



COMMUNITY
DIALOGUE
MANUAL
SERIES

Connecting Communities

Fast-Breaking Dinners



DIALOGUE
SOCIETY



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To readers of this manual:

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's Community Dialogue Manual Series. The PDF version of this and the other manuals in the series can be downloaded from www.dialoguesociety.org/publications

If you have any comments on this, or any of the other manuals in the series, we would be very glad to have your feedback. Please email your comments to manual@dialoguesociety.org

We would like to showcase the valuable work and effort of groups that use the Community Dialogue Manuals to help inspire other groups to take part also. Please get in touch and let us know how this manual helped you and your group with any photographs and testimonials. Please email these to manual@dialoguesociety.org

If you represent a local stakeholder or public body and are interested in Dialogue Society consultancy please email consultancy@dialoguesociety.org



The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nationwide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

Fast-Breaking Dinners

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**DIALOGUE
SOCIETY**

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Overview 01

Preface

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences. It has done this through a wide range of events including community celebrations, interfaith sharing circles, and open cultural festivals as well as a broad variety of dialogue meetings and seminars.

The manual you hold in your hand is part of a series of ten Community Dialogue Manuals developed by the Dialogue Society to encourage interaction between members of different communities. The primary aim of the series is to help people to bring their communities together through a number of approaches and events that the Dialogue Society has found successful. We have always found that the most successful events have been those with clear objectives and where attention has been paid to detail. Therefore the manuals are full of advice, tips and checklists to help everything go smoothly as you plan, organise and host your own events.

This manual will help you to successfully share fast-breaking meals with non-Muslim neighbours and the wider community. Ramadan, during which many Muslims are keen to welcome a succession of guests to share festive dinners, is a perfect time to reach out to neighbours and groups with whom you may not have interacted as much in the past. Eating together is one of the most natural and powerful ways of establishing fellowship. In our experience there is no better way of breaking barriers of difference and reserve than by inviting people to dinner and sharing with them something that is meaningful and valuable to you.

Please get in touch with us to let us know if and how the manual was helpful, to give any feedback and comments about the manual's content, style and structure and with any other enquiries. Please see inside cover for contact details.

We hope that this manual and perhaps others will be helpful to you, and that you will enjoy uniting your community through the events you hold.

The Dialogue Society

Introduction

Sharing food is a wonderful way to bring people together. This manual is designed to help you share the special experience of a fast-breaking dinner with people beyond the Muslim community, initiating new interaction and friendship. As well as being a gesture of friendship and generosity, it gives others a valuable insight into the spirit of Ramadan. This contact with an important aspect of Muslim religious life can challenge misconceptions, promoting mutual respect.

In this manual you will find advice, checklists and hints and tips for organising various different kinds of fast-breaking dinners. Whether you invite next door neighbours whom you do not know, or organise a big dinner to bring together a range of cultural and religious groups within your community, the events can really help to build relationships between different people.

As its focus is a Muslim practice - Ramadan fast-breaking - this manual has been written primarily with a Muslim audience in mind. However, there is no reason why non-Muslim individuals and groups should not put on a fast-breaking dinner for Muslim friends or neighbours or for the local community. They may wish to return hospitality after visiting Muslim friends for a fast-breaking dinner, or they may wish to take the initiative to reach out and forge links with local Muslims. It is hoped that this manual will be of help to such readers.

Alternatively, groups of other faiths and cultures may identify festive meals within their own traditions which they wish to share with others in the same way. Members of other minority religions relatively unfamiliar to the majority may find this sort of event helpful to promote understanding of the practices and values of their faith. As previously suggested, such events are well suited to strengthening relationships between neighbours and between local religious and cultural groups. Much of the guidance in this manual may be of help to groups and individuals preparing a shared festive meal from their own tradition. For example, a lot of the practical advice given here would apply to preparations for a shared Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) meal as well as to preparations for a fast-breaking dinner.

The overview near the beginning of this manual will give you a better idea of the range of events that you might like to consider, providing a short explanation of each kind of event. In the main body of the manual you will find advice, checklists and hints and tips for organising each kind of event successfully. And in the appendices you will find an array of sample emails, letters and forms to give you ideas for writing and designing invitations and materials.

The PDF version of this and the other Community Dialogue Manuals can be downloaded from www.dialoguesociety.org/publications; you can copy and paste materials from the appendices to adapt for your own use.

This fairly long manual is not intended to be read from cover to cover. The intention is that reading the overview will give you ideas for possible events. You will then find support for whatever you choose to do in the relevant section of the manual. And perhaps on another occasion you will turn to it again for advice on a different kind of event.

What is a Fast-Breaking Dinner?

Fast-breaking dinners are held by Muslims each evening during the holy month of Ramadan. As the Islamic calendar is lunar, each year Ramadan begins about eleven days earlier than the previous year. It currently (2011) coincides with summer in the UK but will slowly move through summer into spring. During Ramadan observant Muslims fast each day from before dawn until dusk, refraining from eating, drinking and sexual activity with married partners. This fast is broken at the time of the Maghrib (dusk) call to prayer, which is the fourth of the five daily calls to prayer. Muslims usually eat a special meal with family and friends and often invite a series of guests to join them in the course of the month. The meals are joyous and festive. They can provide an excellent context for dialogue and the development of respect and friendship between people of different faiths and cultures.

Aims and Objectives of This Manual

1. To encourage and support individuals and groups to engage in dialogue
2. To encourage more neighbourly interaction
3. To encourage the opening up of different communities to one another
4. To bring about dialogue between cultural, community and faith-based organisations
5. To encourage inclusion of people who may not necessarily be interested in dialogue
6. To get individuals and organisations interested in dialogue
7. To initiate dialogue through a tangible event
8. To provide strategies, tips, advice and know-how for organising successful events

NB. What is important to remember is that the purpose of these events is to interact and engage with people of other cultures or faiths. When you first go to a religious congregation, community group or other organisation to suggest holding these events they may be reluctant for a whole range of reasons. The most common reason is suspicion that this is an attempt to proselytise and convert others. It is therefore extremely important that you put them at ease by explaining at the outset that your intention is not to convince the congregation of your own faith but simply to engage and interact with them. On the day of the event, it is important to impress upon your team that they should not engage in theological discussion unless it is prompted and then only to inform rather than convince. Dialogue is interaction with others while respecting them as they are.

Who is This Manual For?

- Muslim individuals and families wishing to get to know their neighbours through Ramadan hospitality
- Muslim groups looking to meet and socialise with other religious or non-religious groups to promote mutual understanding and friendship
- Muslim-led groups or charities looking to enhance community cohesion by bringing local people together for a shared meal
- Muslim students looking to improve interfaith/intercultural relations on campus, or to enhance a sense of community among students
- Individuals and groups of other faiths and cultures who wish to use this manual for planning their own traditional dialogue dinner or lunch
- Non-Muslim individuals or groups who wish to return the hospitality of Muslim neighbours during Ramadan, or who wish to take the initiative to reach out to them and invite them for a family or community dinner¹

¹ They are reminded of the need to:

- consider Muslim dietary requirements,
- find out about the timing of the Maghrib prayer, and
- provide a place for Muslim guests to pray.

Overview of the Varieties of Fast-Breaking Events

1. Events for Individuals/Families

a) Events at Home..... 12

Invite neighbours, members of another local faith community or acquaintances from the area for a fast-breaking meal in your own home. Inviting people into your home is a very personal gesture and will enable you to establish a more meaningful relationship with your guests which you probably wouldn't be able to achieve with other events. Faith leaders can make a real difference to community cohesion by encouraging members of their congregations to open up their homes to their neighbours, explaining the benefits of the friendships formed in this way.

2. Community Events

a) Small Community Events 13

Build good will and friendship between your religious community and another local group by sharing your fast-breaking dinner with a local church, synagogue or community group.

b) Larger Events: Indoor Venue..... 15

Hold a big community fast-breaking meal to bring people together, encourage dialogue and boost community spirit.

c) Larger Events: Marquee 34

Holding a large event in a marquee in a public space is a good way of involving passersby as well as invited guests.

3. University Events

a) Small University Events 39

Invite course-mates or neighbours in university accommodation to join you for a fast-breaking dinner. Dinners like this can really add to the friendliness of student halls and increase interaction between students of different religious and cultural backgrounds.

b) Large University Events 40

Hold a larger event and invite people from your department or halls, from faith-based societies or from other societies. This is a great way to promote friendly interaction between different students and different student societies

Appendices: 42

Sample materials and extra resources (as listed in "Contents")



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Varieties of Fast-Breaking Events

02

I. Events for Individuals/Families

a) Fast-Breaking Dinner at Home

OBJECTIVE: to initiate interaction, helping neighbours to get to know each other

Fast-breaking dinners during Ramadan provide an excellent opportunity to socialise with neighbours. If you don't know your neighbours very well what better way to break the ice and get to know them than inviting them to share a special meal in the comfort and hospitality of your own home.

For an event in your own home invite your next-door neighbours, local acquaintances whom you would like to get to know better, colleagues, your child's teacher, or acquaintances from other local faith groups. Appendix 4 gives a sample invitation text for a dinner at home, but you will probably want to deliver your invitation in person, or ring up. An invitation on paper just gives a helpful record of details. The length of Ramadan allows you to be flexible on dates!

Checklist

- Invite your guests at least a fortnight before your proposed date, and have alternatives ready to suggest.
- As soon as the invitation is accepted check whether any of your guests are vegetarian or vegan or have allergies or major dislikes. Food allergies may be dangerous, so be very careful about checking ingredients for an allergy-sufferer.
- Clean your home thoroughly the day before the dinner. Decorating it, for example bringing in some flowers, will make it especially welcoming and enhance the evening.

Hints and Tips

- Do as much preparation as possible in advance to avoid stress at the last minute.
- The fact that you have invited your neighbours to share this special experience with you may arouse some curiosity in your guests, so be prepared to answer any questions they may have regarding the month of Ramadan and fasting. (Appendix 10 has answers to some FAQs.) After you break your fast, you may wish to be excused to carry out your Maghrib prayers. Think about whether you would like your guests to witness you praying if appropriate. If so, then be prepared to answer any questions that may arise from their curiosity.
- Perhaps you may even want to think about giving your guests a small gift upon their departure. Possible items: tea, herbs or spices traditional in your culture; a decorative plate, bowl or cup(s); sweets or chocolates; a translation of Islamic poetry (e.g. Rumi); bookmarks. It is important to note that unless

requested by your guest, giving literature on Islam as a departing gift is not recommended as it may give the impression that you are trying to proselytise. There is of course no harm in providing information to guests that request it. However, even then, care should be taken in choosing material that is suitable in content and style and that is at a level appropriate to the reader.

2. Community Events

a) Small Community Events

OBJECTIVE: to bring different groups together, promoting dialogue, mutual understanding and friendship

"It was a pleasure to host volunteers of the Dialogue Society for a fast-breaking dinner at our chapel during Ramadan. Whilst we provided the venue, they provided the delicious food which we shared between the two congregations. Some of the chapel's congregation had also fasted that particular day to experience the joy at the time of fast-breaking together with our Muslim friends. It truly was an amazing evening of feast, friendship and fun."

Father Jim Robinson, Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead.

In addition to inviting people to share a meal in your home, you may like to consider bringing the community together through a larger fast-breaking meal. The simplest way of sharing your fast-breaking meal with local people outside your religious community is to invite a particular religious congregation (church, synagogue, temple etc), community group (older people's club, women's group etc), or group of local stakeholders (local police officers, staff of local health centre etc). This kind of event will typically be limited to between twenty and forty people and is relatively easy to arrange.

If you do not have a suitable space for the dinner, ask a possible guest congregation/group about using their premises. The essential component of the evening will of course be the food, ideally home-made dishes prepared by volunteers. Somebody should give a short speech either at the start or after eating, to explain the significance of Ramadan. You may like to ask a leader of your guest group to say a few words also.

A recitation of the call to prayer, with a slideshow giving the translation of the call to prayer may be very interesting for non-Muslims.

You could consider allowing non-Muslim guests to watch the prayer, giving them a fuller experience of Ramadan fast-breaking.

Checklist

- Introduce the idea to your group or your local mosque congregation and ask for support. Form a group of volunteers to plan and help with the event.
- Decide on a group to invite and contact the group leader to give the invitation, explain the idea and discuss details.
- Settle on venue, date, time and duration.
- Specific volunteers should take responsibility for:
 - Food
 - Purchasing other necessary items (napkins, bin bags, small gifts for guests etc)
 - Invitations
 - Preparing the venue
 - Giving a speech
 - Organising prayer venue and observation (if you are doing this); leading the prayer
 - Reciting the call to prayer
 - Preparing and running a slideshow
- Organising any music or other extras (“Larger Community Events: Extras” below, page 25)
- Clearing up
- Decide on whom to invite. Ask the priest/rabbi/community group leader to tell the congregation/group about the event at least three weeks prior to it and to give out invitations. Or, even better, attend a service and invite the congregation yourself.
- Prepare a short, interesting presentation explaining Ramadan and the aim of your event. (It may be helpful to look at “Aims and Objectives of This Manual” above, page 8, and at Appendices 9 and 10.)

Hints and Tips

- If you visit a place of worship to invite the congregation, or if you use their premises for the meal, remember you are a guest at another place of worship. Avoid any action or words that may offend. Always show absolute respect to the place of worship, faith and congregation you are visiting. (See Appendix 11 and the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual for advice on visiting a range of places of worship.)
- At the event, resist the temptation to group with the other organisers. It may help if you give yourself a target: try to have a conversation with at least five people that you do not know. Encourage all the volunteers to do this. Make sure members of your group sit among members of the other group for the meal.

- After the event you might like to invite the congregation of the church/synagogue to visit the mosque, invite them to other events or suggest organising joint events together.
- If you have cards, take them with you. It can be useful to exchange contact details with the people you meet to enable you to keep in touch after the event itself.

b) Large Community Event: Indoor Venue

OBJECTIVE: to bring the community together and encourage interaction, community spirit and social cohesion

For a more ambitious event, you may want to reach out to a range of stakeholders, community groups, religious congregations and individuals, rather than focusing on one group. You will need to borrow or hire a hall with plenty of space, and think about catering on a large scale. A larger event like this can really boost community spirit and goodwill in your area.

Such events, of course, require a lot more organisation than the smaller events covered above. For this reason, advice on organising these events has been split into the following sections below:

- Working in Partnership
- Planning Your Event
- Event Publicity
- Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner
- Extras
- Event Essentials
- Checklist

Much of the advice in these sections, and notably the checklist, is also relevant to large community events in marquees, and to large university events.

Working in Partnership

For extensive advice on finding local partners and working in partnership please refer to the Building Partnerships Community Dialogue Manual.

Consider inviting another community group, charity or religious congregation to work with you on the planning and organisation of the project. The benefits of doing this go far beyond just the sharing of the workload:

- It unites your ends and your means; your goal of promoting interaction and friendship between different groups is served even at the planning stages of

your event as your group and another work together on the project and get to know each other.

- It expands your range of expertise by bringing in the skills of members of another group.
- It expands your range of guests, as you can invite all your partners' contacts to your event(s).
- It can bring you new insight into the perspectives and concerns of a different cultural, social or religious group.
- It increases the credibility of your dialogue work by showing that even as you plan your events you are practising what you preach and engaging with other groups.
- It can increase trust and interest in your organisation; some sectors of the community who are unfamiliar with your work may already know and trust your partner organisation, and be more inclined to get involved with your projects because of the connection.
- It helps keep your work genuinely rooted in dialogue. Even as you work on your project you are engaging in a form of dialogue, and probably growing in appreciation and understanding of a different group.
- It can establish a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship where each partner can sometimes benefit from the support, expertise, contacts and facilities of the other.

Tips for Working in Partnership

- Attending events run by other organisations with objectives linked to your own will give opportunities to meet possible partners.
- It is a good idea to invite prospective partners to an informal, social meeting, perhaps over lunch or tea. If they are interested in what you do and in working with you on the project you propose you can then arrange another meeting (see Appendix 1 for a sample email to a potential partner group).
- Choose your prospective partners carefully. The most successful partnerships are those that serve the objectives of both/all partner organisations.
- When contacting an organisation to propose a meeting or collaboration on a particular project, emphasise the objectives that you share and show how collaboration makes sense for you both.
- Make sure that your partners have the opportunity to be involved at every level. If possible, try to get them involved in planning from the early stages, so that they are really part of the team.
- Make sure that your partners feel valued and recognised; be sure to include their names and details on any materials for a jointly organised event, and ensure that they are visible and acknowledged on the day.

Planning Your Event

Inform Your Congregation/Organisation/Group and Gather a Planning Committee

- In a mosque you can inform the congregation after Friday prayers and appeal for volunteers
- You can also speak to parents at a weekend school used by families in your congregation/community group
- Posters in the mosque/community centre asking for volunteers may also be helpful

Consider Partnership

Decide whether you want to work in partnership with one or more other organisations. Contact them accordingly so that they join in the planning process as soon as possible (see Appendix 1).

Decide on Event Size and Target Audience

How many people do you hope to host? And which groups will you prioritise in your publicity efforts? Perhaps you would particularly like to attract people from different local religious groups, or perhaps you want to ensure that all the streets in the local area are represented.

See “Event Publicity” below, page 19.

Set Date, Time, Duration and Venue

Set date, time and duration with your target audience in mind.

Find and book a venue, such as a town hall or large community centre.

People have more time at weekends, but avoid a day when there is another significant local event such as a football match.

Bear in mind that many Jews would not be able to attend on the Sabbath (*Shabbat*), which lasts from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Identify Key Speakers or VIP Guests

The attendance of an important local stakeholder can raise the profile of your event, attract more guests and bring your community into contact with an influential local figure. You could consider inviting your local MP, the Mayor and other councillors, and asking one or more to make a speech. It may be worth contacting possible VIP guests right at the start of the planning process, and choosing a date that works for them (see Appendix 5).

See also “Event Publicity” below.

Draft Content for Promotional Literature

You will need to design/prepare posters, an event booklet for people to refer to on the day (giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events) and letters/emails of invitation for all your potential guests. You may also want to prepare a press release.

See "Event Publicity", page 19, and Appendices 4-6 below.

Plan Food

Decide how you will provide the food for the evening. Volunteers? Caterers? What will you serve? Remember to take into consideration the dietary requirements of your guests.

Plan Extras

Think about 'extras' that can be included in your event (see "Extras" below, page 50). Possibilities which may enhance the interest and enjoyment of the event include:

- Recitation of the Holy Qur'an and Call to Prayer
- Observing prayers
- Displays – posters, artwork, notices, children's work, photos
- Stalls – books, magazines, leaflets, artefacts
- Music, nasheeds (Islamic songs sung unaccompanied or accompanied by percussion instruments), poetry
- Rotating quotes on a screen
- Speeches
- Gift packs

Check Licensing

Find out if you need any licences for the event and arrange to obtain them (see "Extras" below, page 50).

Plan Finances

Work out how much the event will cost, and how you are going to meet the costs. (See "Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner: Funding" below, page 24.)

Plan Human Resources

Assign volunteers responsibility for different areas: food, venue, design, invitations etc (see "Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner" below, page 21).

It may be helpful to produce a human resource plan for the day (see "Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner" below, page 21).

Action Plan

Prepare an action plan that includes all tasks, big and small, and the dates by which they need to be completed. This plan will help you to keep abreast of all your different tasks and ensure that nothing is forgotten. Check the progress of your team of volunteers against the plan at each meeting to make sure that you are keeping to schedule.

Event Publicity

Designing and Preparing Invitations

You will need to design posters and paper invitations (as well as event booklets for people to refer to on the day). You will also need to prepare letters/emails of invitation (see Appendices 4-6).

Identifying Who to Invite and Sending Invitations

Please see the *Building Partnerships* Community Dialogue Manual for advice on finding and contacting a range of community groups, businesses and stakeholders whom you could invite.

Groups/individuals you may like to approach include:

Local stakeholders

- MPs
- MEPs
- London Assembly Members
- Mayor
- Councillors
- The Council
- NHS health professionals (doctors, nurses, dentists, managers and support staff)
- Schools and teachers
- Universities and academics
- Police or Police Community Support Officers
- Firefighters

Local community groups

- Faith groups and religious leaders

- Local support and development organisations²
- Supplementary schools
- “Friends of” groups
- Tenants and residents organisations
- Older people’s groups
- Women’s groups
- Cultural community groups
- Local charities and voluntary organisations
- Local campaign/issue-focused groups
- Sports groups
- Music/art groups

Local businesses and shop owners

- Owners and staff of local businesses and shops in your immediate local community

Local residents

- Local residents of different cultural/faith backgrounds

When inviting a community group or religious group consider attending a service/meeting and inviting your guests in person, leaving printed invitations for reference. (On visiting places of worship, see Appendix 11.)

Preparing a Press Release and Contacting the Media

Invite members of the press to attend and to cover the event in their publications. Contact as many local media outlets as possible two weeks in advance. Avoid sending emails with attachments. In your initial email give a brief, clear explanation of what is happening. The journalist will contact you if he/she is interested and you can then send a press release. Follow up with a call one week before the event.

(See Appendix 3: Sample Press Release and the *Media Engagement Community Dialogue Manual*.)

² Local support and development organisations are organisations that provide support to voluntary organisations and volunteers in a particular borough, district or city. They provide a range of valuable resources, from free or affordable training to networking and funding opportunities.

Find your local organisation through <http://www.navca.org.uk/membersdirectory> (England)/ http://www.voluntaryactionscotland.org.uk/third_sector_interfaces.html (Scotland)/
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/grants/voluntary/contact/?lang=en> (Wales)

Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner

Human Resources

Early in the planning process, make particular people responsible for different areas of work:

- General coordination (finalising programme, chairing meetings and overseeing project in general)
- Venue organisation and licensing
- Food and drink
- Publicity coordination
- Design
- Non-designed materials (feedback forms etc)
- VIP guests
- Media
- Equipment hire (for marquee event: generator; portaloos; tables and chairs)
- Technical management
- Records of the event: filming, photography, interviews etc
- Performers
- HR planning
- Health and safety/first aid
- Venue preparation and decoration

It may be helpful to have a Human Resource plan to identify roles and responsibilities on the day and the number of volunteers needed. The sample plan given below is a guide to assist in identifying such roles. Some roles will be determined by the size and type of event that you hope to organise. While identifying areas of responsibility, bear in mind that one person may be able to take on multiple tasks during the event.

Sample Human Resource Plan

Role	Responsibility Description	Numbers
WELCOMER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome guests and direct towards registration area ▪ Count number of guests entering ▪ Watch out for any security issues and act on them 	1-2
REGISTRATION TABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greet and register guests ▪ Direct to tables or assembly area ▪ If seating is pre-allocated then direct to relevant table 	2-4
INTRODUCTORY SPEAKER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome people ▪ Introduce the event, including practical information such as fire procedures ▪ Introduce any other speaker(s) including VIPs ▪ Thank guests and organisers at the end, mentioning feedback forms and contact lists and announcing any forthcoming events 	1
PRESENTATION SPEAKER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give presentation explaining Ramadan and the purpose and meaning of fasting 	1
TECHNICAL SUPPORT PERSON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check all audio and visual equipment such as speakers and microphones, turn music on and off, ensure slideshow working 	1-2
STALL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look after the books/magazines and other items for sale ▪ Keep a record of sales and of books that are in demand ▪ Get contact details for people who are interested in obtaining publications in the future 	1-3
FOOD MANAGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct food distribution and volunteers 	1
FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare food ready to be served- ensure hot food is properly heated, serving area is tidy etc ▪ Serve food ▪ Make sure the food area is clean at all times 	2-5
WAITORS/ WAITRESSES	<p>If you have decided to serve people at tables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lay tables with cutlery, serviettes etc ▪ Distribute plates of food, desserts, tea and coffee ▪ Take empty plates and cutlery back to the kitchen 	6-20
AMENITIES INSPECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check toilets for cleanliness and hygiene ▪ Dispose of rubbish regularly 	1
RECITER OF ADHAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recite Adhan (Call to Prayer) 	1
PHOTOGRAPHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take photos of the crowd, people eating and talking, kids etc throughout the evening 	1-2

VIDEO CAMERAMAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Record scenes from the evening ▪ Interview people about their experience of the evening 	1
MEDIA LIAISON OFFICER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look after media representatives and meet their needs 	1-2
VIP LIAISON OFFICER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greet VIP's and show them to their places ▪ Look after them and meet their needs 	1-4
EVENT COORDINATOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liaise with Food Manager, speakers and VIP liaison officers to ensure that the event runs to schedule ▪ At a marquee event liaise with council contacts as required ▪ Ensure people are ready for duties ▪ Solve problems 	1
FIRST AIDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be on site at all times to respond to accidents and medical problems and contact relevant support ▪ (See footnote 6, below page 28) 	1-3

Food

You need to find out about any dietary requirements that guests have before preparing the food. Ask them to state dietary requirements on your invitations. If they do not mention any when they send their RSVP, check when you respond to confirm their place.

Bear in mind the dietary requirements of the followers of certain religions. There is often considerable variation in the practice of different groups/individuals belonging to a religion. If you are inviting a religious congregation it is probably worth asking a contact for guidance on the dietary needs of their group.

- If you are inviting Buddhist or Hindu guests remember that many of the followers of both religions are vegetarian. Note that Hindu vegetarians generally do not eat eggs, though they will consume milk and dairy products.
- Note that while Sikh principles do not require adherents to be vegetarian, some Sikhs adhere to the principle of refraining from any meat that has been ritually slaughtered: they do not eat halal or kosher meat.
- If you are inviting Jewish guests you will need to consider the requirements of the Jewish food laws (laws of *Kashrut*):
 - These laws restrict the meats that observant Jews can eat to those animals which have divided hooves and which chew the cud; the meat of cows, sheep, goat and deer are permitted while pigs, horses and rabbits are forbidden. A further restriction is that even permitted animals must be slaughtered in the approved way by a licensed

schochet. While the method used is similar to halal practices in Islam, the differences are such that Jews are not generally permitted to eat halal meat. So if you wish to provide meat dishes for practising Jewish guests you will probably need to source certified kosher meat.

- Fish with scales and fins are permitted but shellfish, molluscs, eels and shark are forbidden.
- The laws of Kashrut also forbid the mixing of meat and milk; only one of these food groups can be consumed at a given meal.
- Note that the strictness with which Jews adhere to these laws varies enormously. Some Jews will refrain from eating pork but eat anything else, however it has been prepared. Others will only eat food prepared in a kitchen in which separate utensils are used for meat products and for milk products.
- If you are inviting Jewish guests it is best to discuss with them what will be acceptable.
- If you are inviting Jains remember that they are strict vegetarians because of their careful adherence to the principle of non-violence. They do not eat eggs and some do not eat consume milk or milk products. In addition, honey is forbidden because of the violence done to bees in its collection and root vegetables are not eaten because harvesting them destroys the whole plant.
- Non-Muslims inviting Muslims should remember that they do not eat pork products and that meat must be halal.

Make sure that you have signs to indicate vegetarian/vegan food, and food containing ingredients to which guests may be allergic, such as nuts. If you are serving food to guests in their seats, make sure you cater for their dietary requirements. You should ideally have records of which guests require vegetarian/vegan/nut-free dishes and where these guests are seated.

Make sure that you brief volunteers to maintain high standards of hygiene and safety throughout. For example, volunteers working with food must make sure they wash their hands regularly; any food being cooked or reheated must be piping hot all the way through; cold cooked food should be kept chilled.

Funding

Depending on the size, format and venue of your event you may find that it is difficult for your group to meet the costs. You may want to consider the following possible sources of support:

- Look for sponsors. Local businesses may be willing to offer goods or services for free. For example, grocery shops and small supermarkets may be

willing to help with food. Offer to add the logos of your sponsors to your promotional materials.

- It is worth investigating any relevant funding available from the local council. Search their website and phone to check if there is anything available. You could also contact your local support and development organisation which may direct you to funding opportunities.³
- The Funding Central website may also be helpful:
<http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Default.aspx>
- The Big Society Network lists a variety of possible sources of funding:
<http://thebigsociety.co.uk/what-is-big-society/faq/>

Materials

Aside from publicity materials think about and prepare the following:

- A little event booklet to hand out at the event, giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events
- A printed sheet/leaflet of FAQ's on Ramadan and fasting for guests (see Appendix 10)
- Feedback forms so that you can learn from people's experiences (see Appendix 7 for sample form)
- An introductory presentation

Extras

You could add interest to your event by organising some additional features to compliment the dinner. Possible ideas that can be incorporated into your evening are given below:

Recitation of the Call to Prayer/Observation of Prayer

Exposing your guests to the call to prayer for the Maghrib prayer with which the fast is broken can be an interesting experience. Provide a translation either by reading the translation afterwards, by projecting the translation onto a screen/wall or by including a translation in the event programme booklet.

If your volunteers and Muslim guests are comfortable being observed, observing the Maghrib prayer can give visitors a privileged insight into the practices of their Muslim

³ Find your local organisation through <http://www.navca.org.uk/membersdirectory> (England)/ http://www.voluntaryactionscotland.org.uk/third_sector_interfaces.html (Scotland)/

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/grants/voluntary/contact/?lang=en> (Wales)

Local support and development organisations are organisations that provide support to voluntary organisations and volunteers in a particular borough, district or city. They provide a range of valuable resources, from free or affordable training to networking and funding opportunities.

hosts and a fuller experience of the fast-breaking meal. You will need to plan where people will go to pray and where people will stand/sit to observe. Provide at least a few chairs for elderly/disabled guests.

Displays – Posters, Artwork, Notices, Children’s Work, Photos

Provide displays to give people something extra to look at. You may like to make a display giving information on Islam, such as a colourful and informative display on the Five Pillars. Children may like to contribute pictures or posters, and photos from other community events are always interesting. Invite any partner groups to contribute displays/photos.

Stalls – Books, Magazines, Leaflets, Artefacts

You may wish to put out a stand of leaflets and publications for sale. Take care over the choice of publications to include. Your guests should feel that they are being invited, in a spirit of conversation, to explore Islam and understand it better, not that you are trying to convert them.

Traditional Islamic products and artefacts for sale can also add colour to the programme. Possible items include: jewellery, rosary beads, Islamic art/calligraphy, bookmarks, keyrings etc.

Music, Nasheeds, Poetry

You may want to play some soft music, for example, a recording of Nasheeds or Sufi Qawwalis. You could even organise a performance of music or poetry by local children/a local music group.

You will need a Temporary Event Notice if your event will include the performance of a play, an exhibition of a film, the performance of live music or the playing of recorded music (except for background music) and your venue does not have a premises license.⁴

If you are going to play recorded music you will need a licence from the Performing Rights Society.⁵

Rotating Quotes on a Screen

⁴ You will need to fill in a Temporary Event Notice form and send it to the Council’s Licensing section, and to the local police, a minimum of ten working days before the event. The Licensing section will be able to give you the appropriate form and advise you on whom you should send the police copy to. An individual can apply for up to five TENs in a year, and a single premises can be used up to twelve times. Currently an application costs £21.

⁵ The PRS for Music website (<http://prsformusic.com>) has a “Charity and Community” section (<http://prsformusic.com/users/businessesandliveevents/musicforbusinesses/charityandcommunity/Pages/default.aspx#10>). You can call them on 08453093090 or can request a callback via the website.

A PowerPoint display of inspiring quotes projected onto a screen or wall while people are arriving and mingling provides extra interest. Including quotes from diverse sources will add to an atmosphere of sharing and mutual respect. You could use quotes from religious texts and from inspirational figures such as Rumi, Gandhi and Mother Theresa. You can refer to the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual for further ideas.

Speeches

If you have VIPs coming, you may want to invite them to make a speech. Guests should be asked to keep speeches succinct. Include them in your printed programme.

Gift Packs

Think about giving your guests a little gift pack to take home. You could include a copy of your event booklet, a short pamphlet/introduction to Islam and a wrapped sweet such as Turkish delight or other sweets traditional to the culture of the evening's hosts.

Event Essentials

Attention to detail can determine the success of your fast-breaking dinner. Below are some essential details worthy of your attention.

The Venue and Seating

Make sure the venue is very clean and aired and decorate it. If possible bring in some flowers or plants.

You may wish to use a seating plan to ensure that people have a chance to get to know people from different groups over dinner. If you do not have a seating plan ensure that volunteers sit amongst guests at the meal.

It may be easier for people to engage in conversation if you are able to provide numerous small tables rather than just one or two long ones.

Health and Safety

Appoint a health and safety coordinator to talk through health and safety with the volunteers and make sure that they know what to do in an emergency.

Appoint a fire warden. Check that your fire alarm is working and that fire exits are fully accessible and clearly signposted.

Make sure that you have a well-equipped first aid kit and that your volunteers know where it is.

Make sure you have a qualified First Aider on site in the event of an emergency.⁶

When introducing the event remember to include safety information, including the location of fire exits.

Guests

Make sure there are some volunteers whose responsibilities include simply taking time to chat to visitors. They may have another minor role too, but their main responsibility should be to talk to your guests.

Make sure that there are people at the door to welcome people in and to thank them for coming as they leave. Don't let people just drift out without feeling that their attendance has been appreciated.

Leave out a visitors' book/contact list and invite guests to add their details to it. You may wish to include a column that they can tick if they wish to help at future events.

Feedback Forms

Remember to prepare and print these in advance and make sure that guests fill them out shortly before the end of the evening.

Filming and Photography

Try to take as many photographs as possible on the day for use on your website and in future newsletters and articles. Investing in a professional photographer can be worthwhile if you are likely to use the photos for future publications, brochures etc.

Filming of parts or the entire event can also be a useful resource later.

Try to record some interviews with attendees offering reflections and feedback on their experience at the end of the event.

At the beginning of the event, inform guests that there will be some photography and filming during the evening and explain the purpose of this.

To Remember on the Day

Today is the most important part. If you look after your guests well today and establish a friendly atmosphere your event could make a real contribution to intercultural understanding and friendship. All your hard work will be worthwhile.

⁶ St John's Ambulance (<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses.aspx>) and the British Red Cross (<http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/>) provide a range of first aid courses. Local branches can also offer first aid cover for events at competitive rates.

If you know a doctor or nurse personally you could ask him/her to be present at the event and provide First Aid cover. Or perhaps another local community group would be able to provide an appropriate volunteer.

See <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Accidents-and-first-aid/Pages/Introduction.aspx> for a First Aid guide.

Smile! There is no substitute. It will make people feel welcome.

Keep everything clean and tidy.

Talk to your guests. Be friendly; approach people. Resist the temptation just to talk with the other volunteers.

Make sure everyone knows exactly what their job is and is confident doing it.

Checklist

Planning: Why, What, How, When, Where

(At least 2- 3 months in advance)

- Set clear objectives for the event: what are you trying to achieve?
- Tell the whole congregation of your mosque/group about the idea and see who is interested in helping to plan the event. Form a planning group to take responsibility for organising the event, but remember to keep the whole congregation updated regularly on how you're doing. Your planning group will need to meet regularly, perhaps once a fortnight with further discussion as necessary between meetings.
- Think of possible partners for the project, such as community groups (whether Muslim or not), religious groups, local stakeholders or businesses. (See the Building Partnerships Community Dialogue Manual for full advice on finding partners.) Meet with potential partners and invite them to join your planning group.
- In your planning group decide on a target audience. Are you simply aiming to attract as many people as possible from the neighbourhood, or will you contact the local church, synagogue, particular stakeholders and community groups...? What are your priorities?
- Set a date. Make sure that no other significant events fall on the same day. If you would like a particular VIP guest to be present to do a speech then it may be worthwhile agreeing the date with them according to their availability. Think of your target audience when setting dates.
- Plan where you would like to hold the event.
- Decide what you want to include in the event and devise your event programme (see "Extras" above, page 50).
- Make a list of all the jobs that need to be done and delegate responsibility for different areas of work: cooking, cleaning and decoration, entertainment etc (see "Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner", page 21).
- Ask suitable people/groups to contribute any "extras" to the event: perhaps someone from the group knows someone in an appropriate music group, or

someone who could give a good introductory speech. Agree on timing and payment.

- Using the rest of the checklist below, prepare an action plan that includes all tasks, big and small, and the dates by which they need to be completed.

Practical Priorities

(At least 2-3 months in advance)

- Find and book a venue.
- Work out what the event is likely to cost altogether.
- Ensure that your mosque's congregation or community group can meet the cost of the event. If the mosque doesn't have a budget for this kind of event, ask for donations from the congregation - after Friday prayers might be a good time.
- Write to the council regarding parking or similar permits if required.

Design

- Design posters.
- Design event booklets (giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events).
- Design A5 invitations.

Publicity and Invitations

(Begin 2-3 months in advance)

- Plan publicity with any partners. If you are organising this event in partnership publicity and attracting guests will be easier. See the *Building Partnerships* Community Dialogue Manual.
- Send letters to the Mayor, councillors, MPs and other important people in your community inviting them to the event; try to give two months' notice.
- Assemble publicity material: invitations, posters, fliers etc.
- Send invitations 1-2 months in advance if possible.
- Give plenty of invitations to the priest of your local church, or the rabbi of your local synagogue and ask him/her to announce the event after a service. Even better, go along and invite the congregation yourself.
- Put up posters advertising the event in local shops, places of worship, Post Offices etc. Where possible leave piles of fliers/invitations for people to pick up. Or use posters with tear-off strips giving essential details of the event and a contact for people to RSVP.
- 4-8 weeks in advance announce the details of the event after Friday prayers

- or other event/meeting and give out invitations to your congregation/group.
- Prepare a press release (see Appendix 3: Sample Press Release and the *Media Engagement Community Dialogue Manual*).
 - Identify and contact as many media outlets as possible two weeks in advance.
 - Follow up with a phone call the week before.
 - 1-2 weeks prior to the event send reminder emails to confirmed guests.

Preparing for Your Fast-Breaking Dinner

- Prepare your Human Resources plan which details all the jobs that need to be done on the day.
- Decide on the type and quantity of food. The initial response generated by the promotion material will give you some indication of attendance levels so that you can start planning.
- Decide to buy or make the food. Consider cost effectiveness as well as effect on the overall quality of the event. If you are buying food from elsewhere check well in advance (at least one month) that your chosen supplier can provide it.
- Take allergies into account; for example, be careful to provide information on whether food may contain nuts.
- Cater for vegetarians.
- Plan where the food will be made, how it will be transported, stored, prepared/heated and served. Make sure that you have all the necessary equipment, serving dishes, implements, oven gloves, kitchen towel, tea towels etc at the right locations.
- Buy/borrow plates, bowls, glasses, cutlery and serviettes as required.
- Find your volunteers and assign them to the various roles. Make sure you have a balance of male and female volunteers.
- Ensure that all volunteers working with food are briefed on maintaining high standards of hygiene, washing hands regularly and wearing gloves, covering any cuts and using separate utensils to serve different dishes.
- Put together and print items to give guests on the day: event booklets, feedback forms and perhaps FAQs sheets. (See Appendix 7: Feedback Form and Appendix 10: FAQs.)
- Prepare an introductory talk for the day. (See Appendix 9 for a sample explanation of Ramadan and the significance of fasting.)

Extras

- Fix length and topic of speeches with any VIPs invited to speak.
- Decide if there will be displays and a promotional stand with books on Islam (free or for sale). If so, make sure you have all you need or order extra materials in good time.
- If you are going to invite guests to observe prayer, plan timing, space for guests and seating.
- If you wish to use a professional photographer or cameraman to capture your events, make sure you book them in advance. Otherwise, find experienced volunteers for photography and filming.
- Select any music you want to play during the event.
- At least one month in advance find out if you need any licences for the event and arrange to obtain them (see “Extras” above, page 50).
- Prepare displays (PowerPoint quote displays, children’s posters, photos of previous events).
- Make sure you have the necessary equipment for playing music and/or for a PowerPoint display (laptop and projector) or show (microphone(s)), as well as any microphones needed for speakers. Test all the equipment in the relevant area.
- Buy/prepare items for gift bags and assemble these

General Practical Preparations

(In the month before the event)

- Make sure that guests have clear information on what to expect on the day: include a provisional programme in the reminder email.
- Buy a visitors’ book and/or a clipboard for a contact list.
- Buy plenty of pens for completing feedback forms and contact lists.
- Check health and safety considerations: fire alarm; accessible, clearly signposted fire exits; limits on numbers; first aid kit; fully informed volunteers. Make sure you have a qualified first aider present. If there is no one among your volunteers, ask a local health professional or see if another community group can provide a volunteer.
- Make sure that there are enough black bags for the rubbish.
- Decide on a photographer/cameraman for the day if using your own volunteers.

(In the final few days)

- Make a list of all the jobs that need to be done on the day and in the final stages of preparation and assign these to specific people.
- Make a list of items that need to be taken to the venue.

- Have a meeting with all the volunteers a day before the event and go through checklists, making sure everyone is clear on what they are doing on the day of the event.
- Prepare or collect the food (the day before or the morning of the event).
- Make sure the venue is thoroughly cleaned and decorated the night before the event.
- Put out a visitors' book/contact list and pens for people to leave contact details and brief comments (including a column that they can tick if they wish to help at future events).

During the Event

- Volunteers should arrive at least one-two hours in advance for final briefing and to assist in preparing the room/layout.
- Volunteers should stick to the job assigned to them to make sure that everything is done properly.
- Guests should be welcomed as they arrive and shown to the assembly area/their table.
- Remember to include safety information in the introduction to the event and to notify guests that photography and filming will be taking place.
- Volunteers should engage with the visitors and NOT group with each other.
- People should speak English on the day as far as possible.
- Keep things clean and tidy, paying particular attention to the area where food is served.
- Before visitors leave someone should ensure that they have signed the visitors' book/contact lists and have filled in their feedback forms and handed them in.
- After the event the volunteers will need to stay to clean the venue and dispose of any rubbish left behind.
- Remember to record interviews with visitors giving reflections and feedback on the event.

Follow-up

- Write thank you letters to anyone who helped.
- Within a week, get in touch with all who came on the day and thank them for attending (see Appendix 8 for sample email).
- Upload photographs from the day on the website, if you have one. Also include any memorable comments.
- Send the link to photographs uploaded onto website in thank you emails.
- Process feedback forms/questionnaires.

- Reimburse any expenses.
- Edit video footage and add to website if required.
- Hold a post-event debriefing meeting with the planning group and volunteers. Evaluate the event and discuss improvements for next time. Ensure that everybody's efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.
- And then, keep in touch with your guests and get to know them better. Suggest that they attend/help with other events.

c) Marquee Events

OBJECTIVE: to encourage friendly intercultural interaction and good will among a broad range of local people by taking fast-breaking hospitality into a very public space

If you have the volunteers and the budget required to organise a large community event in a marquee, it has its advantages:

- Serving food in a public space, such as a park, helps to create a real community atmosphere.
- People enjoy eating outdoors in the summer. It is an ideal opportunity to take advantage of this as Ramadan begins to fall during the spring and summer months.
- Basing the event in a marquee in a public space allows you to invite in passersby and people spending an afternoon in the park. In this way you can reach out to people who may not have planned to attend.
- If you want to cater for a large number of people but have difficulty finding a large enough indoor venue in the local area, a marquee is a helpful alternative.

Varieties of Marquee Events

1. Sit-Down Dinner

You can simply use the marquee as a pleasant alternative venue to a hall and arrange the event in the same way as you would do in an indoor location, with tables, registered guests, food served at a buffet or distributed to the guests at the tables, even a seating plan.

2. A More Informal Option

Advertise the event widely, with posters and fliers and some invitations targeting community groups, religious congregations etc, but don't register guests. Simply arrange a food stall providing meals, and perhaps provide some tables in the marquee for guests to use. A volunteer seated at each table can chat to guests and explain Ramadan, fasting and the event itself.

This option has the advantage of making your event open to passersby. However, to make the event really worthwhile you need to be careful that casual attendees understand the context of the event, and the spirit of dialogue and sharing in which you are offering them a meal.

3. Something Between the Two

Combining the two options above could allow you to achieve a balance between reaching out to local people who may not take the trouble of registering for a dialogue event, and ensuring that a good number of your guests fully appreciate the significance of the meal and the intentions behind it.

You could keep a marquee on your site for three evenings. On two evenings you could cater for registered guests, including local VIPs, providing dinner at tables, and perhaps including extras such as a video, music, speeches etc (see “Extras” above, page 50). On the third evening you could target casual guests and passersby, serving food from a stall or buffet.

Please see the advice and checklist for “Large Community Events: Indoor Venue”, above. These are largely applicable to marquee events.

However, marquee events have their own special planning requirements related to the venue. The amount of organisation required for these events may seem daunting, but Council staff will be able to provide clear guidance on what is needed. It is a good idea to leave plenty of time to plan and organise the event, and to share the work among a number of volunteers.

Using Public Space

Contact the Council

If you wish to use a public space such as a park for your event, the first step is to contact the Council for information and an application form (see Appendix 2 for sample email).

It is a good idea to give as much notice as possible. Try to make sure you contact the Council **at least two months** before the event. Council staff will be able to explain Council requirements and procedures and answer questions you may have along the way.

You may find guidelines available on the council website (e.g.: <http://www.bexley.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4890>)

However, you will generally need to telephone. Search the website for a contact number for a Parks Department, Green Spaces Department or Environment Department, or call a general contact number and ask to be directed to the appropriate person.

The appropriate person in one of these departments will be able to send you full details of what you need to do to use a park or other green space in the borough, town, city,

county or district. You will need to liaise with them during the planning process, fill in the **application form** they supply and possibly meet with them.

Bexley Borough Council provides the application form and extensive guidance online; you can see this example of an event application form and guidance at: <http://www.bexley.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4890>

You May Need to Consider All of the Following:

Insurance

You are likely to need public liability insurance to cover any damage or accident occurring at the event, e.g. due to faulty equipment. The Council will probably specify the value which must be covered by the insurance. You will probably need to provide proof of your insurance policy.

Your contact at the council may be able to provide advice on obtaining insurance.

Licensing

Unless you expect five hundred people or more at any one time at your event, you will not need a Premises License. You are likely to need a Temporary Events Notice (TEN), which is much simpler to obtain. The Council will be able to advise on what is required. You will need to fill in a Temporary Event Notice form and send it to the Council's Licensing section, and to the local police, **a minimum of ten working days** before the event. The Licensing section will be able to give you the appropriate form and advise you on whom you should send the police copy to. An individual can apply for up to five TENs in a year, and a single premises can be used up to twelve times. Currently an application costs £21.

Woking Borough Council gives a helpful explanation of TENs: <http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/licensing/licensingact2/ten>

An example of the form can be found on the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council site: <http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/assets/Licensing/TENform.pdf>

Even if you do not need a TEN in your chosen location (for example, if the location itself has a license covering events like yours) it may be a good idea to inform the local police of your event.

If you are going to play recorded music you will need a licence from the Performing Rights Society. The PRS for Music website (<http://prsformusic.com>) has a "Charity and Community" section (<http://prsformusic.com/users/businessesandliveevents/musicforbusinesses/charityandcommunity/Pages/default.aspx#10>). You can call them on **08453093090** or can request a callback via the website.

Park Fees

You may have to pay a fee to hire space in a park, although there will usually be at least a discount for community groups and charities. You may need to pay a damage deposit or bond in case of damage to the park caused by the event.

Food

If you have caterers providing food you will need to give details to the Council. They will have to be registered with their local authority and may have to have public liability insurance. They may also have to provide a copy of a food hygiene certificate or of part of their last food hygiene inspection report, a risk assessment and a method statement.

If you intend to supply food prepared by volunteers you will need to make sure that everything is done in accordance with the Council's Environmental Health requirements. You will not necessarily need any certificates or qualifications to provide food at your event; you will just need to follow any guidelines given by the Council and provide all the information they ask for.

Risk Assessment

You will almost certainly be required to provide a risk assessment for your event, setting out possible hazards, people potentially affected, measures that you will take to reduce risks etc.

Your Council may provide its own form and guidance. Bexley Borough Council gives risk assessment guidelines and a template online:

<http://www.bexley.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=4328&p=0>

<http://www.bexley.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=4329&p=0>

The Health and Safety Executive also provides guidance: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm>

First Aid

You will probably be required to have at least one qualified first aider present. Check with the council what level of qualification is required. A "First Aid at Work" certificate or an "Emergency First Aid" certificate may be sufficient. If you know a local doctor or nurse personally you could ask him/her to be present for the event and provide cover, or you could arrange cover through a local branch of St John's Ambulance or the Red Cross.⁷

Stewarding

You may have to give details of your plans for stewarding/security, including how you will communicate with your staff/volunteers. The levels of stewarding required will depend on the size of the event and on your particular council.

Electricity

In some cases you may be able to connect to electricity supplies in the park/other

⁷ See footnote 6 above, page 28.

public space. In other cases you will have to obtain a generator. Ask your contact at the council for guidance.

Toilet Facilities

If the park does not have toilets, or if these are insufficient for the numbers you expect, you may be required to hire portaloos. You may need to provide a certain number of accessible toilets for disabled guests.

Premises Inspection

Before the event you will often need to carry out a safety inspection of the site with a park ranger/manager.

Child Protection

If children are performing or helping at the event you may need to provide a child protection policy. See the Charity Commission website for advice (http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Charity_governance/Managing_risk/protection.aspx#4).

You can find sample policies online, for example on the Volunteering England website: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/Core+Themes/ProtectionandSafeguarding/Example+child+protection+policy.htm>

Volunteers working directly with children unaccompanied or for extended periods should have CRB checks (www.direct.gov.uk/crb).

Additional Hints and Tips

- When hosting an informal meal in a marquee in a park, it is worth walking through the park shortly before sunset to inform people of what you are doing and invite them to stay and share some food. You may want to distribute a small flier (A5 or A6 size) giving brief information on the event for people to read. Otherwise explaining in detail to everyone you meet may take a while.
- Be careful to explain the significance of the meal to casual guests. Small fliers providing brief information can be very useful. It is worth discussing what you will say with your group of volunteers and identifying the key messages you want to convey.
- Ensure that there is a suitable area for people to pray, within the marquee or close by, and that there are washing facilities nearby.

3. University Events

a) Small University Events

OBJECTIVE: to increase interaction between students of different religious and cultural backgrounds and strengthen the sense of community among students

If you are a student, why not share a fast-breaking meal with a few course-mates or neighbours? Take the opportunity to initiate interaction with people living or working around you whom you have never got to know well. Invite your guests in person or take them a personalised invitation.

Checklist

- Invite your guests at least a fortnight before your proposed date, and have alternatives ready to suggest.
- As soon as the invitation is accepted check whether any of your guests are vegetarian or vegan or have allergies or major dislikes. Food allergies may be dangerous, so be very careful about checking ingredients for an allergy-sufferer.
- Make sure your room or the room you are using is clean and tidy. Decorating it, for example by bringing in some flowers, will make it especially welcoming and enhance the evening.

Hints and Tips

- Do as much preparation as possible in advance to avoid stress at the last minute. Plan shopping and preparation for the meal at least a week before the meal.
- The fact that you have invited your neighbours to share this special experience with you may arouse some curiosity in your guests. Be prepared to answer any questions they may have regarding the month of Ramadan and fasting. (Appendix 10 suggests answers to some FAQs.)
- After you break your fast, you may wish to be excused to carry out your Maghrib prayers. Think about whether you would like your guests to witness you praying if appropriate. If so, then be prepared to answer any questions that may arise from their curiosity.

b) Large University Events

OBJECTIVE: to encourage friendship and understanding between students and lecturers of different faiths and cultures, and between different student societies

To promote interaction and dialogue on a bigger scale, organise a larger event with friends or with one or more of the university's societies, perhaps in partnership with a different faith group. Working in partnership with another group is an excellent way of getting to know them. You could advertise with posters or fliers in the Student's Union, common rooms and halls of residence and hand out fliers after lectures or meetings. To maximise attendance it may be worth posting invitations to individuals. You could ask the university chaplain or a member of a relevant society to pass on invitations, or go along to a service/meeting in person to invite the congregation/group.

Please see the advice and checklist for “Large Community Event: Indoor Venue” above. These are largely applicable to university events.

Additional Hints and Tips

- If you don't know how to book a room for the event check in the university handbook, if you have one, or on the students' website, or students' section of the main university website. Or ask a tutor, chaplain or student union representative.
- If you need to ask guests for contributions, check with the person in charge of room bookings whether you can do this at the event, and in what form. It may be, for example, that you are not allowed to charge for entry in a university venue, but that you can bring a collection tin and ask for donations.
- A university event on Friday or Saturday evening is likely to be competing with many other events. You may attract more people by holding it on a different evening. Or make sure you advertise it very early on, so that it is the first event that goes into people's diaries for that weekend.
- Try to get a diverse mix of guests. University lecturers and support/admin staff can also be invited to share in the spirit of a fast-breaking dinner as well as students.



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Appendices

You can copy materials from appendices via:

www.dialoguesociety.org/publications

03

Sample Email for Contacting Your Local Church, Synagogue or Other Faith/Community Group

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing to you on behalf of [Name of Organisation] to request the attendance of your [congregation/group] at a Fast-Breaking Dinner in [Month].

During the Islamic month of Ramadan Muslims fast between dawn and dusk, breaking the fast just after sunset in a joyful meal with family and friends. In a spirit of friendship and respect we would like to share this happy meal with the wider community and to give others a sense of the spirit of Ramadan. We have no intention of trying to convert or change anyone; we simply wish to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding and community spirit in the local area.

The event will be held on [Date] at [Time] in [Venue]. We expect at least [Number] guests. We very much hope that members of [Their Organisation] will be able to attend.

We would also be delighted if any members of your [congregation/group] would be willing to work with us as we organise the event. We feel that working in partnership is a wonderful way for different groups and individuals to get to know each other, and we would love to get to know members of your group through this project. We are holding regular planning meetings, and would like to invite any interested individuals to join us at the next meeting, which will be held at [Time] on [Date] at [Location]. Please do pass this invitation on to your [congregation/group] and ask them to contact me for any further information. Alternatively, perhaps I could attend a [service/meeting] within the next couple of weeks and issue the invitation in person?

If it is possible for me to visit I will bring written invitations for the meal itself as well as fliers with details of the planning meeting. I could, alternatively, provide you with invitations to distribute to your members.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm wishes,

[Name Surname]
[Address]
[Telephone]
[Email]

Sample Email to the Council Inquiring About the Use of Public Space for a Marquee Event

Dear [Title Surname],

I am writing on behalf of [Your Organisation] to enquire about using public space in [Borough/Town/County/Area] for a community fast-breaking dinner event this [Month]. Ideally, the event would take place from [Time] to [Time] on [Date(s)]. If possible, we would like to hold it in [Name of Park].

[Give brief details of your organisation and explain the project. For example: The Dialogue Society is a registered charity founded by second generation British Muslims in 1999. It aims to advance social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. This event is intended to promote intercultural understanding and community spirit in the local area.]

During the Islamic month of Ramadan Muslims fast between dawn and dusk, breaking the fast just after sunset in a joyful meal with family and friends. At a community fast-breaking dinner Muslims can share this special, celebratory event with local people of different cultural and religious backgrounds, bringing diverse people together in a spirit of friendship and respect. We have no intention of trying to change or convert anyone. Holding a fast-breaking event in a park would be a perfect way to reach out to those who might not respond to invitations to a more formal event in an indoor venue. Further, it is an advantage to be able to host different people on common ground- public space that is shared by all, and where no one should feel excluded.]

We would hope to host between [Number] and [Number] local people at the event [each day], serving simple but delicious hot meals at tables set up beneath a marquee. [We hope to be able to provide home-cooked meals prepared by volunteers/We plan to use [Name of Caterers] for the catering.] We would possibly have some background music from local acoustic ensembles. We would give out leaflets explaining the (non-proselytising) aims of the event, and giving an explanation of Ramadan and fasting. Essentially the event would consist of a friendly communal meal with conversation and perhaps unobtrusive background music.

We would need an electricity supply as well as a marquee. Perhaps you could advise us on whether we could obtain electricity through the Council and on whether we will need to provide toilets in addition to those in the park.

I would be very grateful if you could send me information on use of green spaces in [Borough/Town/County/Area] along with any application forms and advice.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]
 [Address]
 [Telephone]
 [Email]

Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hackney Muslims Invite All to Help Them Break Their Fast

Community fast-breaking dinner to bring local people together

(Hackney, [Date, Year]) On [Date] a group of volunteers from the Hackney Somali Community Centre will be offering a free meal to all comers from a marquee erected for the purpose in nearby Pymmes Park. Members of All Saints Church Hackney will be joining them in their efforts to enhance community spirit and social cohesion through the sharing of food. Food will be distributed from [Time], shortly after sunset, when Muslims fasting during Ramadan break their fast.

The evening will be the last of three events. On the two previous evenings registered guests will gather in the marquee for a sit-down meal. VIP guests will include the Worshipful the Mayor of Hackney, Cllr [Name Surname] and [Name Surname] MP. The organisers hope to reach out to a broader range of local people through the informal format of the final evening. Music will be provided every evening by local folk group [Name of Group] and by [Name of Youth Choir].

[Name], Director of the Community Centre, said: “We at the Hackney Somali Community Centre are looking forward to sharing this special meal with visitors from the area, whatever their beliefs or culture. Ramadan is a time for sharing and fellowship, and we want to give our non-Muslim neighbours a chance to experience this. We are delighted to have the help and support of our dear friends at All Saints Hackney.”

Cllr [Name Surname] of Hackney Borough Council said: “I welcome this initiative of the Hackney Somali Community Centre. In a time when we hear so much about mistrust and resentment between cultural and religious groups, this sort of positive action to build goodwill is just what our communities need. To see a primarily Muslim community centre working in partnership with its local church on this project demonstrates so clearly the potential for positive collaboration between people of different faiths.”

#Ends#

Notes to editors

1. For further information contact [Name Surname], Co-Director of the Hackney Somali Community Centre.
2. The Hackney Somali Community Centre was founded in [Year]. It aims to further the welfare, education and integration of the Somali community through a range of resources, services and activities, and to contribute to the local community as a whole through services and events. See [Website].
3. All Saints’ Anglican Church, Hackney, is a diverse community of Christians with a strong history of commitment to social justice and intercultural relations. See [website]. Contact the vicar, [Name Surname] on [email address].

Sample Invitation Texts for Paper Invitations

To a Neighbour, For a Dinner at Home (you could simply write your message on an invitation card):

Dear [Name/Title Surname] and family,

We would like to invite you to join us for a Ramadan fast-breaking dinner. Please come and share some traditional [specify type, for example: Turkish] food with us on [Date], ([Time]).

If you are not free perhaps we can arrange another time.

We hope you can come!

Warm wishes,

The [Surname] family:

[Name], [Name], [Name] and [Name].

Number [House Number]

Tel: [Number]

For a Community Event (you may want to design illustrated A5 invitations with some version of this text and print multiple copies for distribution):

You are warmly invited to a
FAST-BREAKING DINNER

At [Venue], [Address], [Date] at [Time]

Come and experience the spirit of Ramadan and share this happy meal
with your neighbours

We will be sharing a meal of traditional home-cooked
[specify type, for example: Turkish] cuisine

Please state any dietary requirements and/or allergies
We look forward to seeing you!

RSVP: to [Name Surname]:

Email: [Email Address]

Tel: [Number]

Sample Letter of Invitation to a Local VIP

[Your Name]

[Position and Organisation]

[Address]

[Postcode]

[Telephone]

[Email]

[Date]

[Title Name Surname]

[Position and Organisation]

[Address], [Post Code]

Dear [Title Surname],

RE: Invitation to Speak at a Fast-Breaking Dinner, [Date]

On behalf of the congregation and Events Committee of [Organisation], I would like to invite you to attend and give a short speech at a Ramadan Fast-Breaking Dinner provisionally planned for [Time - Time] on [Date] at [Venue].

During the Islamic month of Ramadan Muslims fast between dawn and dusk, breaking the fast just after sunset in a joyful meal with family and friends. In a spirit of friendship and respect we would like to share this happy meal with the wider community and to give others a sense of the spirit of Ramadan. We have no intention of trying to convert or change anyone; we simply wish to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding and community spirit in the local area. We anticipate a good turnout and look forward to welcoming local people from all walks of life. We will be inviting a range of other local stakeholders and the local press.

[Give a brief explanation of your organization. For example: The Central Wimbledon Mosque has a daily congregation of two hundred people and on Friday prayers it attracts more than one thousand worshippers. The open attitude of the mosque and its people makes a major contribution in fostering interfaith and intercultural understanding in the local community.]

We would be honoured to have your presence for the evening, and would like to extend the invitation to your wife/husband/partner and family. If you would be prepared to say a few words after dinner (a short speech of just 5 minutes would suffice) we would very much like to hear your reflections on the evening.

The date is yet to be definitively fixed. Should you be unable to attend on the proposed date we would be happy to discuss other possibilities close to that date.

Please contact me by telephone or email to confirm your attendance, or for further information. If you are able to join us please let me know of any dietary requirements.

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]

[Position]

[Organisation]

Sample Email of Invitation to a Local Stakeholder

Dear [Title Surname],

On behalf of the congregation and Events Committee of [Name of Organisation(s)], I would like to invite you to a Ramadan Fast-Breaking Dinner to be held from [Time] on [Date] at [Venue].

During the Islamic month of Ramadan Muslims fast between dawn and dusk, breaking the fast just after sunset in a joyful meal with family and friends. In a spirit of friendship and respect we would like to share this happy meal with the wider community and to give others a sense of the spirit of Ramadan. We have no evangelical intentions; we simply wish to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding and community spirit in the local area. We anticipate a good turnout and look forward to welcoming local people from all walks of life. We will be inviting a range of other local stakeholders and the local press.

[Give a brief explanation of your organization. For example: The Central Wimbledon mosque has a daily congregation of two hundred people and on Friday prayers it attracts more than one thousand worshippers. The open attitude of the mosque and its people makes a major contribution in fostering interfaith and intercultural understanding in the local community.] We hope that the fast-breaking dinner will be an enjoyable way of bringing the local community together.

I do hope that it will be possible for [the local police force/the health centre/the school/the university] to have a presence at the event. I am writing to a number of your colleagues, and would also like to extend the invitation to your [wife/husband/partner and family]. If you would like to bring any relevant literature you are welcome to do so; there will be a table and pin board where local community groups and stakeholders will be able to place leaflets and posters. If this is of interest please drop any materials off to me by [Date (a week before the event)].

Please contact me by telephone or email to confirm your attendance, or for further information. If you are able to join us please let me know of any dietary requirements.

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]
[Address]
[Telephone]
[Email]

Sample Event Feedback Form

Fast-Breaking Dinner Feedback

For each question please tick the box closest to what you feel.

Were you made to feel welcome?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very <input type="checkbox"/> Not very	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
How well were Ramadan and fasting explained?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very well <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well	<input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> Poorly
Were the aims of the event made clear?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very <input type="checkbox"/> Not very	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you feel that it achieved those aims?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, entirely <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> No
How closely did the event follow the advertised programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> Entirely <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well	<input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all
How was the entertainment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> OK	<input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Not so good
How was the food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> OK	<input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Not so good
Would you want to come to another community event like this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Definitely <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe	<input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input type="checkbox"/> No
Where do you expect to see the people you met today again?	<input type="checkbox"/> We have arranged to meet <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting a religious service <input type="checkbox"/> At another event like this <input type="checkbox"/> Nowhere	
<p>Please add any comments:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		
Thank you!		

Sample Thank You Email for Attendees

Dear [Title Surname/First Name (depending on whether you spoke on first name terms at the event)],

I am emailing on behalf of [Name of Organisation(s)] to thank you for attending our Ramadan Fast-Breaking Dinner. It was a pleasure to meet you and we really appreciate your support for our event. I hope that we will meet again before long.

There are now some lovely photos of the event on our website, along with some comments from a range of participants.

We are planning to hold another event to bring the community together. [Briefly explain what the event is.] If you would like to help in any way with this event, provisionally planned for [Date], I would love to hear from you. We will be having our next planning meeting on [Date].

I will send details of the event itself nearer the time and hope to see you then if not before.

Once again, many thanks for your support.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

Sample Explanation of Ramadan and the Significance of Fasting

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar, based on the phases of the moon. Ramadan has special significance for Muslims because it is the month during which the Qur'an, God's direct revelation spoken through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him), was revealed. It is also believed that the gates of Heaven stand open during this month, while the gates of Hell are closed with the devils chained up inside.

You may have heard of the five pillars of Islam, the five key practices of Muslim life. One of the five pillars of Islam is the fast during Ramadan, called *Sawm*. Muslims are called to fast from dawn to sunset every day during this month. During the hours of the fast eating, drinking, smoking and sexual activity are all prohibited.

Children who have not yet reached puberty are not expected to fast. Adults who are unwell, very old, pregnant, breastfeeding, menstruating or travelling are also excused, but where possible they should make up the days of fasting later, or give a gift to the poor instead.

The Qur'an itself contains this call to fasting:

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous. (Al-Baqarah Chapter 2: Verse 184)

Many Muslims take up this challenge to fast and become more righteous during Ramadan. Fasting can help people to appreciate God's blessings, lead them away from the temptations of the physical world and help them to "favour the heart as opposed to the flesh."⁸ Ramadan is a time for thankfulness (*shukr*), for self-examination (*muhasaba*), and reflection (*taffakur*) on life, the world, and the works of God. In addition to fasting some Muslims attend long night prayers called *Taraweeh* prayers. Some go into seclusion for the last ten days, focusing on reflection and worship. It is during this time that the day of the Qur'an's initial revelation is said to fall, although the precise day is not known.

Fasting can also be a means of solidarity with those who live with poverty and hunger all year round. Experiencing hunger can help people to understand the sufferings of others and see the importance of supporting those in need. The great Muslim theologian Al-Ghazali noted that "the man sated is liable to forget those people who are hungry and to forget hunger itself."⁹

Ramadan is also a time for fellowship and sharing. People traditionally break their fasts with a whole series of guests over the month. Ramadan brings people together in goodwill and friendship. This evening, this is the meaning of Ramadan that is foremost in our minds.

⁸ M. Fethullah Gülen, Questions and Answers about Islam, Volume 2, trans. Muhammed Çetin, (The Light, Inc. & İŞK Yayınları: 2005), 22.

⁹ Al-Ghazali, The Revival of the Religious Sciences, book 23, trans. T.J. Winter, (Cambridge Islamic Texts Society: 1995).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is every Muslim supposed to fast?

Not everyone. Children who have not yet reached puberty are not expected to fast. Adults who are unwell, very old, pregnant, breastfeeding, menstruating or travelling are also excused, but where possible they should make up the days of fasting later, or give a gift to the poor instead.

What exactly does the fast involve?

Adult Muslims are required to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual activity from before dawn until sunset each day during the month of Ramadan.

Where did the practice of fasting during Ramadan come from?

The Qur'an calls people to fast:

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous." (Al-Baqarah Chapter 2: Verse 184)

As suggested in this verse, fasting exists in religions founded by other prophets recognised by Islam. Judaism prescribes fasting, most notably on the festival of Yom Kippur.

Is fasting connected to charity in Islam?

Yes. The experience of fasting helps Muslims to become more aware of people who are in need.

Because Ramadan is believed to be a month specially blessed by Allah, good deeds performed during this month, including gifts to the needy, are thought to earn greater rewards. For this reason, *Zakat*, the obligatory annual charitable donation, which is another of the five pillars of Islam, tends to be given during the last days of Ramadan. *Zakat* is a small percentage (usually 2.5%) of a Muslim's excess wealth and is distributed among the poor, needy and other rightful beneficiaries.

The end of Ramadan is also the time of the payment of *Zakat al-Fitr*. This is a payment of a fixed sum, sufficient to provide food for a needy person for a day, regardless of one's level of income. It is intended to ensure that needy Muslims are provided with the means of sharing in the *Eid* feast. Muslims with sufficient means are required (*wajib*) to pay *Zakat al-Fitr* during a particular period: the period from sunset on the last day of fasting until the beginning of *Eid Prayer*.¹⁰

¹⁰ It may be paid prior to this period to ensure distribution in time for the *Eid* feast.

What is special about the month of Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar, based on the phases of the moon. Ramadan has special significance for Muslims because it is the month during which the Qur'an, God's direct revelation spoken through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him), was revealed. It is also believed that the gates of Heaven stand open during this month, while the gates of Hell are closed.

Why do Muslims like to break their fasts with many different guests?

Ramadan is a special time of fellowship and sharing which strengthens community ties. Breaking fast with different friends and neighbours contributes to this. Also, giving others food to break their fast is believed to be an act that is richly rewarded by Allah.

What are the benefits of fasting?

- For Muslims, the most important benefit of fasting is contentment that they are obeying God in following His call to them to fast.
- It is the best form of exercising will power.
- It triggers spiritual growth, reminding Muslims that all the good things that they enjoy, such as food, come from God and ultimately belong to Him.
- The routine of Ramadan encourages families to spend more time together; they will often share an early breakfast and will spend time enjoying a fast-breaking dinner together each evening.
- Fasting reminds the human self (*nafs*) that it is weak, poor and dependent on God to provide for its basic needs. This opens the door for connecting with and submitting to God.
- The hunger experienced can give the spirit a chance to be free from the dominance of the physical body and to develop.
- Through fasting, the wealthy experience what it means to be hungry, making them more inclined to respond to the needs of those who are hungry and poor.
- In Ramadan, there is a high level of interaction between Muslims: they invite each other to break the fast and see each other in the mosque each evening for special Ramadan prayers. This cements community ties.
- By fasting for thirty days, Muslims learn to control their eating habits. Furthermore, one month of fasting rests our digestive system and other vital organs, especially the liver.

What happens at the end of Ramadan?

It is generally towards the end of *Ramadan* that Muslims give the obligatory annual donation of *Zakat*, which is distributed among the poor, needy and other rightful beneficiaries. At this time Muslims also pay *Zakat al-Fitr*, a small donation intended to provide food for needy Muslims so that they can share in the *Eid* feast.

At the end of *Ramadan* there is a joyful three-day festival (*Eid al-Fitr*). This celebration is a personal celebration which symbolically represents the victory and control one has attained over oneself. It is also a communal celebration where people exchange visits and gifts.

Advice for Attending Religious Services

(For guidance on attending other places of worship, including the mosque, please see the *Celebrating Festivals Community Dialogue Manual*.)

Dress codes vary between religious denominations and even individual churches/synagogues. The congregation of a “high” Anglican church may dress very formally while that of a large Baptist church may come to church in jeans. However, fairly smart, modest dress is unlikely to be out of place in any church or synagogue.

In Church

You can join in with what is being said or sung when it seems appropriate, or keep silent if you feel more comfortable doing so.

Only confirmed Christians take the bread and wine at communion. You would be welcome to go up to the altar rail for a blessing at this point, but as the blessing makes reference to God as Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the priest often makes the sign of the cross you may prefer just to stay in your seat. It is quite usual for some members of the congregation to do this.

At the Synagogue

Do not wear a *tallit*, the prayer shawl, as this is a sign of a specifically Jewish obligation to the law. If you are offered one by an usher who is unsure whether or not you are Jewish politely decline it. Men should cover their heads as a sign of respect if the men of the congregation do so. Skullcaps or *kippahs/yarmulkes* will often be provided at the door for those who do not have one. In some Orthodox congregations married women cover their heads with pieces of lace and in some Reform congregations all worshippers wear *kippahs*. If you are a woman and do not cover your hair anyway it is respectful to cover your head in such synagogues. Coverings will often be provided.

In Orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately.

Try to follow the rest of the congregation when they sit and stand but don’t worry if you get it wrong. You can try to follow the service in the *siddur*, service book and the *Humash*, the Torah book. If these are in Hebrew they usually include English translations. They usually begin at what is, in English terms, the “back”.

Join in with the congregation’s words as and when you feel comfortable saying them. Wearing a *kippah* and sitting and standing with the congregation is not an expression of religious allegiance, only of respect. Bowing is a more significant religious act in the synagogue service. If you do not want to join the congregation when they bow, just remain sitting/standing.¹¹ If wine and bread is shared at a Kiddush or blessing after the service you are free to accept or decline it. It does not have the same meaning as in a Christian service; it is just bread and wine that is blessed and shared.

¹¹ Rabbi Daniel Kohn, “What a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guest Needs to Know”, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/BarBat_Mitzvah/Practical_Aspects/Guide_for_Guests.shtml



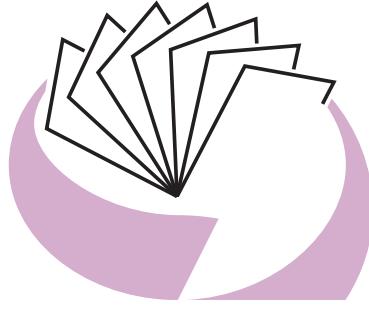
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This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's
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1. Building Partnerships
2. Noah's Pudding
3. Celebrating Festivals
4. Community Fairs
5. Community Engagement Dinners
6. Community Centres Branching Out
7. Speed Dialogue
8. Open Mosque Day
9. Fasting Breaking Dinners
10. Media Engagement

The PDF version of this and the other
manuals in the series can be downloaded
from the Publications page of our website at
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COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MANUAL SERIES

Connecting Communities

A thumbnail for the 'Celebrating Festivals' manual, showing a colorful dish of diced vegetables.	A thumbnail for the 'Building Partnerships' manual, showing two hands holding puzzle pieces.	A thumbnail for the 'Community Fairs' manual, showing a child's face painted with butterfly wings.	A thumbnail for the 'Noah's Pudding' manual, showing a bowl of dessert with a cinnamon stick.	A thumbnail for the 'Community Engagement Dinners' manual, showing a dining hall with red chairs.
A thumbnail for the 'Community Centres Branching Out' manual, showing a collage of colorful sunflowers.	A thumbnail for the 'Media Engagement' manual, showing a stack of newspapers.	A thumbnail for the 'Fast-Breaking Dinners' manual, showing a group of people at a long table.	A thumbnail for the 'Open Mosque Day' manual, showing the interior of a mosque.	A thumbnail for the 'Speed Dialogue' manual, showing people at a round table.



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