle or in the case of illness or injury.

Festivals

Jewish festivals follow the lunar calendar. However, a “Leap Year” takes place approximately every 3 years which has a whole extra month. This serves to keep the Festivals within a fairly tight timescale e.g. Passover is always in the early Spring .The Holy Days of festivals have similar laws to the Sabbath. The most important are:

- **Passover**(Pesach) (March/April, (often coinciding with Easter- which is also lunar based) This celebrates the Exodus from Egypt. as detailed in the Bible. It lasts for 8 days, the first and last two of which are Holy Days). From 10am on the day before Passover until the end of the festival, no food or drink containing yeast or any fermented grain may be eaten. This includes all bread, and cakes and biscuits not made especially for Passover. It also includes whiskey and beer which are made from grain. Matzah which is a plain non-leavened wafer is eaten during Passover. The highlight of the Festival is the “Seder” Service which takes place at home on the first two nights of Passover. A special book called a Haggadah is read recounting the Exodus. Matzah and wine are drunk. Some Synagogues will hold a communal Seder but in the main it is a “family occasion” and, as such, is the Jewish equivalent of a “Christmas Dinner”. The Seder Service is observed by

most Jews at least on the first night even if they are not particularly religious.

- **Pentecost** (Shavouth)(May/June, 2 days), Celebrates the Revelation on Mount Sinai at which the 10 Commandments were heard from God and the giving of the Torah.
- **Rosh Hashanah** (September/October) – The Jewish New Year . This is a solemn festival, lasting two days, leading up to Yom Kippur. Orthodox Jews believe that it is the Anniversary of the Creation of the world and every year God judges mankind on its actions the previous year. A “shofar” or rams horn is blown in the Synagogue.
- **Yom Kippur** (the Day of Atonement) (September/October) the most important holy day of the year, observed by fasting and prayer seeking atonement for past sins, and praying for success during the coming year.

Tabernacles (Sukkot) (September/October) This lasts for 9 days, the first two and last two celebrated as holy days. It is a harvest festival with various agricultural rites such as eating in a “sukkah”, a small hut or shed which has foliage for a roof.

Diet

Orthodox Jews follow strict dietary laws. Food which has been treated and prepared in a particular manner and acceptable to the Jewish religion is known as Kosher. Food that is prohibited includes: fish without fins and scales, shellfish, pork, birds of prey and rabbit. Meat may be eaten but must be slaughtered in the traditional manner by a religious slaughterman who recites appropriate blessings. The meat is also heavily salted before use in order to ensure there is no vestige of blood. Meat and milk are not eaten together, and separate utensils are used for meat and dairy produce. Any utensil that has been used to cook non kosher food may not be used to cook kosher food.

Alcohol is permitted in moderation although wine must be manufactured specifically as kosher. Indeed wine is drunk for ritual purposes - particularly on the Sabbath and festivals. Someone who cannot drink wine may use non-alcoholic grape juice instead. This would apply if someone was in a country where alcohol is not permitted as well as where indicated for medical purposes. As mentioned above there are more restrictions at Passover.

Dress

Except for a few orthodox minority groups, Jews in Britain dress in the same way as the wider community. Men may cover their heads at all times or only when praying. Any covering is acceptable but many wear a small skullcap. However there are no issues with wearing specialist headgear as long as the head is covered. Many men also wear Tzitzith, which is a tasseled garment generally worn under the shirt. Orthodox Jewish men may also wear a beard

and have sidelocks. During certain periods of the religious calendar, some Jews might not shave. Orthodox Jewish women will wish to dress modestly and may not want to wear trousers, short skirts or short sleeves; some may wish to keep their heads covered with a scarf or beret.

One of the most recognizable symbols of Judaism is the Magen David; the Star of David. Many Jews wear a Star of David necklace. Others wear one containing the Hebrew word "chai" meaning life.

Rites of Passage

Jewish boys are circumcised on the eighth day after birth if health permits. They become Bar-Mitzvah at the age of 13, with a ceremony held in a synagogue. A Bat-Mitzvah ceremony is also often held when a girl reaches the age of 12. Jewish marriage is both a civil ceremony and a holy covenant. A dying Jew should not be alone; wherever possible, a Rabbi or any practising Jewish leader should be asked to attend, so that the appropriate prayers may be recited with the dying person. Jews are buried as soon as possible after death in a simple ceremony. Orthodox Judaism does not permit autopsies- except where required by law. Reform Judaism does not object to cremation. Following a death, there is often a week of private mourning (Shiva). Following the death of a parent, an observant Jewish man may wish to go to the Synagogue to recite special prayers morning, afternoon and evening for 11 months of the Jewish calendar. Special prayers are also recited on the anniversary of the death of a parent- called a "yahrzeit". Some also observe minor restrictions for a whole year e.g. not listening to music or going to places of entertainment.

OTHER ANCIENT RELIGIONS

These include religions covered by the Council of British Druid Orders and examples are Druidry, Paganism and Wicca. There are also other ancient religions such as Asatru, Odinism and Shamanism.

Festivals

Examples of festivals include:

- **Spring Equinox** * 21/22 March
- **Beltaine** 30 April
- **Summer Solstice** * 21/22 June
- **Lughnasadh** 2 August
- **Autumn Equinox** * 21/22 September
- **Samhain** 31 October
- **Winter Solstice** * 21/22 December

*Dates moveable due to astronomical times set in accordance with GMT.

Diet

Generally vegetarian or vegan, although not always.

Dress

Some items of jewellery as associated with Pagan faiths such as ankh, pentagram, hammer and crystal.

Rites of Passage

There is no set format laid down for bereavement. Some may prefer cremation or burial at a public institution, though a public or private ceremony may follow in the tradition of the deceased at a private home, grave or stone circle.

RASTAFARIANISM

Rastafarianism originated in Jamaica in 1930 and it has been estimated that there are about 5,000 Rastafarians in the UK.

Beliefs and Practices

Rastafarianism links with Judaism and early Christianity. Obedience to the Ten Commandments is very important and both the Bible and Ethiopian history are closely studied. The Nazarite Vow of Separation is followed closely and prohibits the cutting of hair. It also emphasizes the celebration of life, rather than death.

The main subdivisions of Rastafarianism are: Bobo Shanti, Nyahbinghi Order, and The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Many British Rastafarians belong to the Twelve Tribes of Israel movement, which seeks to educate youngsters in the advancement of black people. The crowned Lion of Judah, bearing the Ethiopian flag of red, gold and green, is a highly recognised symbol, as too are the Star of David and the Cross.

Festivals

- **Groundation Day** (21 April) marks the visit of Haile Selassie I to Jamaica in 1966.
- **Ethiopian Constitution Day** (16 July)
- **Birthday of Haile Selassie I** (23 July)
- **Marcus Garvey's Birthday** (17 August) Jamaican politician who predicted the crowning of a King in Africa and who instigated a "Back to Africa" movement.
- **Ethiopian New Year** (11 September)
- **Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie I** (2 November)

- **Ethiopian Christmas** (7 January)

Diet

Rastafarians follow strict dietary laws derived from the Old Testament. They prefer natural food such as fruits and vegetables (called I-tal). Salt is avoided but spices and pepper are very popular. Most do not eat pork as it is seen as unclean and lamb and shellfish are also proscribed. Rastafarians regularly eat fish but do not drink alcohol, milk or coffee. However, they will drink anything herbal grown from natural roots such as herbal tea. Plentiful amounts of fruit and fruit juices are also consumed.

Dress

Hair is worn uncut in dreadlocks often covered by a tam (a large hat) which is usually red, green and gold. Some men also cover their heads with a wrap (a cloth wrapped into a turban).

Other Points of Note

Whilst the faith supports the smoking of ganja (marijuana) this practice remains unlawful in the UK, and is unaffected by the Equality Act.

SIKHISM

There are 500,000 Sikhs in the UK according to the 2001 Census, many of whom have their origins in the Indian subcontinent.

Beliefs and Practices

Sikhism was founded 500 years ago by Guru Nanak in the Punjab region of north-west India. Sikhs believe in one God and equality for all. Every human being is the Light of the Divine contained in a human form. The human body was given to us so we can have a chance to experience that Divine Light in ourselves and in everything around us. Experiencing the Divine while in our human body generates bliss, fearlessness, and love, and a way to honestly face life with courage and grace. A society of people who are conscious of the Divine within themselves and in all around them is the foundation of a world filled with peace, prosperity, and integrity. This is the vision and promise of the Sikh way of life. Not beholden to rituals and to the past, but simply meditating and serving as a way to be awake to the Divine Reality, to the Deathless Spirit of Love that is already here inside of us.

Sikh simply means a Student - "seeker of truth." Sikhism is a spiritual path for those who are looking to answer the eternal question: "Who am I, and what am I here for?" Like all spiritual traditions, Sikhs have a lineage and legacy,

guidelines and philosophies, masters, saints and its history. But primarily, the Sikh way of life offers a down-to-earth spiritual path for every-day people. It doesn't matter what your spiritual orientation is, or what culture or background you belong to. Any person can use this path to experience his or her own Divinity and Infinity.

By name, the Sikh path is only a little over five hundred years old. Its founder, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469. Guru_Nanak spread a simple message of "Ek Onkar" meaning - *We are all one with the One Creator of all Creation*. This was at a time when India was being torn apart by castes, sectarianism, religious factions, and fanaticism. He aligned with no religion, and respected all religions.

Guru Nanak's students were called Sikhs (students of truth.) He taught them to bow only before God, never to any man or woman, and to link themselves to the teachings of The Guru, the Light of Truth, which is embodied in the "Siri Guru Granth Sahib." – The Holy Scriptures.

Guru Nanak was a humble bearer of this Light of Truth. He opposed superstition, injustice, and hypocrisy and inspired seekers by singing divine songs which touched the hearts of the most callous listeners.

The Aims of a Sikh are:

- To train the mind and all the senses to recognize the Divine Light within oneself and within all of creation.
- To be of service to others.

The lifestyle of a Sikh includes:

- Rising in the early hours of the morning for meditation and then taking a shower.
- Reciting and contemplating on daily morning prayers – which keep them in remembrance of one God throughout the day.
- Remembering God – by qualities, while we do our daily work – which helps them to be honest, loyal and hardworking at whatever they do.
- Meditating and chanting at sunset and before going to sleep.

During the day, a Sikh lives a normal life. Single or married; with children or without; in work life and in social life; Sikhs strive to:

- Be aware of the Divine in their hearts and the whole creation with every breath they take.
- Earn their living honestly and share whatever they have with others.
- Be constantly awake for opportunities to serve and elevate others.

The four basic principles for living a good life and living the life cycle are:

1) **Naam Japna or Simran (Meditation)**

- One of the basic principles for living a good life.
- Simran helps to get closer to God.
- Simran brings a peace of mind

2) **Kirat Karni (Work)**

- The second basic principle for living a good life.
- Sikhs should only accept what they have earned by honesty and hard work.
- Sikhs should not take away what rightfully belongs to others.
- Guru Nanak Dev Ji said “Taking away other’s right is a sinful as pork to a Muslim or beef to a Hindu”.

3) **Wand Chakna (Charity Donations)**

- Sikhs should give to the poor and needy in the form of charity.
- Sikhs should share at least one tenth of their earnings with the needy.

4) **Sewa (Service to Humanity and God)**

- Sewa is a major part of Sikhism and many people do it at the Gurdwara.
- A great example of Sewa is the story of Bhai Kanahiya, who in battle gave water to both Sikhs and Mughals. Bhai Kanahya was asked by Guru Gobind Singhi Ji why he was doing it, and Bhai Kanahya said “I do not see a friend or foe, I only see your face everywhere”. Bhai Kanahya was blessed. His example, as a forerunner of the present day Red Cross, is a tribute to the universal message of compassion and kindness to all. Guru Gobind Singh Ji (tenth Guru) said “Realise that the human race is one”.

There are two stages of development of Sikhs: non Amritdhari and Amritdhari. The former are termed ‘apprentices’ who are working towards the second

stage but may already be wearing one or more of the five symbols or 5 Ks (see below). Amritdharis are those who have been formally baptised and must, thus, keep rigidly to the disciplines and code of conduct enjoined upon them at the time of baptism. These Sikhs are called the Khalsa (the pure ones) and keep the 5 Ks. (See below)

The Sikh temple is known as the Gurdwara. Worshippers bow to the Scriptures which are on a platform or dias, and hymns from the Scriptures are sung. There are no priests, and men or women may lead worship. "Prasad"(sacred sweet pudding) is shared as a sign of equality and worship is followed by a meal known as Langar, taken together. Prayers may also be said at home.

Festivals

Main Sikh festivals are:

- **Vaisakhi** (or Baisakhi) (14 April)
- **Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh** (5 January)
- **Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Rev** (16 June)
- **Sri Guru Granth Sahib Day** (1 September)
- **Bandi Chor (October/November date set by lunar calendar)**
- Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (24 November)
- **Birthday of Guru Nanak** (November)

Diet

The majority of Sikhs are vegetarian. Sikhs who are non-vegetarian do not eat Halal or Kosher meat.

Dress

Older children and adults initiated into the Khalsa are expected to wear five symbols (known as the 5 Ks), which can be called the uniform of their faith.

Kesh - uncut hair. Observant Sikhs will not cut or trim any body hair. The hair is tied in a knot under a turban for men. Women either use a Dupatta (long scarf) or turban to cover their head.

Kangha - a wood comb worn in the hair.

Kara - a steel/iron bracelet worn on the wrist.

Kachera – specially designed knee-length underpants.

Kirpan – a small sword.

Rites of passage

As soon as a child is born, a naming ceremony is carried out from the Holy Scriptures. Every Sikh male uses Singh(Lion) as surname and all females

use Kaur (Princess) – again a sign and willingness to accept equality among all.

As soon as adulthood appears and the child is responsible enough – Amrit Ceremony (baptism) takes place. It is never forced on anyone and is a voluntary commitment.

A Marriage ceremony takes place in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Scriptures)

Sikhs are cremated and have a preference for this to take place as soon as possible after death. Death to a devout Sikh is no cause of grief, as one must submit to God's will, and there is no specified mourning period.

ZOROASTRIANISM (PARSI)

It has been estimated that there are between 5,000 to 10,000 Zoroastrians in the UK, the majority originating in Iran while some came from East Africa.

Beliefs and Practices

Zoroastrianism was founded in ancient times by the prophet Zarathushtra. Zoroastrians believe that Zarathushtra identified, for the first time in human history, the importance of the Vohu Manah (Good Mind). His ethical monotheism taught human beings to think and reflect with a clear, rational mind in order to dispel ignorance and blind faith. Zoroastrians worship Ahura Mazda (the Wise Lord).

Zoroastrians are required to pray five times during the day, saying a special prayer for each part of the day.

Hwab (sunrise to midday)
Rapithwin (midday to mid-afternoon)
Uzerin (mid-afternoon to sunset)
Aiwisruthrem (sunset to midnight)
Ushahin (midnight to dawn)

Prayers should be said in front of a fire – or a symbolic replica of fire. In addition, a ritual is performed each time a Zoroastrian washes his/her hands although the ritual is not always strictly performed in all its detail. When it is performed, the individual will stand on the same spot and must speak to no one during the ritual. No special facilities are required. A prayer will also be said before eating.

Festivals

Dates follow the lunar calendar and will therefore vary from year to year.

- **Khordad Sal** – The Prophet's Birthday

Diet

There are no dietary requirements for Zoroastrians although, through personal choice, some may abstain from beef and pork and some may be vegetarian.

Dress

Devout Zoroastrians wear the sudreh, a sacred white shirt worn next to the skin, and the kushti, a sacred cord worn over the sudreh, passed three times around the waist and knotted at the front and back. The sudreh and kushti are meant to be worn at all times by Zoroastrians.

Rites of Passage

Zoroastrians regard the body of the deceased as polluting and believe that human remains should be disposed of in a quick and ecologically sound manner. In the UK, the remains of deceased Zoroastrians are usually cremated or buried.

FURTHER READING ON WORLD RELIGIONS

Religions of the World (Collins Fact Books)

E. Breuilly

M. Palmer

ISBN: 0001983598

World Religions

J. Bowker

ISBN: 0789496763

NON-RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND NON-BELIEF

In the 2001 Census, 9.1 million people said they had no religion. This category included agnostics, atheists, heathens.

Beliefs and Definitions

“Non-believers” have many beliefs, though not religious ones. They typically hold that morality is social in origin, rather than being the exclusive preserve of religion. They may describe themselves in various ways, the most common today being “agnostic”, “atheist”, “freethinker”, “humanist”, “rationalist”, “sceptic”, “secularist” - or simply “non-religious” or “nothing”. These different terms, many of which overlap, generally reflect differences in emphasis. In practice, however, the needs and requirements of non-believers do not vary greatly.

Agnostic in normal usage means “don’t know” or open-minded about religious belief, but it can mean that nothing is known, or can possibly be known, about God or supernatural phenomena, and that it is wrong to claim otherwise.

Atheist includes those who reject a belief in the existence of God or gods and those who simply choose to live without God or gods. Along with this will usually go disbelief in the soul, an afterlife, and all other religious beliefs.

Freethinkers reject authority and tradition in matters of religious belief, preferring to think for themselves.

Humanist is used today to mean those who seek to live good lives without religious or other beliefs. They reject the idea of any supernatural agency or afterlife. Humanists believe that moral values are founded on human nature and experience, and base their moral principles on reason, shared human values and respect for others. They believe that people can and will continue to solve problems, and should work together to improve the quality of life and make it more equitable.

Non-religious as well as those who are uninterested in religion or who reject it, this category may include the vague or unaffiliated, those who are only nominally or culturally affiliated to a religious tradition, and the superstitious.

Rationalist means someone who rejects religion on the grounds that it is unreasonable and lacks good evidence.

Sceptic means someone who doubts the truth of religious beliefs, probably on rationalist grounds.

Secularists believe that public life, the state and the education system should be neutral towards religion. They also call for freedom of belief, including the right to change belief and not to believe. Secularists seek to ensure that persons and organisations are neither privileged nor disadvantaged by virtue of their religion or lack of it. They believe

secular laws – those that apply to all citizens equally – should be the product of a democratic process, and should not be determined, or unduly influenced, by religious leaders or religious texts. Most secularists are non-believers, but some believers also take a secularist position.

Non-belief only began to become publicly accepted or mainstream during the late 19th and 20th centuries. During this period non-religious beliefs became more structured, and organisations sprang up to serve and represent the interests of non-believers, in particular the British Humanist Association and its antecedents (www.humanism.org.uk) and the National Secular Society (www.secularism.org.uk)

Festivals

The non-religious have no obligatory festivals, but are usually happy to celebrate traditional holidays in their own way.

Practices and Requirements

There are no obligatory practices, for example in dress or diet, or obligatory ceremonies for non-believers.

Rites of Passage

Most non-believers recognise a need for and the value of ritual and ceremonies marking “rites of passage”. Secular humanist and non-religious ceremonies are becoming common, particularly to mark births, marriages and deaths.

Many will be content with civil registration of a marriage or partnership, though some will also have a non-religious or specifically humanist ceremony. Funerals are probably the ceremony that the majority consider most important, and there is an increasing demand for ceremonies with no prayers and no reference to an afterlife or other religious beliefs. Such ceremonies tend to have a short period for silent reflection, leaving those present to remember the deceased in the way they are most comfortable with. Humanist and other non-religious ceremonies are a celebration of the life that was lived, and are designed to meet the needs of those left behind rather than the deceased.

ANNEX D

FURTHER INFORMATION

The main provisions of the Equality Act were summarised in DIN2010DIN01-179: Equality Act 2010 Implications for the Armed Forces which can be found at:

<http://defenceintranet.diiweb.r.mil.uk/DefenceIntranet/Library/CivilianAndJointService>

Guidance on the Equality Act issued by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) is at:

<http://www.acas.co.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2833&p=0>

And the full text of the Equality Act can be found at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

The MOD Equality and Diversity website is at:

<http://defenceintranet.diiweb.r.mil.uk/DefenceIntranet/Teams/BrowseTeamCategories/Orgbased/Centre/DiversityTeam.htm>

If you would like any further advice on equality and diversity issues then please contact:

Royal Navy: Equality & Diversity Officer 93832 5517

Army: LF-Manning Empl-(A) SO1 Diversity 94391 7734

RAF: SO2 E&D Pers Pol 95221 5046

MOD Civil Service: DCP CC Diversity 020 721(82925MB)

Specific religious advice can be provided by your unit Chaplain or through the Chaplains Department as follows:

Royal Navy: Naval Chaplaincy Service – 93832 5055

Army: Royal Army Chaplains Department – 94391 7282

RAF: RAF Chaplaincy Service – 95221 6264

Civilian Chaplains to the Military (CCMs)

Buddhist Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana
sunil.kariyakarawana852@mod.uk or Sunilkari59@googlemail.com
Tel: 020 7414 3411 or Mob: 07785 727134

Hindu Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Mr Krishan Attri
krishankant@hotmail.com

Tel: 01912412908 or Mil: 94731 2261 or Mob: 07951 759863 or 07887758550

Jewish Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Rabbi Arnold Saunders
arniesaunders@talktalk.net

Tel: 01772 262504 or Mob: 07971114018

Muslim Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Imam Asim Hafiz
asim.hafiz@btconnect.com or asim.hafiz@hmarmedforces.co.uk

Tel: 020 74143252 or Mil: 94631 3252 or Mob: 07785 727713

Sikh Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Mandeep Kaur
Mandeep.Kaur110@mod.uk

Tel: 01743262686 or Mil: 944612686 or Mob: 07771944781

OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

Armed Forces Buddhist Society (AFBS)

Points of Contact are:

Buddhist Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana on:
sunil.kariyakarawana852@mod.uk or Sunilkari59@googlemail.com

Tel: 020 7414 3411 or Mob: 07785 727134

Chair of the AFBS, Lt Richie Moss RN, on:

fleet-hrtsg-reqeng2@mod.uk

Tel: 023 9272 4162 or Mil: 9380 24162

Group Network: armedforcesbuddhists@googlegroups.com

Armed Forces Jewish Community (AFJC)

Points of Contact are:

Jewish Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Rabbi Arnold Saunders on:
arniesaunders@talktalk.net

Tel: 01772 262504 or Mob: 07971114018

Chair of the AFJC, Lt Dan Weil RN on:

DESJCA-L4a@mod.uk or daniel.weil568@mod.uk

Tel: 011791 35615 or Mil 9679 36515

Armed Forces Muslim Association (AFMA)

Points of Contact are:

Muslim Civilian Chaplain to the Military, Imam Asim Hafiz on:
asim.hafiz@btconnect.com or asim.hafiz@hmarmedforces.co.uk

Tel: 020 74143252 or Mil: 94631 3252 or Mob: 07785 727713

Chair of the AFMA, Gp Capt Sam Ulhaq on:

zahur.ulhaq830@mod.uk

Tel: 030 679 80286 or Mob: 07900165046

UK Armed Forces Humanist Society (AFHS)

Details of the AFHS can be found at:

<http://www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk/>

Points of Contact are:

David Brittain email: davidbrittain13@hotmail.com

Navy: Cdr. John Craig, email: johncraig7@live.com

Army: Lt. Colonel Henry Cummins email: henry.cummins269@land.mod.uk

RAF: Sqn. Ldr. Steve O'Kane, email: steve.okane647@mod.uk