

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Scope

- **Policy Statement**
 - **The Policy**
 - Accessibility
 - Protected Characteristics
 - Types of Discrimination
 - Recruitment and Selection
 - Monitoring and Audit
 - **Related Policies**
 - **Related Guidance**
 - **Training Statement**
-
- **Part Two of this policy is intended as an aide-mémoire for staff who are involved in meeting the needs of any ethnic minority group, it is not exhaustive**

Policy Statement

Since coming into force in October 2010 this legislation is probably the least understood and most widely misrepresented. The Act is phrased due to its complex and overarching legal framework, replacing over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. The Act simplifies strengthens and harmonises the current legislation (pre-2010) to provide Britain with a discrimination law, which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and equal society. The 9 main pieces of legislation that have merged are:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
- The Equality Act 2006 Part 2
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2007
- The Gender Recognition Act 2004

As an organisation, we are aware of the importance of this Act in relation to service users and staff and the good governance of the organisation generally.

The Policy

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) from time to time, publish guidance and develops different Codes of Practice in line with a timetable set by the government. The basis upon which the Equality Act is structured is Protected Characteristics and how they apply both in the workplace and in everyday life.

This organisation is committed to promoting Equality and Diversity throughout its operations through robust policies and procedures, training and ongoing review to ensure our service is accessible to all.

Accessibility

This organisation strives to ensure that its services are accessible to all people. This includes a commitment to the accessible information standard, where information will be provided in the format of choice to ensure people can make informed decisions and feel free from discrimination.

Improving the accessibility of standard information documents is vitally important. Removing jargon, keeping the language simple, developing Easy Read, etc., all assist staff by education and awareness-raising and are the foundation of good accessibility. The following 'Top Tips' are intended to support the organisation and our staff to make their information and communication more accessible and inclusive.

- Clear face to face communication.
- Printed information provided in an accessible format i.e. Language of choice or easy read.
- Key Word signing systems such as Makaton and Signalong

People are treated as individuals and not discriminated in respect of their protected characteristics and this will be supported by staff training, awareness and ongoing review of our policies and procedures.

Protected Characteristic: Definitions

Age

This means a person or persons belonging to a particular age group. An age group includes people of the same age and people of a particular range of ages. Where people fall in the same age group, they share the protected characteristics of age.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people of all ages. However, different treatment because of age is not unlawful direct or indirect discrimination if it can be justified. i.e. if it can be demonstrated as a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim. Age is the only "Protected Characteristic" that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

Disability

Within the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. For the Act, these words have the following meanings:

Substantial means more than minor or trivial.

Long-term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (special rules are covering recurring or fluctuating conditions).

Normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act.

The Act puts a duty on you as an employer to make reasonable adjustments for your staff to help them overcome the disadvantage resulting from an impairment (e.g. by providing assistive technologies to help visually impaired staff to use computers effectively).

The Act includes protection from discrimination arising from disability. This states that it is discrimination to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something arising from or in consequence of their disability (e.g. a tendency to make spelling mistakes arising from dyslexia). This type of discrimination is unlawful where the employer or other person acting on behalf of the employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that the person has a disability. This type of discrimination is only justifiable if the employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Disabled people are also protected from indirect discrimination. This means that a job applicant or employee could claim that a particular rule or requirement an employer has in place disadvantages persons with a disability. Unless this can be justified, it would be unlawful.

The Act also includes a provision that makes it unlawful, except in certain circumstances, for employers to ask questions about a candidate's health before offering them work.

Progressive conditions are considered to be a disability

There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions. People with HIV cancer or multiple sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis. People with some visual impairments are automatically deemed to be disabled. Where people share the same disability, they share the protected characteristics of disability.

Gender Reassignment

This is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as to where a person has proposed, started or completed a process to change their sex. A transsexual person has the protected characteristics of gender reassignment.

A woman making the transition to be a man and a man making the transition to be a woman both share the characteristic of gender reassignment, as does a person who has only just started the process of changing their sex and a person who has completed the process. Another example would be a person taking steps to identify as non-binary. We do not discriminate against any person on the grounds of their gender, including whether a person is an intersex, non-binary or transgender.

At present, the Gender Recognition Act of 2004 allows people to gain full recognition of their new gender. This legal recognition enables people to obtain a new birth certificate that shows their new gender allowing them to adopt almost all the legal rights which are given to that sex, including equal marriage rights.

Once a trans person has received a Gender Recognition Certificate they are able to change their birth certificate and are treated as that gender. A Gender Recognition Certificate exists solely for the purpose of changing the person's birth certificate and

the act specifies that it is unlawful to request to see a Gender Recognition Certificate for any other means. As a professional, it is also unlawful to disclose that a person has or has applied for a Gender Recognition Certificate except in very exceptional circumstances (such as medical emergencies or where the information is essential for investigating a crime).

Marriage and Civil Partnership

This refers to people who have the common characteristics of being married or of being civil partners. A heterosexual man and a heterosexual woman who are married to each other and a man and another man who are civil partners and a woman and another woman who are civil partners all share the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership.

- People who are not married or civil partners do not have this protected characteristic.
- A person who is engaged to be married is not married and therefore does not have this protected characteristic.
- A divorcee or a person whose civil partnership has been dissolved is not married or in a civil partnership and therefore does not have this protected characteristic.

Pregnancy and Maternity

An employee remains protected in their employment during the period of the pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which they are entitled. This is separate from protection on grounds of sex and discrimination in connection with pregnancy and maternity would be brought under this ground. It is unlawful to treat an employee unfavourably because of any period of absence due to pregnancy-related illness.

Race

For the Act 'race' includes nationality and ethnic or national origins. People which have or share characteristics, of colour nationality or ethnic or national origins can be described as belonging to a particular racial group. Examples include:

- Colour includes black or white.
- Nationality includes being a British, Australian or Swiss Citizen.
- Ethnic or national origins include being from a Roma background or of Chinese heritage.
- A racial group could be 'Black Britons' which would encompass those people who are both black and who are British citizens.

Religion or Belief

This covers people with religious or philosophical beliefs. To be considered a religion within the meaning of the Act, it must have a clear structure and belief system. The Act includes the following examples: the Baha 'I' faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Rastafarianism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

To be considered a philosophical belief for the Act, it must be:

“Genuinely held; be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint; be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour; attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance; and be worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others”

The Act cites as examples of philosophical beliefs, humanism and atheism.

A cult involved in illegal activities would not satisfy these criteria nor would allegiance to a particular football team.

People who are of the same religion or belief share the protected characteristic of religion or belief.

Ethical Veganism

In January 2020 an employment tribunal found that ethical veganism was a philosophical belief and therefore comes under the scope of the legal protection of the Equality Act 2010. Ethical veganism is not just about choices of diet, but rather is where the person has chosen to live, as far as possible, without the use of animal products - for example in what they wear, what personal care products they use and in their hobbies.

Sex

For the Act, sex means being a man or a woman. Men share sex characteristics with other men and women with other women.

Sexual Orientation

This is defined in the Act as a person’s sexual orientation towards:

- People of the same sex as him or her (in other words the person is a gay man or a lesbian).
- People of the opposite sex from him or her (the person is heterosexual).
- People of both sexes (the person is bisexual)

The list for sexual orientation can be extended to include:

- Biromantic – a person who experiences romantic attraction to more than one gender but little or no sexual attraction
- Demisexual – a person who only experiences sexual attraction to people they have a close emotional connection with.
- Pansexual – a person of any gender who is attracted to people of all genders.
- Questioning – a person who is uncertain about and/or exploring their own sexual orientation (and /or gender identity).

People sharing a sexual orientation mean that they are of the same sexual orientation and therefore share the characteristics of sexual orientation.

We do not discriminate on the grounds of any form of sexual orientation.

Types of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a “Protected Characteristic” they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a “Protected Characteristic” (see discrimination by association below).

Example: Paul, a senior manager, turns down Angela’s application for promotion to a supervisor position. Angela, who is a lesbian, learns that Paul did this because he believes that the team, she applied to manage is homophobic. Paul thought that Angela’s sexual orientation would prevent her from gaining the team’s respect and managing them effectively. This is direct sexual orientation discrimination against Angela.

Discrimination by Association

This applies to all characteristics apart from marriage/civil partnership. This is direct discrimination against an individual because they associate with another person who possesses a “Protected Characteristic”.

Example: June works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her mother, who lives at home, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn. This may be discrimination against June because of her association with a disabled person.

Perception Discrimination

This applies to all characteristics apart from marriage/civil partnership. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular “Protected Characteristic”. It applies even if the person does not possess that characteristic.

Example: Jim is 45 years old but looks much younger. Many people assume that he is in his mid-20s. He is not allowed to represent his organisation at an international meeting because the Managing Director thinks that he is too young. Jim has been discriminated against on the perception of a “Protected Characteristic”.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a “Protected Characteristic”. Indirect discrimination can be justified if you can show that you acted reasonably in managing your organisation, i.e. that it is “a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.” A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision you make in running your organisation, but if there is a discriminatory effect, the sole aim of reducing costs is likely to be unlawful.

Being proportionate essentially means being fair and reasonable, including showing that you’ve looked at “less discriminatory” alternatives to any decision you make.

Example: A small finance organisation needs its staff to work late on a Friday afternoon to analyse stock prices in the American finance market. The figures arrive

late on Friday because of the global time differences. During the winter some staff would like to be released early on a Friday afternoon to be home before sunset – a requirement of their religion. They propose to make the time up later during the remainder of the week.

The organisation is not able to agree to this request because the American figures are necessary to carry on the business, they need to be worked on immediately and the organisation is too small to have anyone else able to do the work.

The requirement to work on Friday afternoon is not unlawful indirect discrimination as it meets a legitimate business aim and there are no alternative means available.

Harassment

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant “Protected Characteristic”, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.”

Harassment applies to all Protected Characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Example 1: Paul is disabled and is claiming harassment against his line manager after she frequently teased and humiliated him about his disability. Richard shares an office with Paul and he too is claiming harassment, even though he is not disabled, as the manager’s behaviour has also created an offensive environment for him.

Example 2: Steve is continually being called gay and other related names by a group of employees at his work. Homophobic comments have been posted on the staff notice board about him by people from this group. Steve was recently physically pushed to the floor by one member of the group but is too scared to take action. Steve is not gay but heterosexual; furthermore, the group know he isn’t gay. This is harassment because of sexual orientation.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint; raised a grievance under the *Equality Act*; or are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

There is no longer a need to compare the treatment of a complaint with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

Example: Anne makes a formal complaint against her manager because she feels that she has been discriminated against because of her marriage. Although the complaint is resolved through the organisation’s grievance procedures, Anne is subsequently ostracised by her colleagues, including her manager. She could claim victimisation.

Pregnancy and Maternity

People who are pregnant are protected against unfair workplace practices because of their pregnancy.

Example: Lydia is pregnant and works at a call centre. The manager disciplines her for taking too many toilet breaks as they would any other member of staff, despite knowing that she is pregnant. This is discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity, as this characteristic does not require the normal comparison or treatment with other employees.

Recruitment & Selection

The organisation practices an equal opportunities policy and wishes to recruit and employ those people who are best suited for the vacancies for which they have applied, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, religion and belief, race, disability, maternity and pregnancy, age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership. This will include making reasonable adjustments for interviews for disabled candidates.

To monitor the equal opportunities policy all applications (and their ultimate selection or rejection) are thoroughly reviewed.

Please refer to the separate Recruitment and Selection Policy

Monitoring and Audit

Equality and Diversity will be monitored under our Governance and Quality Management procedures. This will include audits of our processes which will review:

- Policies and Procedures at least annually
- Recruitment records
- Printed Information
- Quality Questionnaires (service users, families, staff and wider stakeholders)
- Complaints
- Training & Competency assessments

Data from monitoring and audit will be analysed to identify themes or trends which will form a service improvement plan if required. This is our commitment to the principles of continuous improvement.

Staff must be aware of the changes in the act and their role concerning service users and colleagues. Within the social care sector, services are often provided which are of a sensitive and private nature. Staff must be made aware of the cultural and ethnic needs of the service users in the delivery of the care to the individual concerned.

Note: This organisation is aware of the specific guidance which is now available to small businesses via the Equality and Human Rights website. Under their "Advice and Guidance" heading there are now specific guidance notes which assist small

businesses and are example led for different situations. This advice and guidance are aimed at all service providers and include guidance about ISSP.

If you provide services through a website such as direct marketing or advertising you are known as an Information Society Service Provider (ISSP).

This organisation takes the advice and guidance regarding discriminatory advertising seriously and regularly reviews any marketing or advertising on its website.

Related Policies

Adult Safeguarding

Equal Opportunities

Dignity and Respect

Female Genital Mutilation

Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Leave

Meeting Needs

Recruitment and Selection

Religion and Belief

Sexuality

Social Inclusion

Related Guidance

Equality Act Codes of Practice:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

Protected Characteristics:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

Discrimination: Your Rights:

<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights>

The Human Rights Act:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/human-rights-act>

The Gender Recognition Act 2004:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/7/contents>

Skills for Care Equality and Diversity:

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/ongoing-learning-and-development/equality-and-diversity/Equality-and-diversity.aspx>

SCIE Equality, Diversity and Human Rights:

<https://www.scie.org.uk/training/co-production/equality-diversity-human-rights>

Report Hate Crime:

<https://www.gov.uk/report-hate-crime>

The Vegan Society: Supporting Veganism in the Workplace Guide to Employers:
<https://www.vegansociety.com/sites/default/files/uploads/downloads/TVS%20Employer%20Booklet.pdf>

Training Statement

All staff, during induction, are made aware of the organisation's policies and procedures, all of which are used for training updates. All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended where necessary, and staff are made aware of any changes. Observations are undertaken to check skills and competencies. Various methods of training are used, including one to one, online, workbook, group meetings, and individual supervision. External courses are sourced as required.

Date Reviewed: March 2024

Person responsible for updating this policy: Hitendra Sharma

Next Review Date: March 2025

Part Two of this policy is intended as an aide-mémoire for staff who are involved in meeting the needs of any ethnic minority group, it is not exhaustive

Guidance on the cultural and ethnic needs of service users should be met in a way that offers privacy, dignity and respect. The attached notes should be the first steps in guiding staff to meet this aim. Further information should be sought where appropriate. The information is set out in such a way that the information can be placed in the service user's file. The *Human Rights Act 1998* and its Articles are considered to be part of the basis for the *Equality Act 2010*.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

PART TWO

African-Caribbean Culture

Background

The term 'African Caribbean' derives from the fact that many Caribbean people regard themselves as Africans, their ancestors having been forced out of Africa and transported to the West Indies to work as slaves. There are many different cultural influences within African Caribbean people as well as the West Indies. The Caribbean islands have been invaded and controlled by various European countries such as France, Britain and Spain.

During the 1950's Britain suffered labour shortages, and as a result, actively encouraged Caribbean people to come to Britain to work. Many of these people have British passports and British citizenship as a result of British colonial governance. Although there are a variety of African communities within Britain, the majority are from the Caribbean.

Language

The European influences on the islands resulted in different languages being spoken, as African slaves were not permitted to speak their language. The three main ones are English, Spanish and French. There are, in addition to these main languages, dialects that have evolved over the years. Patois (pronounced *pat-wa*) and Creole are two such dialects and are languages in themselves. Patois is believed to have developed through the African slaves wanting to talk without their owners understanding them. Both Patois and Creole are continually developing and are used widely within communities. Most Caribbean people living in Britain who originated from countries that are former British colonies speak English.

Religion

The majority of the Caribbean community within Britain are Christians and many attend traditional mainstream Christian churches. Historically many black people were not welcomed into the traditional places of worship, and a preference developed for Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Other religions include Seventh Day Adventists, Islam and Hinduism.

Colonization of the Caribbean islands in the 17th and 18th centuries led to the oppression of the Caribbean people. In an attempt to restore African identity, pride and dignity, the Rastafarian culture developed. Within Rastafarianism, there is a strong emphasis on living in harmony with the natural world. Many Rastafarians abstain from taking alcohol and tobacco. Islam is also a major religion within Africa.

Personal Care and Hygiene

Hair care is particularly important as African hair needs regular specialised care and attention. Washing hair can cause shrinkage, and aggressive drying may break hair. Generally, time is taken to grease, relax and brush hair to maintain it.

Some difficulties may be encountered around shaving due to the thickness of facial hair and there may be particular preferences of shaving methods.

Implications for Care

- Service providers should not assume an African Caribbean's cultural needs and an individual profile should be drawn up.
- Many service users may speak English along with cultural variations, and awareness of this is necessary.
- Preferences of worship need to be respected.
- Extended family and members of the community may play important roles to service users; these contacts should be identified and included, if necessary, in meetings, celebrations, and gatherings.
- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice, storage, preparation and serving of foods.
- Personal care and hygiene are very important and will need specialised products, and additional time allowed.
- Specialised hair products should be made available.
- Time should be provided for greasing and plaiting hair.
- Moisturising and cleanliness are an important part of daily routines for both men and women.
- Hair and beards are not generally cut.
- There may be a preference for same-sex carers, as dressing and undressing in front of people of the opposite sex may be seen as inappropriate.

Buddhism

Small groups of Buddhists have arrived in Britain throughout the centuries from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma. Indian Buddhists and the Hong Kong Chinese came mainly through the new Commonwealth migrations in the 1950s and 1960s. Refugees from Tibet and Vietnamese Buddhists arriving in the 1960s and 1970s have further expanded the number of Buddhists in Britain.

Buddhism was founded on the teachings of SiddhārthaGuatama (also known as Guatama Buddha), a prince in India who left a life of luxury at the age of 29 to embark upon a spiritual quest to understand and alleviate suffering. Whilst meditating he reached enlightenment and became Buddha (the enlightened one). He travelled and taught what he had learnt. Buddha rediscovered the *dharma* (teachings) and is therefore seen as a guide since he did not claim to have written them himself.

Buddhists claim to have found those teachings valid for themselves and achieve them through developing qualities of kindness and awareness, which brings about freedom from pain and suffering, and the ability to help others do the same.

The Five Precepts are the basic rules of living for Buddhists and include the intention to refrain: from harming living beings, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct and misuse of the senses, harmful speech, and drink or drugs.

In Buddhist teachings, the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to overcome unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and each Buddhist aspires to follow it. It includes right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Meditation plays a central role in Buddhist practice. There are two main schools of thought, Theravada and Mahayana although there are many Buddhist traditions, influenced by ethnic origins, schools of thought, and traditions.

Language

In Britain, the vast majority of Buddhists speak English and a variety of languages that reflect their origins. A Buddhist temple or monastery can take many forms and reflects the diversity of the culture. They range from ornate buildings to stark simplistic rooms, large buildings to a room in the home. Despite this, there are common features and each usually contains a statue of Buddha and a characteristic form of Buddha architecture.

A temple is commonly used for religious observance and meditation.

All schools within Buddhism use candles (symbolising the light that the teachings bring to the world); carry out the offering of food, flowers (symbolising impermanence), incense (symbolic of devotion) and water (representing bathing) along with chanting and meditation. This takes different forms within each group though.

A small shrine to the Buddha is often found within a Buddhist home and contains a statue of Buddha usually centrally placed, incense, flowers and candles.

Preferences

Buddhism emphasises the avoidance of killing intentionally, however, there are a variety of different practices within the traditions of Buddhism. Some observe vegetarianism, others do not. The precept of right livelihood excludes trading in flesh and this is not accepted.

The degree to which dietary requirements are adhered to varies amongst the community.

Buddhists prefer to wash their private areas after using the toilet and usually prefer showers to baths.

A Buddhist may refrain from taking medication including painkillers in an attempt to ensure clarity of mind and ability to meditate. Prayers are said both at the time of death and afterwards.

Main Festivals

The Buddhist festivals are based on the lunar calendars of the countries concerned. Some of the festivals vary according to different schools of thought and national origin. The main festivals include:

Uposatha Days – These are observed at full and new moons and on days halfway through the lunar fortnight. Usually observed through a visit to the monastery or temple to pray and study.

Parinirvana (February) – Commemorating the passing of Buddha

Buddha's Birthday – Celebrating the birth of Buddha usually consists of a festival of flowers. Water or sweet tea is ceremonially poured over a statue of the infant Buddha.

Wesak or Buddha Day (May) – Occurs on the full moon in May and commemorates the birth, Enlightenment, and Parinirvana of Buddha. Mahayana Buddhist celebrate these three events on different dates and is also known as Buddha day in the West.

Poson (June) – Celebrate Emperor Asoka bringing the dharma to Sri Lanka and the conversion to Buddhism.

The Rains Retreat (June/July – September/October) – Theravadin Buddhist Monks and Nuns observe this retreat for three months where they remain in one place except for emergencies. Special service days are held to mark the beginning and end.

Asalha or Dharmachakra Day (July/August) – Anniversary of the Buddha's first sermon known as the Turning of the Wheel of the Law, celebrated by Theravadin and Western Buddhists.

Kathina Day (October/November) – Celebrated by Theravadins and follows the Rains Retreat either on its last day or within one month. Monks and nuns are presented with the cloth that is made into a monk's robe that day.

Samgha Day (November) – Celebration of the spiritual community of all Buddhist, usually observed by Western Buddhists by offering flowers, candles and incense.

Enlightenment Day (December) – Mahayana Buddhist celebrate the Enlightenments of Buddha.

New Year – Not usually a religious celebration, however it is a major festival for Buddhists and occurs on different dates depending on the country.

Padmasambhava Day – Occurs in every Tibetan month. Tibetan Buddhists celebrate the founder of Buddhism in Tibet.

Implications for Care

- Service providers should not assume a Buddhist's cultural needs, and an individual profile should be drawn up.
- Dietary requirements will vary, and individuals will need to be asked their preferences.
- Space may need to be made for personal shrines.
- An area of calm and quietness may also need to be allocated for meditation
- Medication should not be administered without explicit consent.
- Washing facilities will need to be available for use after using the toilet.

Chinese Culture

Background

Chinese culture is rich and diverse and includes beliefs, relationships, medicines, language and many other aspects of life.

Across Britain, the Chinese community is relatively dispersed and isolated. In the main conurbations, there can be significant communities (e.g. the Chinatowns in London and Manchester). In other towns and cities, the Chinese community can be relatively small. A significant percentage of the Chinese community work in the catering and restaurant trades. This means their work involves anti-social working hours, further compounding isolation.

Language

The two most well-known Chinese languages are Mandarin (spoken in Northern China) and Cantonese (spoken in Southern China). However, there are many other language groups and dialects. All Chinese speakers have the same written language, but a Mandarin speaker would not be able to verbalise with a Cantonese speaker (unless the conversation was written down).

The written form of Chinese is considered complex, and historical events have meant that literacy in China has only in the recent past achieved above 80%. The Chinese communities in Britain are likely to be literate but similarly to the rest of the population, there may be individuals who cannot read or write.

Religion

Spirituality is a strong feature of Chinese culture, and subsequently, faith continues to be an important aspect of life for many people in the Chinese community in Britain.

Confucianism

Confucianism is a framework of ethics and values—though sometimes described as a religion—that originated with the teachings of Confucius around 2,500 years ago. It is concerned with relationships and obligations. Confucianism establishes the importance of showing respect to individuals who have higher social status whilst conveying the obligation that falls on those who are socially more senior. Such relationships include those between a mother and child, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, ruler and subject etc.

Taoism

Taoism seeks to promote inner peace and harmony. The word Tao could be translated as “the way.” Taoism has various interpretations or branches. The more philosophical approach encourages individuals to shun earthly ways and to focus on the oneness of life.

Other interpretations of Taoism encourage people to pursue good deeds, which are rewarded with happiness, whilst shunning bad deeds, which result in punishment (pain and suffering). Both Taoism and Confucianism reinforce the Chinese values of collectivism and community (both family and society).

Buddhism

Buddhism first entered China about 1,900 years ago. The main Buddhist school in China is Mahayana. Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism include belief in repetitive prayers, heaven and deities who can help people gain salvation.

Christianity and Islam

Both of these religions are evangelical, and so have extended into China. In the Chinese community in Britain, some Chinese people joined Chinese Christian churches to overcome their sense of isolation. About a quarter of Chinese people in Britain are Christians.

Death and Funerals

When a person is near death preparations for their funeral may well start, e.g. ordering a coffin. The social status of the person who is dying or has died will influence the funeral arrangements. If an older person has died then the funeral rites must convey respect. This could entail the family going into debt. If a young adult has died then traditionally the parent cannot offer prayers; only children can perform this rite. In line with this, older members of a family will wash them and dress them in their best clothes. Once the body is placed in the coffin it is not sealed until after the wake.

Family members will gather, traditionally dressed in black, blue or white depending on their particular relationship to the deceased. Close relatives will express their emotions often by crying and wailing.

Incense is often burned and prayers spoken, with verses drawn from Buddhist or Taoist scripture read out if the family are followers of those faiths.

The wake will last at least a day, sometimes longer. At the end of the wake, the coffin is sealed and taken to the cemetery for burial. The family members will follow the coffin to the cemetery. Burial is preferred, although cremation does occur in the Chinese community in Britain, partly for reasons of cost. Traditionally the period of mourning lasts for a hundred days.

Festivals

China adopted the Gregorian calendar early in the 20th Century. However, the Chinese New Year is still calculated using the old lunar calendar.

Chinese New Year (Late January to Early February) – Houses are cleaned and decorated; incense burned. On New Year's Eve families gather and share a meal. At midnight fireworks are let off.

Qing Ming (Early April) – It is a time to show respect for ancestors. Graves of relatives will be visited and tended.

ZhongQiu (Late September/Early October) – Families gather and celebrate with a variety of food traditionally associated with this festival.

Other festivals are also celebrated and these could include festivals associated with faiths e.g. Buddhist festivals.

Food and Diet

The Chinese diet is very different from traditional English cuisine. Rice or noodles are staple aspects of most, if not all, meals. A diverse range of meats and seafood could be eaten, but personal choices based on lifestyle or faith will mean individuals may not eat certain meats. Some Buddhists and Taoists are vegetarian. Nearly all vegetables are cooked; uncooked foods such as salads are Western, not Chinese. Many Chinese prefer boiled water that is left to cool rather than cold water. Chopsticks and a spoon (for soup) are still commonly used.

Personal Care

Physical modesty is very important. Cross-gender contact is generally avoided except between husband and wife.

An older person who has personal care needs is likely to feel most at ease if their daughter provides the care. For many older people in the Chinese community, this is not possible due to family members working long hours or families being dispersed.

Cleanliness is very important to Chinese people. Some Chinese people dislike baths and would prefer body washes or the use of warm running water.

Medicine and Health

Traditional Chinese medicine and health treatments such as acupuncture are well established. Chinese older people may rely almost exclusively on the diagnosis and treatment identified by a Chinese medical practitioner. Family remedies may also be employed.

Younger Chinese adults may blend the use of NHS resources and traditional Chinese medicine.

Implications for Care

- Personal care needs to be provided in a manner that upholds individual dignity.
- Providing an acceptable diet is crucial to the person's sense of health and well-being. This includes drinks provided for them.
- When individuals are ill, they may prefer to access Chinese medical practitioners rather than NHS resources.
- Some Chinese service users will have significant support from family and many family members may visit them especially for festivals.
- Some Chinese service users are very isolated and may feel a mix of emotions about relying on services.

Christianity

Background

Christianity is the largest single religion in Britain. Missionaries from continental Europe introduced Christianity to the British Isles during the first centuries of the Common Era. Christianity was adopted by the Roman Empire in the fourth century, and owing to the geographic scope of the empire, Christianity became a widespread community. The practices and interpretations of Christianity have diverged over its history, and today the three largest groups are Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant. Various denominations are considered Protestant, including Baptists, Anglican, Methodist, Reformed and Lutheran. Additionally, there are significant Pentecostal and Evangelical churches.

Languages

Most Christians in Britain speak English, although other languages may also be spoken as is indicative of the international nature of the religion.

Religion

Christianity is a religion based on the belief that there is one God who created heaven and Earth. The religion is directly and indirectly influenced by the teachings and traditions within Judaism. Christians believe that God came down from heaven to

Earth through the incarnation and took the form of a living Christ (Messiah), Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is regarded as fully human and fully divine without sin. There are different names for him and these include: "Son of God", "Son of Man", "Christ", "Jesus Christ", "Saviour" and "Word of God".

The Bible is the Christian holy book and is divided into two main sections known as the Old and New Testament (covenants). The Old Testament covers the period before Christ, whilst the New Testament is about the time of Christ, the period after his death and his teachings. These scriptures are central to the life of all Christians although their interpretation varies within the different practices of Christianity.

Christians consider the purpose of life is to live according to the model of Jesus' life, which is characterised by sacrificial, and self-giving love. Without the power of God, it is believed that the human being is enslaved to sin. Those who believe in God and Jesus are saved from their sin (salvation) and will join God in heaven.

Some Christians believe that their faith in God is continually tested with temptation and that Jesus was sent to die for them to save them from sin; others believe that doing good deeds and helping others is the basis of salvation and passage to heaven, and others believe that good deeds and faith in God will bring salvation.

A person's entry and acceptance of the Christian way of life is marked by their baptism or Christening. This ceremony occurs at different times in a Christian's life depending on the tradition followed. For example, within the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches the baptism of a person occurs when they are babies or infants; within the Baptist and Pentecostal movements, baptism takes place when the person can make a personal confession of Christian faith.

Within the different traditions, a later ceremony takes place when the person is of an age to be able to confirm their faith. This ceremony varies within the different traditions but generally completes initiation into the way of life and the community. Within the Roman Catholic community, it is known as confirmation, and within Orthodox practices, it is known as chrismation.

Christians worship together or individually at home, at school, or in a community hall. Where groups gather to worship this is called a 'church', and the buildings in which these take place are called churches. Christians worship and pray individually, and some will say prayers before sleeping and upon waking. It is customary to attend church regularly. The holy day, known as the Sabbath, is for most Christians on Sunday, and many will visit the church on this day. However, for Seventh Day Adventist's the Sabbath begins from sundown on Friday, and they attend church on a Saturday. The cross and the crucifix are symbols of the suffering of Jesus and some Christians have these within their homes. Christians may also have images of the Virgin Mary who gave birth to Jesus.

Food Preferences

There are no specific dietary requirements; however, personal choice and preference (i.e. vegetarian) may mean that certain foods may not be acceptable to an individual. Many Christians will eat fish on Friday each week in honour of Christ's deaths. Wine is used within religious ceremonies and is blessed. This blessed wine is seen to be sacred and different from alcohol for everyday consumption. In some churches, any other alcohol is not permitted, whilst others are alcohol-free environments.

Some Christians will say a brief prayer or give thanks to God for the food before eating.

The period of Lent, which leads up to Easter, is for some Christians a time of fasting to mark the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert on a spiritual journey. During this time abstinence from some foods and/or luxuries may be observed.

Personal Care and Hygiene

Dressing and undressing may be particularly embarrassing, and a choice of same sex carers may be preferred. Jewellery is often worn as a symbol of the Christian faith.

Customs

There are clear guidelines within the Old Testament about behaviour, which are known as the Ten Commandments. These relate to respecting neighbours and sexual and marital relationships. Women are seen to be equal; however, as in most societies, gender roles are clearly defined. There is a strong tradition of social concern within the Christian community emanating from the teachings of Jesus and found within the Bible.

Some Christians may find comfort in being read passages from the Bible before dying. As with most religions and cultures, the death of a family member is subject to a period of mourning. There is usually a funeral service with prayers and hymns, and the body is either cremated or buried. After the service, there may be a wake where family, friends and members of the community gather. Refreshments are normally served at this gathering. Family and community members may also visit the bereaved family to offer condolences and pay their respects.

Catholics believe in a final confession before dying and therefore a priest is called to anoint the dying person, to hear the final confession and to pray for the person so that they can make their peace with God. For other Christians, a priest or minister may be called upon for similar reasons.

Main Festivals

The Western Christian churches use the Gregorian calendar, but some festivals are fixed according to the lunar calendar. Most of the main festivals relate to the significant events in the life of Jesus and these can vary within different traditions.

Advent – Celebration of Jesus “coming” into the world and his “second coming” at the end of time. This four-week long solemn preparatory season traditionally begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. Advent also marks the start of the Christian year.

Immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8th December) – Roman Catholics celebrate the belief that Mary, the Mother of Jesus was herself conceived free from original sin to bear Jesus.

Christmas (25th December) – Celebrating the birth of Jesus. Many visit a church and share a special meal with family and friends, exchanging gifts and glad tidings.

Epiphany (6th January) – Commemorates the three wise men visiting Jesus when newborn, and also known as the Twelfth Night of Christmas. Some traditions believe it marks the end of the Christmas period whilst others believe it is the true date of the birth of Jesus.

Shrove Tuesday (February/March) – Also widely known as Pancake Day, this marks the last day before the start of Lent. There are various traditions and cultural customs attached to this day such as the confession of sins before Lent or the using up of food before fasting.

Ash Wednesday (February/March) – The first day of Lent commemorates the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. Christians may attend church, where their forehead is marked with ash as a sign of mortality and penitence before God. Within the Catholic tradition, it is a day of fasting and abstinence.

Lent (February – March/April) – This is forty days, excluding Sundays, between Ash Wednesday and the Saturday before Easter. It is a preparation time before Easter and many will abstain from certain luxuries or foods.

The Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary (25th March) – This celebrates the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that she is to give birth to a son called Jesus.

Mothering Sunday (March) – This is the fourth Sunday of Lent and is also widely known as Mother's Day. Originally it was to commemorate the idea of mother Church. It is now a popular occasion upon which to recognise and thank mothers for all that they do. Many spend time with their mothers and special meals are eaten.

Passion Sunday (March) – The fifth Sunday in Lent, when Christians begin to concentrate their thoughts on the significance of the passion or suffering of Jesus.

Palm Sunday (March/April) – This is the first day of Holy Week and is one week before Easter. On this day Christians are often given pieces of palm leaf in the form of a cross to commemorate Jesus entering Jerusalem days before his crucifixion.

Holy Week (March/April) – The last week of Lent dedicated to remembering the suffering and death of Jesus.

Maundy Thursday (March/April) – The Thursday in Holy Week commemorates the day that Jesus instituted the Holy Communion.

Good Friday (March/April) – The Friday of Holy Week commemorates the day of Jesus' crucifixion and most Christians will attend solemn services recalling how he was betrayed, put on trial and killed for the sins of all people.

Holy Saturday (March/April) – A day of prayerful waiting and preparation for Easter. Some will attend church for the reading of the story of creation and Jesus' resurrection, along with the lighting of a candle and renewal of baptismal vows.

Easter (March/April) – Commemorating the resurrection of Jesus three days after his crucifixion. Many will attend church and receive communion (blessed bread and wine). More secular customs include Easter eggs, which symbolise new life. It is the central Christian festival and is full of joy.

Ascension Day (May/June) – This is celebrated on the fortieth day after Easter, and commemorates Jesus ascending to Heaven. Early morning services are sometimes held on high hills to remember this day.

Pentecost (May/June) – Also known as Whit Sunday; marks the day when Jesus' disciples (followers) were touched by the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire and were inspired to go out and preach the teachings of Jesus to all peoples.

All Saints Day (1st November) – Commemorates all the saints known and unknown.

There are many other Saints and Saints Days remembered by the different traditions.

Implications for Care

- Some may wish to pray soon after rising in the morning and before retiring at night and can be accommodated by allowing additional time.
- Specific dietary requirements will need to be identified.
- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice of foods, storing, preparation and serving of it.
- There may be a preference for same-sex carers, as dressing and undressing in front of strangers can be embarrassing.

Christian community life and belief varies within the different traditions. It is always better to ask individuals what their preferred beliefs are and which festivals are observed

Hinduism

Background

The official languages of India are Hindi and English; there are however over 100 different dialects and languages throughout India, and most schools teach English as a second language. In Britain many younger Indians speak fluent English, although for some it is a second language and the older generations may speak little or no English.

Religion

Hinduism is the main religion in India. The main principles of Hinduism are a belief in God, prayer, rebirth, the law of action (we decide our destiny by our past deeds), and compassion to all living things. Brahman is the supreme spirit of creation and the creator of all Gods. Hindus believe in one eternal God able to take any form. They do not worship the images or forms that God takes but God itself. They believe that life is sacred and taking any kind of life is prohibited. A Hindu's goal is to live a moral and ethical life; through serving fellow men and creatures, they can realise God. If they are not able to realise God in their lifetime, Hindu's believe they are reborn through incarnation to continue their pilgrimage. A Hindu's path through life is called "Dharma". The life of a Hindu is determined by the actions of the previous life and is known as "Karma". It is suggested that bad behaviour in one's life may result in being incarnated in their next life as an insect or as a person with a disability.

Worship can take place within the home or a temple ("Mandir") and is done usually once a day in the morning by one's self. Special religious gatherings and celebrations are communal affairs. Most Hindu families have a sacred shrine in their house; shoes, alcohol and meat are not permitted in this room. Orthodox Hindus do not let meat or alcohol in their home at all. Hindu society is split into four *varnas* (castes) each has its own societal roles. This caste system is defined as Brahmins (priests and teachers); Kshatriyas (rules and warriors); Vaishyas (farmers and merchants); and Sudras (labourers).

Food Preferences

Most Hindus are vegetarian and do not eat meat or animal by-products including gelatine (often found in sweets); those that do might still not eat beef, as the cow is regarded as a sacred animal. Strict Hindus prefer not to eat food prepared outside of the home, as they are unsure as of how far the food meets their requirements. The preparation and storing of vegetarian foods will be seen as contaminated if near meat. The degree to which these strict dietary requirements are adhered to varies amongst the community. Fasting is a regular occurrence within Hindu culture and requires abstinence from some or all foods. There are exemptions, which include pregnant women, older people, people with diabetes or those of ill health. Some Hindus that eat meat and drink alcohol may wish to abstain from these during some of the fasting, where discretion is accepted.

Personal Care and Hygiene

Washing hands and rinsing the mouth before and after eating is considered essential. Hindus also prefer to wash their hands in the same room as the toilet and prefer to wash in free-flowing water rather than sitting in a bath. Many people exclusively use their left hand to clean themselves after using the toilet, as they eat with their right; it is seen as unclean to use the left hand at mealtimes.

Customs

Some Hindus offer food to guests, either invited or otherwise. No visitor should leave hungry. There are traditions as well as religious requirements concerning diets, e.g., some Indians consider it unwise to take milk and citrus fruit when suffering from a cough.

If a Hindu is dying, relatives may wish to bring money and clothes for them to touch before they distribute them to the needy. Some relatives may wish to read to them from one of the four holy books: The Bhagavad-Gita, The Upanishads, The Ramayana, and The Mahabharata. After death the body should remain covered. Relatives may wish to wash the body and put new clothes on; traditionally this ritual is led by the eldest son of the deceased. The mourning period begins immediately on the death of the person and runs for 12 days. During this time family members are not left alone and visitors will visit daily to sit, chat and sing bhajans (hymns). A person is cremated in order to release the soul from the body and allow for its reincarnation (unless they have finally realised God). It is traditional for the body to be brought home 1-2 hours before the cremation for family and community to pay their respects and to allow the priest to perform the last rites.

Some Hindus wear sacred threads and jewellery, which can have great religious significance. Traditional women's dress is conservative – either a sari or Punjabi suit (two-piece cotton or silk dress worn over baggy trousers). A red dot in the middle of the forehead signifies being married.

Naming systems within Hindu culture can be complicated and inappropriate use can cause embarrassment and show disrespect.

Main Festivals

There are many festivals within Hindu culture. The calendar months referred to apply to the Gregorian calendar.

Shivaratri or Mahashivaratri (February/March) – Worship devoted to Lord Shiva. Some may fast. Celebrated by spending a night at the temple chanting, singing, and pouring milk continually over the symbolic form of Lord Shiva.

Holi (February/March) – Festival of colours associated with Vishnu. Celebrated through the lighting of bonfires, attending temple services, throwing coloured water and powders over friends and family.

Yugadi or GuidParva (March-April) – For many Hindus this festival marks the New Year. Feasting and greetings are common, with the consumption of bitter and sweet foods symbolising things in life.

Rama Navami/HariJayanti (March/April) – Celebrating the birth of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu. Ramayana is read aloud in the temples and some may fast.

Janmashtami (August/September) – Marks the birth of Lord Krishna. Hindus may decorate their homes, feast and sing hymns.

Navarati (September/October) – Celebrated differently throughout the Hindu culture this festival lasts nine days and celebrates the different goddesses, and good over evil. Fasting by some is followed by feasting, dancing and storytelling.

Diwali or Deepawali (October/November) – Festival of lights when small lanterns are lit, cards and small sweets exchanged. It celebrates Lord Krishna's victory over the demon, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. In Britain fireworks are also used to celebrate this festival. For some, this signifies the New Year.

Annakuta or NutanVarsh (October/November) – This occurs the day after Diwali and large amounts of sweets and other food are taken to the temple and offered to the deities.

Implications for Care

- Provision of a shrine within rooms for individual prayer and worship may be necessary.
- Shoes will need to be removed before entering a service user's room if they have a shrine.
- Always ask before touching or moving a service user's shrine, this includes cleaning.
- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice, storage, preparation and service of foods.
- Separate cooking utensils and equipment should be used in preparing vegetarian food.
- Use toilets with sinks for washing hands, whenever possible.
- Offer a shower rather than a bath, if available.
- Respecting elders is seen as fundamental to the Hindu culture and should be observed at all times
- Some service users will only eat with their right hand, as it is seen as unclean to use the left. This should be observed if assisting.

- Washing hands before and after meals is customary. If you are assisting them to eat using a knife and fork you should also observe the washing of hands.
- Remember to present food to guests, this is customary.
- Never remove threads, jewellery or symbolic dots without permission.
- Commodes may not be permitted in bedrooms.
- Clarify preferred terms of address with individuals.

Islam

Background

There has been a significant Muslim culture in Britain since the turn of the nineteenth century, which grew during the labour shortages of the 1950s and 60s. Many of the Muslim communities within Britain have ancestral origins in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, migrating either directly to Britain directly or via migrations to East Africa and the Caribbean. Others have their ethnic and national origins from a variety of countries such as Malaysia, Cyprus, Iran and the Middle East. There are also indigenous Britons who have embraced the Islamic faith.

There are two main traditions within Islam: Sunni and Shi'a. There are various other groups, but 90% of Muslims follow the Sunni tradition. In order to become a Muslim, a person must pronounce that there is no god except God (Allah) and that Muhammad is his messenger. Shi'a Muslims also include that Ali is the seal on the will of the prophet; Ali is Muhammad's son-in-law and is seen by Shi'a's as his rightful successor.

Muhammad provided Muslims with the Shari'ah (pathway, as defined by God) and this informs how they conduct their lives. It is concerned with prayer, rituals, and attitudes to economics, family life, values and governance.

Jihad is the struggle to protect, promote and live by the messages of the Qur'an (holy book) and is central to Islam. It involves spreading the word of Islam, promoting opportunities to practice freely, self-discipline, and defending Islam.

In Islam, marriage and procreation are important. The traditional role of the man is to protect and financially provide for the females within the family. This includes his wife, children, and—where his father has died—his mother. Muslims believe that it is a duty to marry and, although the ideal family is formed around monogamy, Muslim men can take up to four wives. There are strict regulations around this, including that each wife must be treated equally both financially and socially; should be adequately provided for; and should be in agreement of the man taking another wife. Within Britain a polygamous marriage is not permitted, although where this has been contracted overseas recognition can be accorded.

Modesty is important within the Muslim culture. Men should be covered from the navel to the knees and women are required to cover the whole body.

Language

The British Muslim community is very diverse and there are many languages spoken within the community. In addition to English, Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Gujarati, Hausa, Malay, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu are commonly found. The Qur'an is written in Arabic and there needs to be some understanding of Arabic.

Religion

Islam is founded upon seven basic beliefs: in one God (Allah), the books revealed by God, the prophets, the angels, the Day of Judgement, life after death, and that all power belongs to God. It is understood within Muslim culture that the purpose of human life is to exercise authority and trust to manage the world responsibly, and to live in accordance with God's creative will. How each person responds to God's will and revelation determines their eternal destiny. It is believed that a descendant of the prophet will come before the end of time to establish justice on the earth.

In order for a Muslim to live a good and responsible life according to Islam there are five obligations they must satisfy. These are called the Five Pillars of Islam and consist of *Shahadah*: sincerely reciting the Muslim profession of faith; *Salat*: performing ritual prayers in the correct manner five times a day; *Zakat*: paying an alms tax to benefit the poor and those in need; *Sawm*: fasting during the month of Ramadan; and *Haji*: pilgrimage to Mecca. Following the Five Pillars provides the framework of a Muslim life, binding together their everyday activities and their beliefs; key is that one's faith should be evident in their daily living.

Muslims pray five times a day, and Friday is seen as the congregational prayer day where Muslims meet at the mosque to pray. Shoes are removed before prayer and ritual-washing (*wazu*) takes place before prayer. *Wazu* includes washing of the genital area, hands, face, hair, mouth, nose, forearms, and the feet. During prayer, worshippers face Mecca (South East). Women are not required to pray if they are menstruating, or postnatal, and those who are not fully conscious are also exempt. A Muslim can pray in any clean place and use a prayer mat if they cannot find a mosque.

Food Preferences

Muslims do not eat pork or pig products and will only eat meat that is killed in accordance to the Islamic law (*halal*). Dairy products are acceptable, provided it is *halal*. No alcohol is permitted. Fish and vegetables are permitted. Food containing animal by-products such as animal rennet is not permitted.

The degree to which these strict dietary requirements are adhered to varies amongst the community.

Muslims practice self-denial; they fast in the month of Ramadan, which occurs once a year. The fasting period, lasting for 30 days, begins at sunrise and ends at sunset, and during this time no food or drink can be consumed. Pregnant, menstruating and breast-feeding women, people with diabetes, people who are very ill, or older people are exempt from this.

Personal Care and Hygiene

As well as washing before prayers, Muslims prefer to wash their private parts after using the toilets. Cleanliness is very important within the Muslim culture, as they cannot worship if unclean. The left hand is used for washing after the toilet, and the right hand for eating meals.

Muslims may also have no pubic hair and are required to shave to maintain it, as it is seen as being unclean. Modesty is important to the culture and toileting is required to be done in private. Washing is preferred under free running water. Some Muslims are

circumcised at a young age to ensure cleanliness. After menstruating, women will wash themselves to cleanse the body.

Customs

Turning your back to the Qur'an is considered disrespectful, as is passing someone reading it with your back towards. The Qur'an is kept above head height in most homes, and Muslims need to be clean before reading the Qur'an and prayer.

When a Muslim is dying, relatives will recite verses from the Qur'an to comfort them and bring them peace. At the moment of death, they will recite a specific line of the text.

A member of the family usually washes the body after death, and words from the Qur'an are spoken throughout this procedure. After washing, the head is turned to face Mecca and traditional preparation of the body is performed. There is no coffin, as the body is wrapped in linen. Muslims are buried as soon as possible after death, usually within 24-48 hours. Post-mortems are forbidden under Islamic law and should be avoided. The mourning period lasts for a month. Usually the family stay at home for three days after the funeral, where family and friends provide food. After this period a ceremony is held. This is repeated 40 days after the funeral and again each year.

Main Festivals

Al Hijrah – The first day of the Muslim year, marking the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca which led to the creation of the Muslim community.

Ashurah – Commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Husayn; it is held on the tenth day of the Islamic calendar and is an occasion for "passion plays", and ritual mourning where Shi'a Muslims identify with the pain and suffering of Husayn.

Milad al-Nabi – The Prophet Muhammad's birthday is celebrated with speeches about his life. It also commemorates his death and can be a subdued affair.

Lailat al-Baraat – Marks the night that the fate of humankind is ordained for the next year. Prayers are said, lamps are lit at graves, and it is a time for fasting and penitence.

Ramadan – Muslims fast from dawn till dusk for the month of Ramadan in order to reflect their devotion to God. It is a time for self-discipline, patience, selflessness and solidarity between Muslims.

Eid al Fitr – This festival marks the end of Ramadan and occurs on the first day of the next month. It is a major festival in the Muslim calendar. Gifts, and charitable donations are made at this time and the festival emphasises unity and togetherness, with often, large gatherings held at mosques.

Eid al-Adha – This is a three day festival and is known as the festival of sacrifice. Muslims traditionally sacrifice an animal, which is then distributed to the poor and shared amongst family and friends.

Implication for Care

- Medicines may need to be checked for contents, as strict Muslims may only accept halal food and drink.
- A separate prayer room may need to be provided

- Cleanliness, privacy and modesty are very important. This should be observed during bathing and using the toilet. Pubic hair may need to be removed to maintain cleanliness and promote worship.
- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice, storage, preparation and serving of food.
- Use toilets with sinks in the same room, whenever possible, so the person can wash their hands.
- Offer showers rather than a bath, if available.
- Some service users will only eat with their right hand, as it is seen as unclean to use the left. This should be observed if assisting.
- Post-mortems are not permitted and can cause deep distress to families; should a post-mortem be performed all organs should be returned to the body before the funeral.

Jainism

Background

Jainism originates from India. Tradition claims that there were twenty four Tirthankara, who were born as human beings but who attained a state of perfection through meditation and self-realisation

The Tirthankara of whom we know most about is Mahavir, who was the last of the Tirthankara. Mahavir was born about 2,600 years ago and died at the age of 72. Mahavir's teachings have been very influential in the development of Jainism, although Jains believe that Jainism already existed before Mahavir. Mahavir reformed Jainism, introduced some of his own ideas and was an effective advocate for Jainism, and impressed many people through his teaching and life.

Today, Jainism has followers across India. The exact numbers are unknown with various estimates between half a million and 12 million followers.

In Britain there are about 30,000 Jains.

Beliefs

Jainism believes the universe and everything in it to be eternal. The human soul is eternal but is trapped in the human body. Only through a life that seeks to follow the three key requirements of right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct can the soul attain liberation, and live in total bliss (*Siddhasila*), at the top of the universe.

Central to correct conduct are five vows:

- Non-violence – not to cause harm to any living beings.
- Truthfulness – to speak the truth only.
- Non-stealing – not to take anything not properly given.
- Chastity – not to indulge in sensual pleasures.
- Non-possession/non-attachment – complete detachment from people, places and material things.

Jainism preaches a message of universal love, emphasising that all living beings are equal and should be loved and respected. Hence women and men are equal. Animals and insects must not be killed. Animal welfare, vegetarianism and care of the

environment are active expressions of Jain beliefs. Jains practice fasting and self-denial of all material and sensual pleasures.

Mahavir organised his followers into a four-fold order:

- Monks
- Nuns
- Laymen
- Laywomen

Monks and nuns seek to follow the five vows strictly, whilst lay people try to follow the vows as far as their lifestyles permit.

At present there are no monks or nuns in Britain. They can only travel on foot, and the vast majority of monks and nuns live in India. It is possible that a Jain who lives in Britain will decide to become a monk or nun and so start a community here.

Jainism is known for building beautiful temples. They are built to honour Mahavir and other teachers. Images of the Jainist teachers are adorned with flowers and the faithful recite sacred mantras. However, Jains do not worship God or gods. Jains accept that there are gods but do not see them as creators or protectors. The worship of God or gods to reach salvation is seen as futile. Each individual is responsible for their own destiny. For lay men and women attending the temple is an important aspect of their spiritual life.

The combination of soul and matter produces energy (Karma), the concept of which is important in Jainism. When the soul is engaging in anger, deception, lust, greed etc., then Karma sticks to the soul, imprisoning it. To be free, the soul needs to engage in confession, repentance, penance, self-control, austerity and religious deeds. Like many world religions, there are different branches within Jainism. The division is mainly noticeable amongst the orders of monks and nuns. One branch of monks and nuns wear white robes. The other branch seeks to apply an austere discipline of nakedness (which Mahavir did for part of his life). However, even this branch of monks tends to limit their nakedness to only the time they eat.

Food preferences

Jains take seriously the requirement not to hurt other animals, and so vegetarianism is very important. The preparation and storing of the food are also important. Some Jains are vegans; some Jains avoid root crops e.g. carrots. Fasting is a regular occurrence within Jain culture that can take different forms; it may involve giving up favourite foods or eating less than the person needs or giving up food and water completely for a period. Often fasting takes place during one of the festivals.

Main Festivals

Mahavir Jayanti (March/April) – The celebration of Mahavir's birthday; processions are held and Mahavir's message is explained to all.

Akshyatriya (April/May) – On this day sugarcane juice is ritually offered to those who have observed various types of fasts throughout the year.

Paryusana or Daslaksana Parva (August/September) – This festival lasts between 8 and 10 days. For part of this time Jains will fast, some will fast for all the days, some

alternate days; all will fast on the last day. The last day is marked by asking fellow community members for forgiveness for any wrongdoing.

Diwali (October/November) – This festival is celebrated by Hindus as well. In Jainism it marks the day that Mahavir gave his last teaching and attained ultimate liberation. Lamps and candles are lit. Children are often given sweets by parents. Some Jains will fast.

KartakPurnimu (October/November) – This follows Diwali. In India, Jains may go on pilgrimage to sacred sites.

Mauna Agyaras (November/December) –A daylong observance of fasting and silence. Jains also meditate on the five great beings.

Implications for Care

- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice, storage and preparation of food.
- A person's decision to fast must be respected.
- Attending a temple is an important aspect of a believer's religious life and should be supported.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Background

The origins of Jehovah's Witnesses can be traced back to around 1870 in Pittsburgh, USA, where a group of people were studying the Bible, led by Charles Russell. One question they sought to answer was when Christ would return. Russell's leadership resulted in the group expanding; this necessitated an organisational structure. A governing body of twelve men, based in Brooklyn, New York was established and continues to exercise leadership and final decision making. The organisation's formal title is the 'Watch Tower Society'. Worldwide, there are about 6 million Jehovah's Witnesses. In Britain there are about 120,000 Witnesses.

Beliefs

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jehovah alone is God and that he should be called by his name (Jehovah). Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jehovah created the Earth and placed humans on it. All people, living or dead, who accord with Jehovah's purpose for a beautiful, inhabited Earth may live on it forever.

Humanity is fallen (disobeys Jehovah) due to Adam and Eve disobeying Jehovah. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jehovah created Jesus Christ and that his life and death was paid as a ransom for obedient humans. Witnesses believe Jesus is a lesser person than Jehovah, and do not believe in the Holy Spirit, as Christians do.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ died on a stake, not a cross, and was then raised from the dead as an immortal spirit. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that 1914 is a pivotal year that marks the end of the 'Gentile Times' and the beginning of a transition period, from human rule to the 'Thousand Year Reign of Christ'.

On the last day, humans will engage in pleasure seeking, pursue money, lack self-control and reject goodness. It is then that Christ will return to Earth and there will be

a great war or battle, culminating in 'Har-Magedon' (or Armageddon). Christ will be the victor and his thousand year reign of peace will begin.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that at this point about 144,000 people will join Jehovah in heaven, whilst a far larger number of people will live peacefully on Earth. The Earth will be cleansed and beautified and people will live forever.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe only active Witnesses doing Jehovah's will, by serving the Watch Tower Society, will survive Har-Magedon.

As a result, the commitment of Jehovah Witness to their beliefs is striking. Most will attend up to five devotional meetings, each of an hour length, every week. Most Witnesses will spend ten hours a month evangelising from door to door and there will be an expectation that Witnesses will devote time to personal study and family study at home.

Witnesses believe everyone apart from active Witnesses will die and not be resurrected (or recreated). Witnesses believe there is no hell, just death, for those who are not an active Witness.

The Watch Tower Society uses its own translation of the Bible called the New World translation (NWT).

Other aspects of Jehovah Witnesses beliefs include:

- Birthdays should not be celebrated. The Jehovah Witnesses claim that the two explicit references to birthdays in the Bible are both negative and there is not mention of prophets, Jesus or his disciples celebrating birthdays.
- Christmas is not to be celebrated, since the exact date of Jesus' birth is not known (which is true). Also, the 25th December was originally the festival of a roman god (which is true) and so Witnesses argue that it is a pagan celebration.
- Easter is not to be celebrated; since, as mentioned above, Witnesses argue that Jesus died on a stake, not a cross, the cross is not a visual image that Witnesses use.
- Blood transfusions are forbidden by Jehovah. Witnesses would argue that there are often medical alternatives. Additionally, it is worth bearing in mind that many adults ignore or dismiss doctor's advice about what is good for their health (e.g. smokers).

For irreligious individuals, the differences between Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses can seem minor. It may be surprising, therefore, that there is disagreement between most Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses; at best they view each other with indifference, and at worst see each other as following flawed beliefs.

Implications for Care

- Whilst an older person who has care needs will not be as active as they used to be, they may well want to remain as active as they can be.
- Discuss with the service user their aspirations in respect of attending weekly religious meetings and other religious activities (e.g. personal study time).
- Discuss with the service user how they wish to manage days when the service celebrates festivals (e.g. Christmas) or marks someone's birthday.
- There may be a preference for same-sex carers as dressing and undressing in front of strangers can be embarrassing.

Judaism

Background

Jews have been present in Britain for centuries, with the initial settlement occurring after the Norman Conquest. They were later expelled and then readmitted in the 1650s. There are two main traditions within Britain: the Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. Sephardi Jews came originally from Spain, Portugal and Arab countries. Ashkenazi came from Central and East European countries. Ashkenazi Jews migrated to England for economic reasons, or else fled from persecution in the Russian Empire, Germany and other European countries. In addition, small numbers have arrived from India.

Like many religions, Judaism has different branches or denominations. Most practicing Jews are Orthodox; there are smaller numbers of Conservative, Reform and Liberal Jews. In Britain, a Jewish person's religious lifestyle is more likely to be influenced by whether they are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or Liberal rather than whether they are Sephardi or Ashkenazi.

Language

Depending on the origin of a Jewish person, and from where they may have migrated, they will speak the regional or national language of that country. In Britain, most speak English, although some may speak Yiddish. Hebrew is the language of the Bible, prayer and modern Israel. It is the main language of worship and many Jewish people are taught it from an early age.

Religion

Judaism is a religion that has been in existence for about 3,500 years. Jews believe in one God, and that God will send a Messiah; they do not believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. They obey the Ten Commandments and love God through study and prayer. The teachings of the Jewish faith and way of life are contained in the Torah, and the rabbinic interpretations found in the Talmud. The Bible is known as TeNakh and includes the Torah (the five books of Moses), Nevim (prophets) and Ketuvim (other writings). The Sabbath (holy day) begins at sunset on a Friday and ends at nightfall on a Saturday. There are restrictions to working on the Sabbath. Orthodox Jews may also not turn lights on or off and may use a timer. The Sabbath ends with the lighting of a candle and a blessing for the coming week. Friday evenings and Saturdays are times for prayer at the synagogue, overseen by the Rabbi.

Many Orthodox men will usually cover their heads. Men, and often women—particularly Orthodox women—cover their heads when entering the synagogue. Three daily prayers are stipulated: Shaharit (morning), Minhaha (afternoon) and Maariv (evening). Orthodox male Jews may wear Tephilin (small box worn on forehead, and left arm containing sections of the scriptures on parchment) during their morning prayer and ArbaKanfot (a fringe, worn at all times on a vest under their clothes)

Food Preferences

A Jewish diet has to be kosher (permitted), that is animals humanely slaughtered by a shochet (qualified slaughterer) and according to Jewish law. This involves the

drawing of blood from any animal as part of its preparation. Kosher meats are all sources of meat with split hooves and that chew the cud; fowl can be kosher, and the eggs from them; for fish to be kosher they must have both fins and scales, e.g. cod. Treif (forbidden) foods include horses, pigs, rabbits, birds of prey, and non-kosher fish include all shellfish such as prawns, crabs etc. Fruit and vegetables are kosher provided they are not cooked with non-kosher ingredients.

Jewish law prohibits the mixing of milk foods with meat food, and separate utensils and service items should be used for both items, with a time lapse observed between eating the two items. Fish can be served with milk. Fish can also be served with meals that contain meat. The degree to which these strict dietary requirements are adhered to varies amongst the community and between individuals.

Personal Care and Hygiene

Hygiene and washing are regarded, as with other cultures, as important. Dress codes are normally of a conservative nature when attending the synagogue. Dressing and undressing can be viewed as embarrassing, and same-sex carers can be preferred.

Customs

As is commonly found within many cultures, family and community are seen as very important social structures. Men and women are seen as equal, and gender roles are clearly defined, with women responsible for the care of the family and the home. The door post of a Jewish person's home is often marked with a small prayer box (mezuzah). It is customary for a Rabbi and a relative to be by the bedside of a dying person to recite prayers and provide the opportunity for confession of their sins. Burial arrangements are usually made through the synagogue. A group of people will prepare the body as soon as possible after death, often reading prayers. After death, the eyes and mouth of the person are usually closed by a close relative, the body is washed and placed in a shroud or prayer shawl, and burial is immediate. There is a mourning period of up to seven days where family and the community pay their respects, bring food and ensure the family are not left alone. There are different stages to the mourning period: firstly, the initial seven days; then twenty-three days where life returns to normality; and finally, this is followed by a lighter mourning period lasting eleven months.

Coffins are usually plain, and there are no flowers. Mourners will usually fill in the grave before returning to the prayer hall. For many there remains a great kinship with Israel and it has great importance and significance to the Jewish people. Jewish boys are often circumcised on the eighth day of life. At thirteen, male Jews take on a new role within their community and this is celebrated by way of a Barmitzvah. Some Jewish girls have a Barmitzvah at the age of 12 or 13. Some Jewish people wear jewellery such as the Star of David.

Main Festivals

Rosh Hashana (September/October) – The Jewish New Year, celebrated by the blowing of a ram's horn in the synagogue to remind people of their sins and their spiritual awareness. No work is permitted on this day. At home, an apple dipped in honey is eaten and an apple cake may also be served. This is a ten-day festival and ends with Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur – A day of atonement wherein fast of food and drink is observed for approximately 24/25 hours. The day is devoted to worship and prayer, and no work is permitted.

Sukkot – The festival of Tabernacles, which commemorates the wandering of Israel's children. Jews celebrate this day by the building of a temporary hut (Sukkot) on the side of houses and synagogues. The festival also commemorates harvest, where a palm branch, citron, willow branches, and three myrtle branches are carried in procession around the synagogue.

Simchat Torah – Celebrates the completion and recommencement of the annual cycle of reading from the Torah.

Pesach or Passover (March/April) – An eight-day festival where unleavened bread is eaten to symbolise Jews leaving Egypt; the story of Exodus is told and a special meal is taken on the first and second evening.

Shavuot – A two-day festival commemorating the Israelites receiving the Torah, in which harvest, olives, dates, grapes and figs are eaten.

Implications for Care

Each house holder or service user should be asked how they want to be supported to apply their faith and culture. Below are some areas to consider. As always there can be variation within a community.

- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice, storage, preparation and serving of food.
- Bereavement traditions and customs should be respected.
- Jewellery should not be removed without consent.
- The Sabbath is the day of rest and should be respected. The Sabbath and festivals start on the evening of the day before.
- In care homes some Jewish people may want to place a Mezuzah (small prayer box) on the door post to their room.
- Same-sex carers may be preferred where personal care is required.

Rastafarianism

Customs

Rastafari is a way of life and is guided by a central concept of peace, truth, right and love. It is named after RasTafari who became Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. Haile Selassie I is recognised as Jah, the living manifestation of God. Rastafarians believe that salvation can come to black people only through repatriation to Africa after liberation from the evils of the Western world.

Rastafarians often say "I" and "I" instead of "me" and "you" to denote that God (Jah) is within all human beings.

The Bible is seen as the divine word and is interpreted through reasoning: collective drumming, reading, prayer, studying and debate. There are no buildings for worship (reasoning) and each individual or group is autonomous.

Rastafarians believe in reincarnation and the movement of life from one generation to the next through spiritual and genealogical inheritance. There are no special

arrangements or ceremonies following death. The extended family and wider community are seen as the support network to help resolve individual and family crises. The use of cannabis is understood to be sanctioned in the Bible.

Food Preferences

Many Rastafarians are vegetarian, avoiding meat, fish and poultry; others are vegan and will not consume any animal by-products, including fat, milk, and gelatine. Some Rastafarians do choose to eat meat, although they may not eat pork as it is regarded as unclean meat. The degree to which these strict dietary requirements are adhered to varies amongst the community.

Rastafarians do not cut their hair or beards, and it needs to be kept clean.

Sikhism

Background

The British Sikh community is the largest outside of India. Sikhism originated in Punjab, India, and was founded by Guru Nanak Dev. A number of Sikhs settled in Britain in the 1920s and 1940s, although the vast majority arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of these came from Punjab, although some came from East Africa and other former British colonies. Many Sikhs served in the British Indian armies during the First- and Second World Wars.

Guru Nanak Dev preached a message of universal love, peace and brotherhood, emphasised by the worship of one God. He believed that the worship of God in whatever tradition one practiced should be sincere and honest. He settled in Punjab and founded a community of Sikhs (disciples or learners).

Guru Nanak Dev was the first of ten Gurus (divine teachers who convey the word of God). Sikhism emphasises the worship of the Word of God, not object of worship. The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh vested authority in the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh scripture) and in KhalsaPanth (path of the pure ones). The Guru Granth Sahib is therefore the eternal Guru embodying the Divine Word.

Guru Gobind Singh introduced Sikhs to "Armit", a ceremony of initiation similar to Baptism whereby Sikhs adopt their name (Singh for men and Kaur for women) and the five symbols of Sikhism. He provided instructions for prayer and how Sikhs should conduct themselves, completing the spiritual and temporal structure of the Sikh faith. Some Sikhs may carry a small prayer book wrapped in cloth which can only be touched with clean hands.

Language

Most Sikhs in Britain speak Punjabi and English, although other languages may also be spoken such as Swahili (those from East Africa) and Hindi (the national language of India). The Punjabi language shares similarities in vocabulary and grammar with Urdu and Hindu.

Religion

Sikhs believe in one God, and this underpins every aspect of life. The creation of the world is understood to have originated from God's will to create, developing from lower to higher forms of life. From air came water; from water came the lower forms of life: plants, birds and animal, and the supreme form of created life on earth: humans. The purpose of human life is to seek its creator and merge with God, breaking a cycle of rebirth. Failure to do so will lead to rebirth, including lower forms of life than humans.

Prayers are normally said in the early morning and before sleeping at night. This can be done individually and within the Sikh's home (some homes may have separate rooms that contain the Guru Granth Sahib), although communal prayer is regarded as particularly important. There is no particular holy day during the week for Sikhs; for convenience, the temple is usually visited on a Saturday in Britain.

Gurdwara (Temple) is open to all irrespective of race, religion, or social status. Each has The Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book), communal kitchen and dining area. It is customary for all that enter the temple to be served food. Shoes are removed and entrants should cover their heads. Smoking and alcohol are not permitted in temples.

Food Preferences

Many Sikhs refrain from alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants. Meat should only be consumed if it is Jhatka, where the animal has been instantaneously killed with one stroke. Those that eat meat must not eat halal or kosher meat. Many Sikhs are vegetarians. The degree to which these strict dietary requirements are adhered to varies amongst the community. Sikhs do not practice self-denial, therefore they do not fast for religious reasons.

Personal Care and Hygiene

Cleanliness is very important to Sikh communities. Long hair requires regular washing and managing, with hair oil being applied for its maintenance. Leaving the hair uncut applies to the whole body not just to the head and face. Beards are not cut and the Khanga is used to comb the hair every day. Orthodox Sikhs will bath daily and pray twice. The steel bracelet, jewellery or threads that are worn should not be removed without permission.

Women may wear Punjabi suits (two piece cotton or silk dress over baggy trousers). Men tend to wear Western clothes, although more orthodox Sikhs will wear traditional tunics over baggy trousers.

As with many other religions, Sikhs require the use of the left hand when using the toilet and leave the right hand for eating.

Modesty is one of the five 'K's (see below) and both men and women observe conservative dress codes.

Customs

Food is always served to those entering the Sikh temples

There are five symbols of Sikhism (the five K's): Kesh (long hair, symbolising holiness); Kanga (the comb symbolising purity); Kara (steel bracelet worn on right wrist to protect the sword arm, symbolises eternity); Kirpan (a small dagger symbolising willingness

to fight oppression) the Criminal Justice Act 1988 exempts Sikhs wearing the Kirpan from criminal prosecution, if the employer can justify the prohibition of wearing the Kirpan as a proportionate response on the grounds of health and safety, security or some other legitimate business aim then it can be removed; and the Kaccha (shorts worn under clothes to symbolise modesty). In addition to this a turban is worn to protect the Kesh. The wearing of these items identifies the person as a Sikh who has dedicated himself or herself to a life of devotion to Guru.

In Britain, the Kirpan is worn by orthodox Sikhs and is exempt from the classification of a dangerous weapon. Sikhs believe in rebirth and after death the body is washed and dressed, with cremation happening as soon as possible. In India, cremation is usually on the same day; in Britain cremation is within two to five days. Post-mortem examinations can be viewed as a form of violation of the body and are likely to cause significant distress to the family. On the day of the cremation, the body is usually placed in an open cask; relatives and friends come to pay their last respects, and a priest reads the last rites. The Guru Granth Sahib is brought home from the temple after the cremation and prayers are read, usually lasting a whole morning.

Main Festivals

Dates provided refer to the Gregorian calendar.

Gurpurbs – Celebrations of the birth or death of a Guru are usually by means of prayer, religious lectures, Karah Prashad (blessed, sweet food made from semolina, sugar, clarified butter and water are served after worship) and Langar (free communal meal). There are four major Gurpurbs celebrated in Britain:

Guru Nanak Dev – Celebration lasting 3 days

Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Gobind Singh

Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev

Installation of the Guru Granth Sahib (August–September) – Celebrating the Sikh Scriptures.

Vaisakhi (April) – Marking the day when Guru Gobind Singh founded the Sikh brotherhood Khalsa. Sikhs carry a flag down the streets in a procession to the gurdwara and replace the old one with it.

Diwali (October/November) – Celebration in memory of Guru Hargobind's return from imprisonment and the saving of 52 Hindu Kings. It is celebrated with the lighting up of the Gurdwara.

Implications for Care

- Some may not want a commode in their living areas.
- Space may need to be dedicated to holding the Guru Granth Sahib and for prayer.
- Utmost respect must be observed for the five symbols of faith, and these should not be touched or removed without permission.
- Specific dietary requirements will need to be identified.
- Strict observation and care should be taken over the choice, storage, preparation and serving of food.

- Hair and beards are not generally cut. For many, this extends to all body hair and care will be needed in dealing with this.
- Personal care and hygiene are very important, and will need specialised products, and additional time allowed.
- Specialised hair products should be available.

Travellers Culture

Background

'Traveller' is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of groups, including: Romanies or gypsies, Irish traveller, New age Travellers, and occupational travellers (circus and fairground workers). Whilst it is commonplace for travellers to be nomadic, some may also live in houses. A person is born a traditional traveller and cannot become one by association. It is thought that Romani people arrived in the British Isles around the 16th Century, travelling to trade, work and entertain. The size of the population is estimated to be 80,000 to 110,000 in Britain. There is no single culture and traveller communities worldwide hold different beliefs, customs and traditions.

Language

Due to the diversity of the population language is not specific and may include Romanies. Within the Irish traveller community Gammon, Shelta, or Cant may be spoken. New Age travellers are a diverse group including people from many different origins and the languages used will vary between them.

Religion

Due to the diversity of this group religious practices or beliefs vary across Britain. Usually the religions and local culture of the country or area in which they settle are adopted. Within Britain, Christian practices are followed, although this varies between groups and area of settlement. It should also be noted that for many religious beliefs may be a mix of traditional beliefs and community-based practices and traditions.

Food Preferences

Travellers mostly adopt the diet of the area or country they live in, although many will not eat horsemeat.

Personal Care and Hygiene

Many prefer to wash under free flowing water and use different bowls for different tasks.

Customs

Although practices vary across different groups there are some general similarities. For example, there may be clear, gender-defined roles within traveller communities. Within some groups women and men will socialise with other same-sex members.

Privacy is highly valued within the community. There may not be a defined community leader, although age is respected. Men are usually self-employed and rely on traditional trade for income, with women often not working outside of the home.

Literacy levels may be low due to the nomadic way of life. Some families believe it to be disrespectful to say the names of those that have passed away. Gold jewellery is sometimes worn as a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Dogs are generally not allowed within the living areas of the family, as they are seen as unclean.

Main Festivals

This will vary depending on the area and “adopted” beliefs of the community.

Implications for Care

- Literacy may be low and care should be taken to read things if required, or assistance provided in completing written work.
- Privacy is valued and should be respected.
- Identifying a person’s individual, specific needs by asking them will be important, due to the diversity of the culture.
- There may be a preference for same-sex carers, as dressing and undressing in front of strangers can be embarrassing.
- Modesty may also be important, and care should be taken over the choice of the sex of the carer, and over washing and bathing routines.
- Each traveller group has its own culture, traditions, routines, beliefs, and customs. These should be identified and respected.

Return to Policy Heading (Ctrl+Click) – [Policy Heading](#)