



# MUSLIM NETWORK

## ISLAMIC PRAYERS

GUIDANCE FOR NHS STAFF AND MANAGERS

### INTRODUCTION

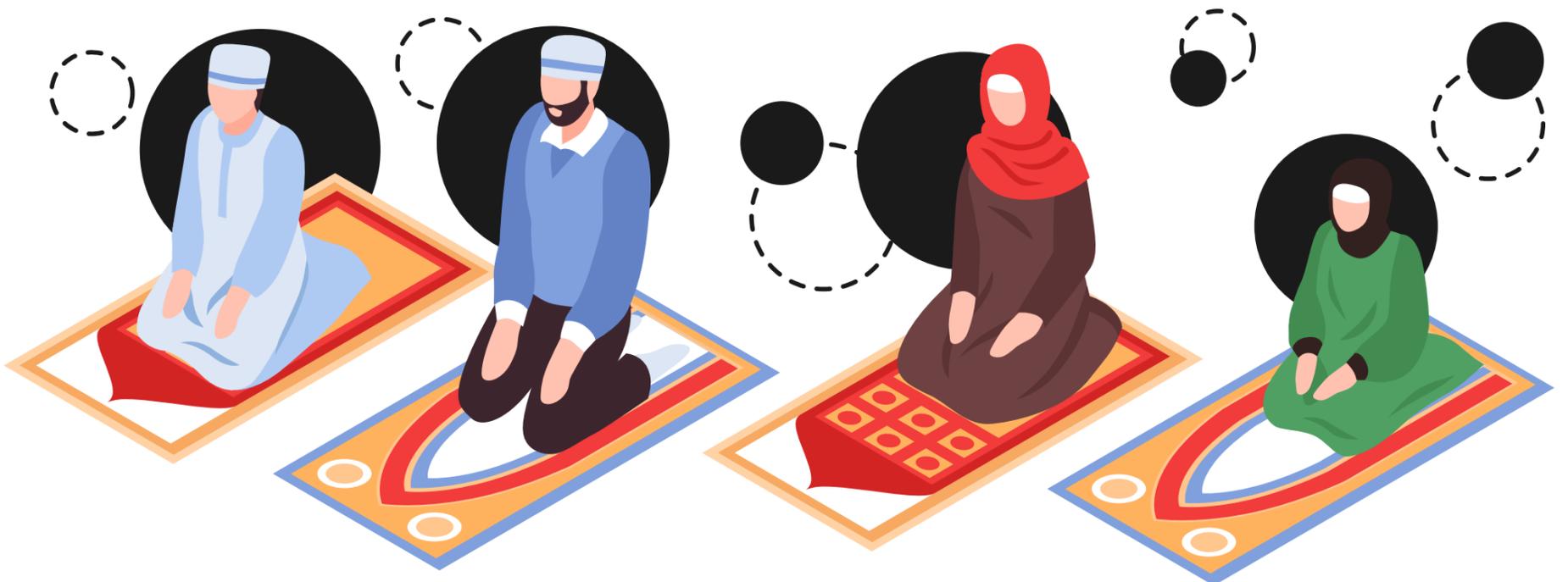
*This guidance is designed, for managers and team members, to increase awareness relating to Islamic prayer times. It has been prepared in the spirit of creating an inclusive workplace that respects the beliefs and practices of its Muslim staff. The guidance is geared towards non-clinical NHS settings in particular.*

*Muslim staff make-up a significant proportion of the NHS workforce. Enabling flexibility and allowing for reasonable adjustments at work will support Muslim employees to observe their religious obligations, feel comfortable embracing their identity in the workplace and enable them to bring their whole selves to work.*

### WHAT IS THE ISLAMIC PRAYER?

*Many Muslims pray five times a day. The importance of this is indicated by the status of prayer as one of the five pillars of Islam. The prayers are as follows:*

- **FAJR (MORNING PRAYER)** – starts at dawn and ends with sunrise
- **DHUHR (EARLY AFTERNOON PRAYER)** – starts just after midday
- **ASR (LATER AFTERNOON PRAYER)** – between mid-afternoon and sunset
- **MAGHRIB (EVENING PRAYER)** – just after sunset
- **ISHA (NIGHT PRAYER)** – starts from the disappearance of twilight



*During a typical working day (i.e. 9am – 5.30pm) Muslim employees may pray two to three times. Duhr (early afternoon) prayer may take place around noon and can be performed during a lunch break, Asr (late afternoon) may occur during work hours around late afternoon, and during the winter, when the days are much shorter, Muslim employees may need to pray Maghrib (evening) during work hours at sunset.*



**More information around prayer times can be found here.**



Individuals may perform these prayers differently; some may combine certain prayers and perform these together at once. Similarly, some may take slightly longer or shorter to perform prayers. The recommended 10-15 minutes includes the act of purification (washing) required before prayer.

Prayers should take place somewhere that is clean and quiet. In the office, this can be in a prayer room or a dedicated space. Having this space means Muslim employees do not have to worry about finding a place to pray, explaining themselves or being interrupted or embarrassed.

Friday prayers are particularly important and may take longer than other prayers. For some, Friday prayers are to be conducted in congregation, include an address/sermon and may require travel to the nearest mosque. However, if there are larger numbers of Muslim staff in one facility, they may hold a congregation themselves as opposed to going to a mosque. Friday prayers can take place in an extended lunch break and this time can be made up by coming in earlier or staying late.

The Muslim Network Health Collaborative recommends that managers and team members should be flexible where possible and consult with employees about how they perform their prayers, and what accommodation may be needed for them, as this can differ from person to person. It is important not to assume that all Muslims practice their prayers and faith identically.

Due to remote working, the number of meetings for many staff members has increased, often with continuous meetings for numerous consecutive hours. This may mean that Muslim staff do not have time to perform their prayers, posing a different set of issues for remote workers.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NHSEI STAFF

These recommendations will ensure an inclusive work culture that is considerate of the various commitments staff have, particularly in the context of remote working:

- 1** Managers and team members should avoid scheduling meetings over lunch time and around sunset. This ensures Muslim staff can perform their prayers. If unsure, reach out to your meeting attendees beforehand to check which times work best.
  - a.** Alternatively – consider putting meetings in for 25/50 minutes rather than an half an hour/an hour. This gives Muslim staff time to pray and other colleagues a break between meetings.
- 2** Muslim employees may decline a non-urgent meeting if it clashes with their prayer time, please consider rescheduling the meeting to ensure your Muslim colleagues can attend.
- 3** Managers and team members should consider scheduling important meetings at suitable times for all, this may mean considering a late morning slot to avoid any prayer times, lunch time or other commitments staff may have i.e. school runs.
- 4** Muslim staff should consider blocking out short slots in their diary where they may need to be away from your desk to pray. Consequently, colleagues should be considerate in timing meeting around the blocked slots.
- 5** If a meeting clashes partially with a prayer time, Muslim staff should consider letting the meeting organiser know that they will be a few minutes late or need to leave a few minutes early.

These guidelines are important to create a comfortable workplace in which all employees feel valued and respected. This has been shown to increase productivity, performance, wellbeing and retention of employees, with benefits for employers and organisations.

This document is the first in a series of guidance on these matters. We also intend to publish guidance for clinical staff and updated guidance when remote staff return to the office.

