

23rd April 2020

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very happy Ramadan, from all of us at Hackney Council. I realise that you will be celebrating this holy month under very different, and very difficult circumstances this year.

I know that Ramadan is traditionally a time for friends and family to come together. However, I am writing to remind you of the critical importance of social distancing, even at this incredibly important time, to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus and keep our community safe and healthy.

Advice for staying safe and protecting others from Coronavirus (Covid-19) during Ramadan this year

Ramadan is an important time of prayer and reflection, when friends, family and members of mosques traditionally come together in person. The current outbreak of Covid-19 has a huge impact on daily life. This leaflet provides advice for people in Hackney on how to stay safe and protect others while celebrating Ramadan this year, including advice on communal celebrations and fasting.

Places of worship across the UK, including mosques in Hackney, have closed temporarily until the risk of Covid-19 has reduced. Individuals of all faiths must pray at home and not invite friends or family members who do not live in the same house to visit their homes. This action is vital to protect individuals, families and members of the local community. The single most important action we can all take to fight Covid-19 is to stay at home.

Social distancing

Public Health England has produced guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK, encouraging all of us to stay at home, only leaving home for the following reasons:

- Shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, as infrequently as possible;
- One form of exercise a day – alone or with members of the same household;
- Any medical need, including to donate blood, avoid or escape risk of injury or harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person;
- Travelling for work purposes, but only where someone cannot work from home.

Social distancing and traditional Ramadan activities

Everyone must avoid large or small gatherings. This means that congregational acts of worship outside of the home, including taraweeh (prayers at the mosque), will not take place during Ramadan to stop the spread of the virus. It also means that people must stay in their own homes and not visit others (including family) for iftars (breaking of the fast). People must adapt to these major temporary changes, while still finding ways to enjoy the spiritual lift and community spirit that Ramadan provides.

Staying connected to friends, family and the wider community during Ramadan

Instead, stay connected using technology such as the phone, internet and social media. The Muslim Council of Britain has highlighted that there may be many ways for people to share prayers during Ramadan using video-conferencing platforms such as, for example, Zoom or Facetime. This may prove to be especially vital for people who live alone and hope to connect with others. Certain mosques may also have arrangements to provide Islamic lectures that can be streamed and watched at home.

Many mosques in Hackney have live audio transmissions to the home all year round and this will be continued during Ramadan. For people without access to the internet, phone calls with family and friends will help to maintain the sense of communal celebration during Ramadan.

Fasting during Ramadan

People who are well and have no underlying health conditions should be able to fast as usual during the Covid-19 outbreak. As is the case every year, anyone with an underlying health condition, such as diabetes, should discuss whether they are able to fast safely during Ramadan with their GP before deciding to fast. For individuals who are able to fast safely, it is important to:

- Hydrate well during non-fasting hours to prevent tiredness and headaches;
- Eat a well balanced diet during non-fasting hours, including slow release food that can provide energy for the day;
- Avoid too much time spent in the sun to avoid dehydration; and
- If possible, plan meals in advance to avoid the need for regular trips to supermarkets.

What to do if you develop symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19)

If you become unwell with any symptoms of Covid-19 (continuous new cough or fever), it is strongly advised that you stop fasting.

People with symptoms of Covid-19 should consult NHS 111 by phone or online (<https://111.nhs.uk>). This is a useful tool that advises people when to seek medical help, and how to manage symptoms at home. Those managing symptoms at home are advised to drink plenty of fluids. If you are concerned about yourself or someone else, you should call NHS 111 or your GP for medical advice. In a medical emergency, where someone's life may be at risk, always call 999.

Sources of guidance and information

Additional advice on the coronavirus (Covid-19) as well as guidance for Ramadan this year can be found in the links below:

1. Information on coronavirus (Covid-19), including what to do if you develop symptoms, can be found on the NHS coronavirus webpage: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
2. Find out more about how Hackney Council is responding to coronavirus (Covid-19) and sign up for updates: <https://hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus>
3. Local support is available within Hackney for residents who need help. If you or someone you know needs practical support during the coronavirus outbreak, you can contact Hackney Council via the webpage <https://hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-support#vulnerable> or by calling **020 8356 3111** (8am-5pm Monday-Friday).
4. The Muslim Council of Britain has produced practical advice for managing during the coronavirus outbreak, with specific guidance available for Ramadan: <https://mcb.org.uk/resources/ramadan/>

Thank you for everything you are already doing to stay safe and support each other through this difficult time, these measures are a vital part of efforts to protect all residents and reduce the rapid pace at which coronavirus is spreading within our communities and putting lives at risk.

I wish you all the best for Ramadan over the coming weeks. Ramadan Kareem.

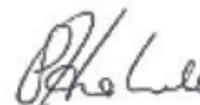
Yours sincerely,



Philip Glanville
Mayor of Hackney



Munaf Zeena
Chair of North London Muslim
Community Centre



Dr Sandra Husbands
Director of Public Health