ENGLAND NETBALL



RELIGION AND BELIEF IN NETBALL GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Religion and belief play an integral part in the lives of many people. Acknowledging and accepting the importance of religion and philosophical beliefs (or the absence of beliefs) is therefore a key element of providing an inclusive environment.

Religions are historic and cultural systems that transform with time, while faith is an individual's value and belief structure. Faith and belief are more interchangeable, whilst religion is a means through which people can express their faith. The term faith is used in this document to cover the concepts of religion and belief.

People should feel confident that they can bring that part of them to netball, that they can undertake the practices that are important to them and share as much as they wish about their faith, without fear of discrimination. Religion can sometimes be viewed as a topic with the potential to lead to conflict, given the strength of opinion and emotion it can generate. This means that it is often overlooked as part of inclusion work.

In our diverse society, acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of faiths and beliefs (including those without a belief) is a key way to bring people together and unfortunately if ignored can be a source of misunderstandings, subtle or more overt exclusion, or even conflict.

Sport is not immune to these tensions, and these can present themselves in the form of microaggressions, hurtful remarks and fears relating to selection. Various societal shifts mean that considering religion and belief is critical.

In many societies, people have the freedom to choose their value systems and beliefs and are more open about these and less willing to disconnect from their personal identities when choosing their social pastimes. Having an insight into, and sensitivity towards, religious beliefs and practices will help to grow participation and attract new audiences to netball by delivering inclusive netball provision.

Netball Organisations therefore need to be confident they can attract and retain a population reflective of the societies they operate in. This document aims to help raise awareness about the major religions in the UK to help further our understanding and tolerance of each other and provides some best practice guidance on how to approach religion and belief in netball to meet the needs of all within our sport.

FAITH INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Below is a brief guide on key issues and actions that netball organisations can take to promote faith inclusion.

Leadership - To support inclusion around religion and belief, leaders must role model desired behaviours, deal with issues in the appropriate manner and remove barriers that hinder progress. This can be supported by ensuring diversity within the leadership.

Attitude adjustment - Certain expressions of religious faith will be more compatible with existing cultures than others. Therefore, it will be important to prepare should individuals wish to demonstrate their beliefs in less familiar ways or those that might be more uncomfortable for others.

The organisation should demonstrate and role model that it is willing to listen and engage on topics that are unfamiliar and that might challenge traditional and accepted norms.

Collaborative conversations - Of all the diversity characteristics, faith and belief tends to be the one we talk about least. Many people feel uncomfortable talking about their faith or belief - partly because it's a private matter, partly because of potential stigma, and also because it can be controversial. Equally, asking others about their faith can also feel difficult – questions around faith can risk being intrusive, patronising or indeed ignorant.

A critical way to facilitate respect as well as comfort and trust in sharing who we are is through supporting greater awareness and understanding. Learning about and sharing the religious beliefs and practices of individuals will aid this.

Exploring issues which might relate to beliefs that lie at the heart of individual or group identity can be challenging, so they need to be approached with care and respect.

Nevertheless, encouraging discussion and engagement between groups can be highly beneficial, because it allows the diverse experiences and opinions to be explored and common ground to be identified. An emphasis on shared history and parallel experiences promotes tolerance and understanding while not denying the separate identities of each group. Potential tensions can be explored without directly confronting issues that may lead to argument or hostility. A number of resources to support multi-faith or belief dialogue are listed in the **Useful Resources** section of this package.

Celebrate - Events that showcase different faiths and promote dialogue that helps to celebrate common and shared values, regardless of background, religion or belief system are highly valuable.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- **Key dates and celebrations** for all religions. Acknowledge and celebrate all religions through communications or social media.
- **Scheduling of activity** to take into account religious holidays and practices (e.g., fasting, The Sabbath etc). You may need to consider days of the week and times of the day or be flexible if individuals are unable to attend training.
- **Kit rules** that may create unnecessary barriers to participation to those who wish to dress modestly.

The World Netball rules only state the following rules relating to dress code and appearance:

> **5.1.1 (iv)** Players may not wear anything that could endanger themselves or other players, specifically:
>
> a) No adornment or jewellery may be worn other than a wedding ring which must be covered with tape
> b) A medical alert bracelet may be worn provided it is covered with tape
> c) Fingernails must be short and smooth
> d) Hair must be suitably tied back

England Netball's Domestic Guidance 2020 states:

The priority must be to encourage increased participation in Netball, while being sensitive to religious practices, cultural differences, health, and well-being issues, for example, climatic weather conditions with due regard to the safety of all participants.

Players Uniform - As per INF Rule 5.1.1.(i) Exceptionally non-registered playing uniform may be worn. There is no intention to debar players from wearing tracksuits and clothing that reflect the uniform and colours of a club. Umpires should act responsibly and sensitively in checking that the players' uniform reflects both the INF Rules and EN Domestic Rules Guidance. Umpires should therefore use common sense when applying the rules in the local leagues.

Head Coverings - A player may wear a hat / head covering. They should ensure that the material used for the head covering is soft and without embellishments or loose fibres, which might constitute a danger to any other player on the court, and with potential flowing/flapping edges held securely around the neck or tucked into the shirt collar. Headbands that meet the requirements as above should be allowed. Peaked, baseball or tennis type caps do not meet the requirements and are not allowed.

Jewellery / adornments and medic alerts - It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that they comply with the INF Rule 5.1.1 (iv). Dermal piercings (that are located below the skin and cannot be easily removed) and flat religious bracelets (which are not to be removed for religious and / or cultural reasons) are to be suitably covered with padding / tape as necessary to prevent injury to others.

Where organisations have additional rules around dress code and appearance, they should consider if these impose restrictions prohibitive to inclusion (including for religious reasons) and whether they are necessary.

- **Prayer facilities** if individuals are going to be present for an extended period of time e.g., tournaments. Consider making a room available as a quiet space that can be used for prayer and meditation. This should be located close to washing facilities so individuals can practise Wudu – washing before prayer.
- **Support for those fasting**. How you can best support individuals who are observing periods of fasting?
- **The environment in which netball activity is delivered**. For individuals from some religions, you may need to consider providing a female only environment.
- **Where you hold meetings and social events**. For example, holding committee meetings in a local pub could be a barrier to individuals from certain religions putting themselves forward for committee roles. For social events it may be more sensitive to consider holding these at a restaurant or community space over a pub or bar.
- **Catering** that is made available on occasions where individuals are going to be present for an extended period of time e.g., tournaments or social events e.g. BBQ or Hog roast fundraisers. Consideration should be given as to whether this would be appropriate for individuals from certain religions.

MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS

To promote inclusion and ensure fairness you may need to consider making accommodations.

1. **Case by case approach** - There isn't a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, religious practices vary within religions and cultures, so where possible take steps to address individual needs and circumstances.

2. **Positive intent** - Never dismiss an individual's needs even if their religion, belief or practices are unfamiliar to you.

3. **Sensitive questions** – Ideally, providing religious accommodations should be conducted as a dialogue to find practical and sustainable solutions. However, not all individuals will feel comfortable to raise matters directly so you may need to ask respectful questions to understand more about the individual's practices and beliefs to reach accommodation solutions that are mutually beneficial.

4. **Creativity** – If there are challenges, take time to think creatively about the ways in which the needs of the individual can be met. This will increase the chance of finding a solution and demonstrates your commitment to religious inclusion.

5. **Learning from experience** – Where practical and creative solutions are identified, track and share these. We are all learning how to make netball more inclusive.

OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR RELIGIONS



In the following section we have provided factsheets on the major religions. Information has been drawn from insight conducted by Inclusive Employers, the BBC website and guides produced by the Higher Education Academy.

PLEASE NOTE: Religious beliefs and practices vary over time and from place to place, so these factsheets may not accurately reflect the practices of all. It's important to consider that people of the same faith may practice their faith in different ways and may hold different beliefs. It's also important to consider that an individual's faith may change over time.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism is a tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development and the attainment of a deep insight into the true nature and purpose of life. Buddhists seek to reach a state of nirvana, following the path of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, who went on a quest for Enlightenment and the teachings and ways of living that developed from it, which cover the practice and development of morality, meditation and wisdom.

248,000
Buddhists
in the UK
(2011 Census)

Buddhists believe that life is endless because individuals are reincarnated over and over. There is no belief in a personal God and Buddhists can worship both at home and at a temple.

KEY DATES

The specific dates of Buddhist events and celebrations differ across schools of thought and traditions. However, almost all the traditions follow a lunar calendar. The following are only indicative of the kind of religious events Buddhists are likely to celebrate in any year.

Buddhist New Year - This is celebrated from the first full moon in April in some countries and from the first full moon in January in many others. There is also local cultural variation.

Parinirvana or Nirvana day - Some Buddhists celebrate Gautama Buddha's death and final enlightenment. It usually falls on the 8th February or the 15th February.

Wesak, Vesak or Visakah Puja (Buddha Day) - This is a major Buddhist festival and incorporates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. It is celebrated on the first day of the full moon in May (except in leap years, when it falls in June).

Dharma day or Asala - This is a celebration of the Buddha's first teaching after his enlightenment, 'The Wheel of Truth'. It usually falls in July.

Bodhi Day (Enlightenment Day) - This is a celebration of Gautama Buddha's enlightenment and usually falls on the 8th December.

ETHICS

Food - Many Buddhists are vegetarians or vegans.

Alcohol – Some do not consume alcohol or other intoxicants.

CHRISTIANITY

2 billion
Christian followers globally

The Christian holy book is the Bible and Christians believe that there is only one God but that there are three elements to this one God: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. They believe that Jesus is the Son of God sent to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins.

Christians worship in Churches and there are many different denominations of Christianity which follow slightly different beliefs e.g., Catholics, Protestants.

KEY DATES

For centuries Christians oriented their lives around a sacred calendar celebrating the life of Jesus, the saints and the birth of the Church. The Christian calendar encompasses six seasons.

Advent - This is the first season of the Christian calendar, beginning in late November or early December. Advent is a Latin word meaning 'coming' and the theme that marks this season is the coming of Jesus, both at his birth and at the end of the world.

Christmas - Is a 'season' lasting 12 days and throughout this period the birth of Jesus as the entry of God into the world is the central theme.

Epiphany - This word means 'manifestation' and is a time of reflection lasting several weeks, during which Christ's manifestation as Messiah is explored.

Lent – Begins with Ash Wednesday and is a period of penitence lasting 40 day, remembering how Jesus called people to follow him. It is a custom among many Christians to practice a discipline of fasting or giving up something during this period. Lent includes what many Christians would identify as the most important week of the year; Holy Week, the seven days prior to Easter. Holy Week begins with 'Palm Sunday', signifying Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem, followed by 'Maundy Thursday', commemorating the Lord's Supper, and 'Good Friday', marking his last hours.

Easter - Commemorates the disciples' experience of Jesus as having defeated death, rising from the dead on the first day of the week. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following 21st March.

Pentecost - Celebrates the birth of the Church and the miracles and missionary activity of its early days. It lasts for several months and ends the day before advent.

ETHICS

Sexual orientation - Although some Christians no longer consider sex between same sex couples as incompatible with Scripture, this is an issue that currently deeply divides churches.

HINDUISM

Hinduism could be the oldest living religion in the world, documented back many thousands of years. Hinduism has no single founder, scripture and no majority-agreed set of teachings, but the main Hindu texts are the Vedas and their supplements (books based on the Vedas).

810,000
Hindus in the UK
(2011 Census)

The beliefs, practices, sensibilities and sensitivities of Hindus are in fact best understood not as representing 'Hinduism', but as reflective of the regional and linguistic background of the individuals concerned, their caste status and sectarian affiliation.

However, most Hindus believe in a Supreme God whose qualities and forms are represented by a multitude of deities which emanate from him.

Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, governed by Karma. They believe that the soul passes through a cycle of successive lives and its next incarnation is always dependent on how the previous life was lived and morally sustained.

KEY DATES

The Hindu calendar is lunar and is divided into 12 months based on the phases of the moon and so fall on slightly different dates in the secular calendar each year. Most of these festivals mark aspects of Hindu mythology relating to the gods and goddesses.

Janmashtami - This festival celebrates the birth of the popular Hindu god, Krishna (July-August).

Ganesh Chaturthi - A festival dedicated to the elephant-headed god, Ganesh, the remover of obstacles (August- September).

Dussehra - A celebration to mark the victory of the popular god Rama and his monkey army over the demon king Ravana. Hindus also celebrate Navaratri during this period. This is the festival of nine nights. For Bengalis from eastern India, Navaratri culminates in a grand celebration dedicated to the worship of the goddess Durga (October-November).

Diwali - The festival of Lights follows shortly after Dussehra. This is a five-day festival when Hindus worship Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and beauty. Hindus observe Diwali by cleaning and illuminating their homes with lamps, wearing new clothes and exchanging sweets and other gifts.

Maha Shivaratri - A festival dedicated to the worship of the great god Shiva. Shiva worshippers observe a fast to mark Shivaratri and stay awake overnight to pray to Shiva (January-February).

Holi - This is a spring festival during which observers drench each other in water and smear coloured powder on one another's faces. It commemorates the death of Holika, who, according to popular myth, plotted to kill her nephew to punish him for his ardent devotion to the great god Vishnu (February-March).

ETHICS

Food - Some Hindus may consider certain kinds of food and drink, such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, onion, garlic and alcohol, to be 'impure'. Vegetarian food is considered 'purer' than non- vegetarian food, therefore some castes and communities may follow a strictly vegetarian diet. Others will focus on dietary purity during certain phases of their life or on specific occasions. The majority of Hindus also consider the consumption of beef taboo, following from the Hindu belief that cows are sacred animals.

Gender - Some Hindu communities in Britain tend to foster patriarchal values which can impose constraints on the female members. Ideas of what it is to be a 'good' Hindu woman often revolve around themes of modesty and self-effacement, obedience to one's parents, husband, and in-laws, chastity, a sacrificing spirit and selfless service to one's family. These characteristics may impact an individual's autonomy, interactions and ambitions. Whilst most second and third generation Hindu immigrants in Britain are increasingly autonomous in this regard, there remain some who are more conservative.

Family values - For some Hindus their sense of familial loyalty and bonding is an important issue. Hindu children are often brought up to respect the authority of their parents. This can potentially put a constraint on their individualism, and situations which require Hindu children to act contrary to the wishes of their parents may cause conflict.

ISLAM

Followers of Islam are called Muslims. The word Islam means 'submission to the will of God'. Muslims believe that there is only One God and the Arabic word for God is Allah. According to Muslims, God sent a number of prophets to mankind to teach them how to live according to his law. Jesus, Moses and Abraham are respected as prophets of God. They believe that the final Prophet was Muhammad.

1 billion
Islamic followers globally

Muslims base their laws on their holy book the Qur'an and believe that there are five Pillars of Islam which must be adhered to. These are the declaration of one's faith, praying five times a day, fasting during Ramadan, giving reasonable earnings to charity (also known as 'Zakat') and, if viable, a pilgrimage to Mecca in a Muslim's lifetime.

KEY DATES

There are two major festivals in Islam that all Muslims celebrate, Eid ul-Adha and Eid ul-Fitr. However, there are several others that are celebrated only by certain Muslim groups.

Eid ul-Adha (Eid al-Adha) - Eid-ul-Adha (the Festival of Sacrifice) is celebrated throughout the Muslim world as a commemoration of Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail to God. It is celebrated on the 10th day of the month of Dhu al Hijja (12th month of the Muslim Lunar calendar).

During Eid ul-Adha, communities decorate both their homes and streets. They also attend the formal Eid Prayer at Mosques, exchange gifts and participate in a celebratory meal. It is common practice for Muslims to celebrate this festival across two or three days.

Eid ul-Fitr (Eid al-Fitr) - Eid ul-Fitr marks the breaking of the fast on the first day after the month of Ramadan and continues for three days in a similar manner to Eid al-Adha. Many Muslims spend the last few days of Ramadan in reflection with their families and prepare for the Eid celebrations.

You may hear these colloquially referred to as big Eid (Eid ul-Adha) and little Eid (Eid ul-Fitr).

Ramadan - is the name of the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims believe it is the month during which the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over 1400 years ago. Ramadan is the holiest month of the year for Muslims, and it is considered that the reward of good deeds during this month are multiplied several-fold.

During Ramadan, from dawn until sunset, Muslims are obliged to abstain from all forms of food, drink (including water), smoking, immoral behaviours and thoughts, and sex. Most Muslims will wake before dawn for a meal before the start of their fast and break their fast with dates and water at sunset. This is followed by a meal, often celebrated with extended family.

As a matter of simple courtesy, non-Muslims may consider refraining from eating, drinking or smoking openly in the presence of Muslims who are fasting during the day in Ramadan.

Where Ramadan falls during the winter months and the breaking of the fast is before the end of the working day, it is normal for Muslims who are fasting to wish to be able to break the fast and pray the sunset prayer at the appropriate time.

Muslims who are fasting may have reduced energy and concentration may be impaired as the day progresses. For some, this could become more pronounced as the month goes on. This will be due to fasting and disrupted sleep patterns, as people tend to stay up late at night to socialise and wake up early for a predawn meal. It is good practice to take this into account and factor in flexibility where possible. However, the fasting period reduces in length slightly each day because of the lunar calendar.

Lailatul-mi'raj - celebrates the night of the ascent when the Prophet ascended to heaven. This festival occurs on the 27th day in the month of Rajab, the 7th month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

Muharram - The festival of Muharram celebrates the Islamic New Year's Day and is named after the first month of the Islamic calendar. This festival lasts for ten days. The first eight days are counted from New Year's Day. The last two days are celebrated through fasting to celebrate the day Prophet Moses saved the people of Israel from the Pharaoh.

Al-Mawlid-an-Nabawi - celebrates the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. He was born on the morning of the 12th day in the month of Rabi' alAwwal, the 3rd month of the Islamic year. According to the Gregorian calendar, this would be August 20th, 570 AD. The Prophet died 63 years later, on the same day. This day may be celebrated with parties and other gatherings.

ETHICS

Modesty –Islam has a strong view of 'indecent' behaviours, for example any activity that would involve close contact between men and women. This idea may extend to views around modesty and avoiding clothes that are revealing.

From a modesty perspective, many Muslim women choose to wear a headscarf, often referred to as the Hijab. The majority of Muslim scholars of both genders believe that according to the Islamic sources, women are to cover their whole body with clothes, except their face, hands and feet, when outside the immediate family circle. They do

not need to be covered when they are in exclusively female company, nor in the company of male family members within the degrees of relationship that prohibit marriage (i.e., father, grandfather, brother, son and uncle). It is important to note that there are also many Muslim women who choose not to wear the Hijab in the UK, as it is often also culturally significant for some ethnicities.

Language – Obscene language and swearing may be offensive to Muslims.

Food – Many Muslims follow a strict dietary law, which means that pork is prohibited in any form or food that has come in to contact with pork products. Products containing blood are also prohibited. Halal meat must be slaughtered in a certain way and the blood removed. Most seafood and all vegetables are permissible.

Alcohol –Muslims are not permitted to consume alcohol or other intoxicants that interfere with the clear functioning of the mind. Some Muslims will prefer to avoid gatherings that involve the consumption of alcohol.

Sexual orientation – Many Islamic scholars agree that the religion forbids same sex relationships. Consequently, many Muslims feel strongly on this issue. It's important to consider intersectionality here too, as some individuals may be reflecting on their own identity being both LGBTQ+ and Muslim.

JUDAISM

Judaism is the original of the three Abrahamic faiths, which also includes Christianity and Islam. Jews believe that there is only one God with whom they have a covenant. In exchange for all the good that God has done, Jewish people keep to God's laws and try to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives. However, there are many people who identify themselves as Jewish without necessarily believing in, or observing, any Jewish law. Judaism is also recognised as a race under the Equality Act of 2010.

263,346
Jews in the England & Wales
(2011 Census)

Judaism has a rich history of religious text, but the central and most important religious document is the Torah. Spiritual leaders are called Rabbis and Jews worship in Synagogues.

KEY DATES

The Jewish calendar is lunar. There are thirteen months in the religious year and festivals occur on certain days on these months. Consequently, the Jewish festivals do not occur on the same date in the secular calendar each year.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - Rosh Hashanah occurs in the autumn and marks the Jewish new year. It is followed ten days later by the most solemn day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On both days, religious Jews spend the day in the Synagogue, praying, repenting of sin, and getting their lives in order. On the Day of Atonement, religious Jews fast completely for 24 hours to atone for past wrongdoing.

The three pilgrim festivals - In ancient times Jews would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the following three festivals:

- **Passover** (Pesach) in the spring.
- **Pentecost** (Shavuot) which occurs seven weeks later.
- **Tabernacles** (Succoth) in the autumn.

All these festivals are agricultural in origin, but they also commemorate important events in Jewish history. There are ancient rituals connected with them. Notably, Passover is the most widely celebrated.

There are many other Jewish fasts and feasts besides the above, such as the Feast of Esther (Purim), the Feast of Lights (Hanukkah) and the Fast of Av.

ETHICS

The Sabbath - The Jewish Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, Saturday. It begins on Friday evening at sunset, and it ends a little more than 24 hours later on Saturday evening when it is dark. Observant Jews observe the Sabbath by avoiding any form of work, including driving cars. Although Sabbath occurs weekly, for observant Jews its

strict observance is key, so it will be important to consider this when scheduling netball activity. Especially during the winter months as the sun sets earlier in the UK and observant Jews will want to be at home to prepare for the Sabbath by 4pm on a Friday.

Food - In brief, for those who are observant, it is forbidden to eat birds of prey, shellfish and animals which do not both chew the cud and have a cloven hoof. Animals must be slaughtered in a certain way by qualified slaughterers. Additionally, meat-based products must not be mixed with milk-based foods. For some, this may include the use of separate cutlery and utensils.

Consequently, very Orthodox Jews will only eat food which has been inspected and prepared within their own community. This may mean that they will bring their own food and will not share food with others. Less observant Jews may not keep Kosher at all or have a less strict approach to the laws above, so it is best to check if in doubt.

During Passover, observant Jews will not eat bread, or anything made with flour.

Gender - Traditionally, Judaism is a patriarchal religion with clearly defined roles for men and women. These divisions remain among the strictly Orthodox where women's lives may revolve around domesticity and child-rearing. However, in recent decades attitudes have been shifting within the mainstream Jewish community.

Sexual orientation - Traditional Jewish law makes it clear that same sex relationships are prohibited. However, nowadays Jews in the UK reject this teaching for the most part.

SIKHISM

Sikhism is considered to be a race under the Equality Act of 2010. Sikhs believe in one God and the religion stresses the importance of carrying out sound moral deeds, rather than merely conforming to ritualistic norms and values. The most important thing in Sikhism is the internal religious state of the individual. The way to lead a good life is to

432,000
Sikhs in the UK
(2011 Census)

- always keep God in the heart and mind
- live honestly
- work hard. Also
- treat everyone equally, be generous to the less fortunate and serve others

The Sikh place of worship is called a Gurdwara and the Sikh scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib. Devout Sikhs show their commitment through the Five Ks or panj kakke. These five symbols are required of both men and women and include: Kesh—uncut hair, Kangha—wooden comb worn in the hair, Kara—steel or silver wristband, Kirpan—sword, and Kach—special shorts which are worn as an undergarment.

The code of discipline for devout Sikhs is the Rahit Maryada. Key beliefs and practices include believing only in the teachings of the ten Gurus, reciting morning and evening prayer daily, attendance at the Gurdwara, the prohibition of tobacco, intoxicants, adultery and the consumption of animals which have been slaughtered in a sacrificial way e.g. Halal and Kosher products.

KEY DATES

Until 2003, the Sikh calendar was based upon the Hindu calendar, but from that date onwards, the Nanakshahi calendar was authorised in Amritsar for use worldwide and now most festivals have dates that are consistent with the secular calendar. Only three celebrations continue to reflect the Hindu calendar:

- Hola Mahalla falls in March (the day after the Hindu festival of Holi mentioned above).
- Diwali or Bandi Chhor Divas is celebrated in late October or early November.
- Guru Nanak's Birthday is celebrated in November.

Other festivals that are especially important include:

- Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday – 5th January.
- Vaisakhi/Baisakhi, the anniversary of the Khalsa - 14th April.
- Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev – 16th June.
- Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadar – 24th November.

The festivals are chiefly celebrated in Gurdwaras. Vaisakhi and the Birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh can involve street processions. A continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib commences 48 hours beforehand, culminating with congregational worship on the morning of the festival day.

ETHICS

Gender - Sikhs do not tend to seek segregation of the sexes and often proudly point to gender equality in their community. But, in traditional Sikh communities, it is common for girl's behaviour, especially mixing with the opposite sex, to be more closely supervised.

Marriage and relationships - Family honour continues to be a guiding concern in Sikh families. Over the centuries, families have felt the greatest dishonour when the reputation of their daughters is at stake. For this reason, Sikh women may be acutely anxious about any gossip getting back to their families or social circles.

Sexual Orientation - In most cases, same sex relationships are unlikely to be acknowledged or approved of by traditional Sikh families, although there is an increasing awareness of the fact that some individuals in society are gay.

Food - Devout Sikhs may be strictly vegetarian/vegan, including no cheese or egg-based products.

Alcohol and smoking - Some Sikhs of both sexes will strictly abstain from both alcohol and smoking. They may also be uncomfortable in social situations where these are prominent.

USEFUL RESOURCES

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS CALENDAR

The Inter Faith Network

https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals

FACILITAING MULTI-FAITH CONVERSATIONS

Building good relations between people of different religions and faiths The Inter Faith Network

https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/building-good-relations-with-people-of-different-faiths-and-beliefs

Let's talk: Practical pointers for interfaith dialogue The Inter Faith Network

https://www.interfaith.org.uk/uploads/LetsTalk2017web.pdf

The Public Conversations Project Dialogue is a method to enable people to talk constructively and compromise on topics that are deeply divisive and linked to core identity or values
https://www.civicus.org/documents/toolkits/PGX_D_Public%20Conversations.pdf