Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community

Understanding, respecting and valuing the diverse communities of Sussex

Working together to make Sussex a safer, more sustainable and cohesive community
Alternative Formats and Translation

**Albanian**
Me kërkesë, një përmbledhje e këtij dokumenti gjendet edhe në gjuyl shqipe.

**Arabic**
ملخص لهذه الوثيقة متاحا أيضا باللغة العربية عند الطلب.

**Bengali**
এই ডকুমেন্টের সারাংশ ও অনুরূপে বাংলায় পাওয়া যায়।

**Cantonese**
本文档的摘要也可應要求製作成中文 (繁體字) 版本。

**Farsi**
خلاصه شده این مدرک هم در صورت درخواست به فارسی موجود است.

**Russian**
Краткое содержание настоящего документа по отдельному запросу предоставляется также на русском языке.

**Gujarati**
આ દૃષ્ટાંભનો ટ્રૂકસ્ટર વિનંતી કરવાની જુદરાતીમાં ફલા મળી રહેશે.

**Kurdish**
کوردی مکمی نەمە شەگە به پێی داوەکاری به زمانی کوردی دەگەوێت

**Portuguese**
Encontra-se também disponível um sumário deste documento em Português pedido.

**Polish**
Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany w języku polskim.

**0845 130 8855**

The following formats are available on request:

**Large print** (reformatted and increased to 18 point sans serif font)

**CD ROM** in plain text format to enable computer ‘reader’ systems to access and translate the information. Audio Tape, Audio CD and Braille.

**Pictoral format** suitable for people with learning difficulties (‘easy read’)

For translations of this document please contact the
Media and Communications Officer

**Tel:** 0845 130 8855
**Minicom:** 01323 725574
**Mobile text number:** 07743 672733
**Fax:** 01323 462049
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Foreword

Both East and West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services are dedicated to embedding fair treatment and dignity into our working environment and we value the contribution diversity brings to both the Service and the community.

This ‘Religion, Belief & Culture’ guide, helps to illustrate our commitment to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and developing good relations between people of different ethnic groups. It will help ensure that we develop robust policies and strategies that recognise and respond to the diverse and differing needs of our communities as we work towards achieving our key priorities as a Service.

“Welcoming and embracing diversity is a responsibility for all of us in the Fire & Rescue Service to help support and promote cultural change. It will encourage talented individuals to join the Fire & Rescue Service, enabling us to develop and deliver effective and high quality services to our local communities.”

Excerpt from Des Prichard’s speech at the launch of the guide on 17th November 2006.
Aims of this Literature

- To provide an opportunity for a better understanding of religion/belief within the diverse communities of East and West Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove.
- To provide a general knowledge of their culture and historical background.
- To give general information on the customs of dress, diet, visits, marriage, funerals, language, birth and medical matters.
- To introduce some of the major festivals celebrated by the various religions and beliefs.

This guide has been prepared to increase awareness of some of the cultures which make up the modern Sussex community. It is focused on religious groups although the authors are aware that not all faith groups represented in Sussex are featured and those profiled provide a broad overview to the wide and varied range of beliefs which make their pursuit an enriching experience for thousands of people in Sussex. The in-depth section has been restricted to those religions listed in the 2001 census with the quick facts section including a much wider range of beliefs.

Future editions may be extended to include a focus on the lives and traditions of other less well understood groups such as Gypsies and Travellers, both New Age and traditional, along with a focus on the ethnic diversity within Sussex including asylum seekers, migrant workers and refugees.

At the end of this guide is a quick reference to each of the religions and beliefs.

The Community Fire Safety section of this guide has been included not just to promote general fire safety, but to encourage the reader to link religious festivals and customs to aspects of fire safety, particularly in the home of those celebrating their own religions and to make Sussex a safer community.

Both East and West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services believe that education and publicity are the most effective ways of improving fire safety. This is in line with ESFRS’s Strategic Objective No.2 “To ensure a competent, diverse, safe and valued workforce” Strategic Objective No.4 “To embed and embrace equality and diversity principles in all that we do” and WSFRS’s Strategic Key Priority No.9 “Provide a well trained and safe workforce that reflects the values held by the community in terms of equality, diversity and value for money”.

Both East and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Services have received some very positive feedback about this guide which has been highlighted in The Government Office for the South East Partners’ Quarterly Newsletter (Issue 16/March 2007). There has also been some invaluable feedback from religious and non-religious groups in Sussex who have helped us to create a more informative document.

We encourage, and would like, religious and non-religious groups to contact us in order to improve the Guide and build positive relationships with all of the diverse religions and beliefs in East and West Sussex.
Introduction

Sussex is made up of many diverse and culturally rich communities, despite the relatively small numbers of many of these communities when compared to some other parts of England and Wales. This guide has been produced to help develop our knowledge and understanding of some of the faiths and cultural information of the local community in which we serve. It is intended that future editions will be more expansive providing further information to our personnel and the community.

What Do We Mean By ‘Ethnic Diversity’?

Britain has been home to Black and minority ethnic communities for many centuries, with people with diverse histories, cultures, beliefs and languages settling here since the beginning of recorded time. In AD203 Septimus Severus arrived in Britain and was the first Black Roman Emperor not born and raised in Italy. His legions were made up of different ethnic groups from Spain, Africa, Italy and Germany, some of which remained in Britain after their tour of duty. In the late Middle Ages the Moors from Spain (conquered by Muslims from North Africa) arrived in Britain and the number of Africans in Britain began to increase. Indians first arrived in Britain mainly because Britain traded with, and later colonised, India. In the 1840s large numbers of Indians began to migrate to the Carribean as labourers. Some of these migrants or their descendants eventually settled in Britain.

It was Britain’s involvement in the slave trade which began in the 16th century that had the greatest influence over the size and pattern of its Black population. Over 400 years, Europeans transported many millions of Africans to labour in their colonies in the Americas. Many estate owners from the West Indies bought their household slaves to Britain to work as servants.

The Huguenots (Protestant refugees who arrived in the 17th Century), gradually became assimilated into the UK community. Others, such as Irish and Jewish groups who came over a longer period, have, to some extent, maintained a closer group identity. People from South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean arrived in substantial numbers after the Second World War to help meet severe labour shortages at that time. Subsequent decades have seen our communities enriched by those travelling from all parts of the globe, some fleeing persecution and war in the steps of the Huguenots, and others arriving at our invitation or on their own initiative to improve the quality of life for residents and incomers alike. Sussex has a number of small ports and also a major airport and so will be the first British soil which many travellers step onto. However, diversity in Sussex, in comparison to the country as a whole, is very limited outside of Crawley and to a lesser extent urban areas such as Brighton & Hove.

What Do We Mean By ‘Religious Diversity’?

Whilst this guide may be a useful source of information, it cannot be stressed too highly that we are all individuals, varying widely in our religious orthodoxy and having regard to the customs associated with our beliefs. It is worth noting that customs and cultural traditions sometimes become intertwined with religious observance.

The census of 2001 provided a level of knowledge of the declared beliefs of those who took part. This was the first serious attempt by Government agencies to measure our religious traditions since the census 150 years earlier. The figures used in this guide are taken from the census, apart from that for the Christian Church*, and may not be wholly accurate. The primary reason for believing that a number of groups were not accurately recorded was that the population of Sussex was registered as 1.49 million when other evidence indicated the figure is nearer 1.54 million.
Introduction

Statistics from the 2001 census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Faith</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>42,079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>559</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>267</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim (Islam)</td>
<td>1,591</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>All Religions</td>
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<td>9,104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>4,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All No Religion/Not stated</td>
<td>13,626</td>
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</table>

Sussex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Faith</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>4,789</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>100,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>6,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>5,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim (Islam)</td>
<td>14,222</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>1,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7,676</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The data for the Christian Church is based on returns from the churches themselves (a measure of attendance at church services and not belief). The census recorded the number of respondents as describing themselves as Christians as 1.07 million.
These individuals are not evenly distributed across Sussex as a whole, and each urban centre has a different profile as far as faith identity is concerned. Many faith communities and traditions are centred around a communal place of worship which tends to draw individuals to towns with such facilities. There are twice as many Buddhists in Brighton & Hove as the average for England and Wales, and the Jewish community in the City is three times the average size. Half of the Sussex Muslim community lives in either Brighton & Hove or Crawley. Crawley is also home to half of the Hindu and Sikh residents of Sussex.
Cross Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication (inter-cultural communication) is a term which relates to establishing and understanding how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate with each other. Understanding and respecting cultural differences promotes clearer communication, breaks down barriers, builds trust and strengthens our relationship with our diverse communities.

**Do** check what individuals mean when they use the term 'cousin', 'uncle', 'aunt' etc. They may have a different meaning to what you are used to.

**Do** be careful when using jargon or slang when speaking to individuals from differing communities.

**Do** be careful how you use gestures or body language, it may be interpreted as offensive by some members of the community.

**Do** be aware of colloquialisms or terms of endearment, e.g. luv, dear, etc. What is innocent to you may be offensive to others.

**Do** seek advice, where possible, from colleagues with different cultural backgrounds, about how to communicate effectively.

**Do** be aware that handshaking between people from different genders is not always considered appropriate and do not be offended if an outreached hand is not returned.

**Do** be aware that within some communities, some women may not feel comfortable being alone in a room with a man who is not a relative.

**Do** take care to be patient and reassuring when accents, or language, hinder communication.

**Do** be aware that some acts of physical contact, even those done with the intention of comforting an individual e.g. putting an arm around them, may cause embarrassment or offence.

**Don't** ask for a 'Christian' name. Ask for the 'first' and 'last name' instead. There are a multitude of differences between how different cultures address themselves. The only sure way of getting it right is to ask people how they would like to be addressed.

**Don't** assume that a response to a question in English means that the individual fully understands what you are saying.

**Don't** assume references to day or time has the same interpretation as yours, e.g. 'afternoon' may mean a different period of time other than the one you are used to.

**Don't** assume lack of eye contact during conversation is a sign of dishonesty or disrespect, in some communities it means the opposite.

**Don't** make generalisations about groups or individuals.

**Don't** assume an individual’s language is the same as that of their country of origin.

**Don't** assume that all individuals from a particular country have identical cultural backgrounds or beliefs.

**Don't** assume just because an individual is raising their voice they are losing control or becoming aggressive.

**Don't** underestimate how your own cultural background may affect your perception and behaviour towards others.

**Don't** enter a room unless invited to do so. It may be a prayer room where important customs should be respected.

**Don't** forget that many people remove shoes before entering some rooms at home, as well as a Mosque, etc. If in doubt ask, you will be told if it is necessary or not.
Ethnic Origin Guidelines

When referring to people by ethnic origin, if you are unsure of how an individual or group may wish to be identified then it would be reasonable to ASK.

Below are terms frequently used to describe Ethnic origin:

**African**
This is often used to describe Black people from Africa, but, individuals often prefer to identify with their country of origin and will use Nigerian, Somali, etc.

**African Caribbean**
This is often used as a general term to describe Black people from the Caribbean, and should be discouraged. The terms ‘Black African’, ‘Black British’ and ‘Black Caribbean’ are now standard terms used and the umbrella term ‘Black’ as a general term can also be acceptable - although this is not universally acceptable.

‘West Indian’ is a historical term used in Britain previously to describe first-generation settlers from the Caribbean. In most contexts it is inappropriate and may be offensive.

**Asian**
This is a general term, and although not unacceptable, it is very imprecise. It is far more acceptable to the persons concerned to be identified in terms of their national origin, e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Mauritian, region of origin, e.g. Bengali.

Although terms such as South Asian, in reference to people from the Indian sub-continent (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi), or South Eastern Asian are sometimes used, many people may not be clear as to what you mean. Refer to people by their country of origin, such as Vietnamese, Malaysian, etc., when this is known, and you will reduce the risk of offence, however unintended.

**Black**
‘Black’ has more than one meaning, a literal meaning relating to skin colour but also a broader political meaning e.g. ‘Black Politics’. Some people will define themselves as ‘Black’ even though others may not perceive them to be. Not all people find the term acceptable, but if it is used it should be as an adjective (a describing word) e.g. ‘black communities’, not as a noun e.g. ‘the blacks’

**Black British**
Although this is often seen on official documentation, when racial identity is an issue, people in general, particularly young people, will refer to themselves as ‘Black’.
Ethnic Origin Guidelines

British
The term ‘British’ relates to characteristics of Great Britain or its people or culture. Nearly everyone born in Britain has British citizenship, regardless of colour or ethnicity and the term should not be used as another word for ‘white’.

Coloured
This is not acceptable. Many people find it offensive. Although this term was in common usage some years ago, it is now used less often and has been replaced by the term ‘Black’.

Non-White
Many people may find this term deeply offensive, as its origins relate to apartheid. The term should be avoided.

Half Caste
The use of the term half-caste was widely used until recent times. It is now regarded as offensive by many people due to its origins within the Hindu Caste System, in which being half-caste could mean social exclusion for the individual concerned.

Mixed Race
This is generally accepted, but can sometimes have negative connotations. An alternative is ‘mixed parentage’ or ‘dual parentage’. The term ‘multi-racial’ may also be used, for example as in reference to a ‘multi-racial household’. ‘Mixed cultural heritage’ is increasingly used in educational circles.

Self-classification of Ethnic Origin
When dealing with people from any community their own self-classification of ethnic origin is important and should be recorded in line with their wishes. Where the self-classification may be perceived by others as derogatory, particularly in written statements, it is recommended that clarification is added in brackets e.g. Half-caste (mixed race/parentage) or coloured (Black).

Minority Ethnic Communities/Minority Ethnic
These terms are widely used and generally accepted in the broadest term to encompass all those groups who see themselves as distinct from the majority of the population in terms of cultural or ethnic identity and not just ‘Black’ or ‘visible’ minorities. ‘Ethnics’ as a term on its own is not acceptable. Neither should a term such as ‘immigrants’ be used generally, unless in its strict technical sense. It is also important to note here that the term “communities” should be used. A community in its singular sense refers to one homogeneous group, which the minority ethnic communities living in one area rarely are.
These are the main festivals and celebrations throughout the year. The month of the festivals may change as many depend on the phases of the moon. If you search the internet for any of these festivals there are numerous websites which will provide a description of the festival/celebration and the activities involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>March</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh - Sikh</td>
<td>Hola Mohalla - Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian Christmas Day - Rastafarian</td>
<td>Purim - Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makar Sankrant - Hindu</td>
<td>Holi - Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajj - Muslim</td>
<td>Spring Equinox - Pagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eid-Ul-Adha - Muslim</td>
<td>Naw-Ruz - Baha’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Hijira (Islamic New Year) - Muslim</td>
<td>Jamshedi Noruz (Fasil New Year’s Day) - Zoroastrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losar - Buddhist</td>
<td>Khordad Sal (Fasil calender) - Zoroastrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shogatsu - Japanese Shinto</td>
<td>Hina-matsuri - Japanese Shinto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese New Year - Chinese</td>
<td>Shubun-sai - Japanese Shinto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphany - Christian</td>
<td>Palm Sunday - Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - Christian</td>
<td>Good Friday - Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism of Jesus - Christian</td>
<td>Annunciation - Christian</td>
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<tr>
<th>February</th>
<th>April</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu B’Shevat - Jewish</td>
<td>Vaisakhi (Baisakhi-Sikh New Year) - Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasant Panchami - Hindu</td>
<td>Passover (Pesach) – Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahashivratri - Hindu</td>
<td>Yom Hashoah – Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbolc - Pagan</td>
<td>Rama Navami – Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashura - Muslim</td>
<td>Hanuman Jayanti – Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magha Puja - Buddhist</td>
<td>Beltane – Pagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parinirvana - Buddhist</td>
<td>Milad un Nabi (Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) – Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setsubun - Japanese Shinto</td>
<td>Ridvan –Baha’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lent - Christian</td>
<td>Mahavira Jayanti – Jain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candlemas - Christian</td>
<td>Easter – Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lantern Festival - Chinese</td>
<td>Ching Ming – Chinese</td>
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## Festivals and Celebrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May</th>
<th>September</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yom Ha’Atzmut - Jewish</td>
<td>Ethiopian New Year - Rastafarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesak (Buddha Day) - Buddhist</td>
<td>Ganesh Chaturthi - Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of the Bab - Baha’i</td>
<td>Autumn Equinox - Pagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascension of Baha’u’Ilah - Baha’i</td>
<td>Lailat-ul-Bara’h - Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecost/Whitsun - Christian</td>
<td>Ramadan - Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascension Day - Christian</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>June</th>
<th>October</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev - Sikh</td>
<td>Yom Kippur - Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dragon Boat Festival - Chinese</td>
<td>Rosh Hashanah - Jewish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shavuot - Jewish</td>
<td>Sukkot - Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Solstice - Pagan</td>
<td>Simchat Torah - Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corpus Christi - Christian</td>
<td>Navaratri - Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Humanist Day - Humanist</td>
<td>Dussera - Hindu</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>November</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I - Rastafarian</td>
<td>Diwali - Hindu, Sikh and Jain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asala - Buddhist</td>
<td>Birthday of Guru Nanak - Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martyrdom of the Bab - Baha’i</td>
<td>The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur - Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratha Yathra - Hindu</td>
<td>Anniversary of the Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I - Rastafarian</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>August</th>
<th>November (continued)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birthday of Marcus Garvey - Rastafarian</td>
<td>Birth of Baha’u’Ilah - Baha’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tish B’Av - Jewish</td>
<td>Ascension of Abdu’l-Baha - Baha’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raksha Bandhan - Hindu</td>
<td>Advent - Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janamashtami - Hindu</td>
<td>All Saints Day - Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lughnasadh - Pagan</td>
<td>All Souls Day - Christian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khordad Sal (Shenshai calendar) - Zoroastrian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paryushana - Jain No Ruz (Shenshai New Year’s Day) - Zoroastrian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farvandigan (Fasil) - Zoroastrian</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfiguration - Christian</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Assumption - Christian</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannukah - Jewish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Solstice - Pagan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bodhi Day - Buddhist</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zartusht-no-Diso (Shenshai) - Zoroastrian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas - Christian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feast of the Immaculate Conception - Christian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Faith
Buddhism began in Northern India over 2,500 years ago, and is based upon the teachings of Siddattha Gotoma who became known as the 'Buddha' - the enlightened one. After searching for a way to free himself and others from suffering he discovered enlightenment. For the next forty five years he instructed those who were willing to listen in the methods to achieve this for themselves. Nothing was written down by the Buddha, but he left a legacy in the form of a teaching (the Dhamma) that was at first conveyed orally by the religious order the Sangha (a community of monks and nuns) that he founded and guided. Monks and Nuns (mendicants) are not permitted to preach, they are spiritual companions who can only teach when asked to do so.

In order to help people realise that the normal understanding of life is inadequate, the Buddha spoke about 'dukkha' (roughly translated as unsatisfactoriness). He summarised his teachings as the Truth about dukkha; its origin, its ending and the path to its ending. These core teachings were to be measured against one's experiences and used for guidance. They are known as the Four Noble Truths; first that all life is unsatisfactory, second that this springs from our craving. Complete happiness can be gained by the third, which is the absolute elimination of craving. This is achieved by the fourth Noble Truth, which comprises of following what is referred to as the The Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. the path of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. All eight components of this path are required to be developed together in order to achieve full enlightenment. The Dhammacakka Wheel represents the doctrine 'set rolling' by the Buddha. The eight spokes Eightfold Path, the fourth Noble Truth and the Path to the end of suffering. Buddhism is divided into a number of different traditions and there are two main schools - The Theravada, or "Teaching of the Elders" and Mahayana, or "Greater Vehicle".

Dress
Generally there are no religious requirements for everyday dress for lay Buddhists. Buddhist monks or nuns of the Theravada school wear robes of orange or ochre colour. They shave their heads and carry bowls, in which they carry the food that other Buddhists give them as they are prohibited from growing food or having money.

Language
The main language for Buddhists is the spoken language of the country of residence. Depending upon the particular school the teachings have been written in either Pali (Theravada school) or Sanskrit (Mahayana school).
Buddhism

Diet
Many Buddhists are vegetarian - but this is a personal preference.

Visits in the Home
There may be a small shrine or image of the Buddha in the home. A gift of flowers would be acceptable when visiting. Shoes should never be worn in a shrine room.

Place of Worship
When visiting a Vihara or shrine, offerings of food for the community, flowers and incense are welcomed. When entering a Vihara or shrine it is respectful to dress modestly and remove shoes. Seating is usually on the floor and it is important to remain quiet as the shrine room is used for meditation; visitors are not expected to join in but may do so if they wish.

Names
As Buddhists come from a wide variety of backgrounds it is best to ask what people call themselves. If a name is required for records, it is advisable to first ask the family name and use this as the surname.

Birth
The birth of a baby is a special time for family celebration. There is usually no specific ceremony carried out at the birth, although Monks may be invited into the home to chant texts from Buddhist scriptures and the baby may be taken to a Buddhist temple to be blessed by the Monks.

Marriage
Some Buddhist marriages are arranged by their parents. Dress is usually the wearing of 'best clothes' to suit what best reflects the guests' own tradition. The ceremony is not religious and can take place anywhere. After the ceremony the couple can either invite the Monks into their home or visit a Vihara to have the marriage blessed. After the wedding ceremonies there is generally feasting and celebration for the bride and groom, relatives and guests.
Buddhism

Medical
Many Eastern Buddhists favour home remedies in the case of illness. For hospital stays, a Buddhist Monk or nun would prefer to be treated by a member of staff of the same sex. Showers are considered to be preferable to baths. There are no religious objections to blood transfusions or transplants. A Buddhist should be informed of the effects of medicines if they are likely to cause drowsiness or unconsciousness. It is one of the rules for many Buddhists that they take no drugs that might cloud their mind.

Funerals
After death, a Monk from the same school of Buddhism as the deceased should be informed as soon as possible. Buddhists view death as natural and inevitable and hope the deceased may gain a favourable rebirth (if they have not attained Nirvana). Buddhists are generally cremated. Traditional Buddhists funerals can be quite elaborate, other Buddhist funerals may be a quieter affair.

Festivals
Buddhist holidays are determined according to the phases of the moon. No particular day of the week is designated a holy day, instead quarter moon days are used. Lay Buddhists in Western countries try to at least celebrate the full moon day, though if it is not feasible on the actual day it will be celebrated on the nearest Sunday.

Different schools of Buddhism celebrate different special events throughout the year.

Wesak
Highpoint of the Buddhist calendar. Celebrating Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. This festival is celebrated by all schools of Buddhism and is a lively event which involves dancing, food, singing, praying and chanting.

Losar
Losar marks the Tibetan New Year and is celebrated for three days.

Magha Puja
Magha Puja (Sangha Day) is the second most important Buddhist festival which commemorates the day that Buddha recited teachings to 1250 enlightened disciples who came to hear him.

Parnirvana
Parnirvana or Nirvana Day celebrates Buddha’s death when he reached total Nirvana.

Asala
Asala is the anniversary of the start of Buddha’s teaching.

Bodhi Day
Buddhists remember the enlightenment of Buddha while he was sitting under the Bodhi tree.
Christianity

Faith

Christianity is based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who lived as a Jew in the Middle East. Christians date their calendar from his birth. The Christian holy book is the Bible, comprising the Jewish scriptures or Old Testament and the New Testament, about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christians belong to the Church which is a term used both to describe many of the buildings in which Christians meet, as well as the community of Christians who worship together, primarily on a Sunday. They pray regularly to the One God, whom they believe to have been revealed to the human race as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Cross is a symbol of the sacrificial death of Jesus, bringing forgiveness for human sins and of his resurrection which opens the way to eternity. Belief and right behaviour are closely linked.

The Church is found in many forms: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican (e.g. Church of England) and many other types or traditions. Christians are people of all cultures and ethnicities and are numerically the largest of the world’s religious groups.

Dress

There are no dress codes for Christians, though modesty is encouraged, particularly in places of worship. Men remove their headwear and in some countries women cover their heads in Church. Many Ministers wear robes when conducting acts of worship and some, including many Monks and Nuns, wear identifiable robes throughout the day. Many Ministers also wear a white collar underneath their shirt (affectionately referred to as a dog collar).

Language

The language of the people of the country is usually used in worship, with the Bible translated from its original Hebrew and 1st Century Greek. However, various ethnic-based Churches express their worship in the language of the culture concerned (e.g. Russian Orthodox).

Diet

As far as the majority of Christians are concerned, there are few prohibitions on food, but fasting is encouraged as an aid to devotion, particularly during the seasons of Lent and Advent. Some traditions do adhere to specific restrictions on certain days of the week and at certain festivals.
Visits in the Home
Many Christians say a prayer or ‘grace’ before meals. Family prayers may be said, with Bible readings. Candles or sacred pictures may be used as devotional aids. A simple fish symbol is also often used to identify Christians.

Visits in the Places of Worship
Most Christians gather for worship in purpose-built Churches or chapels, though they may worship anywhere, indoors or out. The main act of worship for many Christians is a commemoration of the Last Supper when Jesus shared bread and wine with his followers as representations of his life, given for the benefit of the human race. This service may be called the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper or Mass. Visitors are welcome to join in Christian worship, though they may only receive Holy Communion if they are members of a Church.

Names
The family name or surname is preceded by one or more ‘Christian’ names chosen by the parents and used in the Baptism service. Most women adopt the man’s surname upon marriage, but this is not a requirement.

Birth
The birth of a child in many church traditions is followed by Baptism (sometimes called Christening), when water is poured on the child’s head to symbolise the washing away of sin which was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ. It is usually through Baptism that a person becomes a member of the Church. Baptism can take place at any age.

Marriage
Bride and bridegroom exchange vows with each other in the presence of a member of the clergy, who then pronounces God’s blessing on their union. They may also exchange rings and other traditional customs may be observed which are not actually requirements of the Christian faith.

Medical
Prayers are said for people who are ill and these may be accompanied by the ‘laying-on of hands’ invoking the healing power of the Holy Spirit. Christian ministers visit those known to them who are ill and hospitals usually appoint chaplains, who co-operate with and complement the work of the medical staff.

Funerals
The body of a dead person is treated with respect and is buried or cremated after a funeral service. There are no objections to autopsies. Christians believe that after death God will give them bodies fitting to their new state with God. On earth they enjoy ‘communion’ with other Christians, living and dead, because of their union with the living Christ.
Christianity

Festivals
The year is divided into 'seasons' and special days. These are the main ones:

Advent
This season prepares for Christmas and also the Return of Jesus Christ, or Second Coming.

Christmas
Celebrates the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Epiphany
Marks the visit of wise men from the East to Bethlehem; they were the first Gentiles (people who are not Jews) to greet the birth of Christ.

Lent
Begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts 40 days, commemorating Christ's sojourn in the wilderness. Lent is a time of fasting and penitence.

Holy Week
Concludes Lent and marks the trials and sufferings of Christ. The Friday of Holy Week is called Good Friday because it is the day Jesus died for the sins of humanity.

Easter
Easter is a great celebration commemorating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ascension Day
Is 40 days after Easter and marks the time when Jesus was seen no more and ascended to God the Father.

Whitsun/Pentecost
Celebrates the day when Jesus' disciples experienced the effect of the Holy Spirit and were inspired to spread the message about Jesus throughout the world.

Candlemas
Candlemas marks the midpoint of Winter, halfway between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. It is also called 'The Presentation of Christ in the Temple' and commemorates the day Mary took Jesus to the Temple to present him to God. The day also marks the blessing of candles in church.

Corpus Christi
A Roman Catholic holy day which commemorates the Eucharist – a ritual in which they believe that a wafer and wine become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ.
Christianity

Christian Churches found in Sussex

- Church of England (Anglican)
- Roman Catholic Church
- Orthodox Churches (including Coptic Church)
- Methodist Church
- Baptist Church
- United Reformed Church
- Salvation Army
- Quaker (Society of Friends)
- Churches with a significant ethnic focus (eg black majority churches, Chinese church etc)
- Independent traditions of churches including chapels and modern church movements

Other groups found in Sussex

Alongside the Christian Churches whose beliefs are described in the section above, there are a small number of other religious groups with beliefs or terminology which shares some aspects with the Church, but also has a number of significant differences to the Churches

- Seventh Day Adventists
- Christadelphians
- Christian Science
- Jehovah Witness
- Mormon
- Spiritualist
- Unitarians
Hinduism

Faith
The word 'Hinduism' is a collective term for the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus. ‘Hindu' was the word historically used of people living by the river Sindhu. The Hindu way of life is referred to as the Sanatana Dharma (the eternal religion) or Vedic Dharma (pertaining to the Vedas), it has no precise traceable beginning, nor is there a single founder. There is great diversity within the religion and its followers.

Hindus follow the sacred texts known as the Vedas (knowledge). They believe in an indescribable, all encompassing oneness, an ultimate reality, referred to as Brahman.

Brahman is depicted as having 3 aspects:
Brahma - the creator
Vishnu - the sustainer
Mahesh - the completer

A central belief is in the existence of a cosmic or natural order, a balanced way of living, physically, socially, ethically and spiritually. These are interpreted as the four human achievements of:

Dharma - observing religious law
Artha - acceptance of power, wealth and possession
Kama - achieving quality and enjoyment of life in a balanced way
Moksha - liberation from the continuous cycle of births and deaths (samsara)

Duty to others and taking responsibility for one's actions is fundamental to the notion of Dharma. Failure to do so results in a price to pay - Karma.

"Om" is the most sacred syllable often spoken during the practice of any Hindu rites. It is a holy character of the Sanskrit language, the language of God. The character is a composite of three different letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. The English equivalent of those are "a", "u" and "m" and represent the Trimurti. The Trimurti is composed of the three supreme Hindu Gods: Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. These three letters when pronounced properly in unison create an invigorating effect in the body. Because of its significance this sacred syllable is spoken before any chants to show God we remember him. The sign in Hinduism also represents the whole universe.

Hindu Society
The word 'caste' comes from the Portuguese and the correct term is 'Varna' (societal groupings). The four varnas are:

Kshatriya - kings, warriors and technologists
Brahmin - priests, historians, educators
Vaishya - agriculturalists and artisans (now extended to traders of goods and finance)
Shudras - workers who provide labour and service

The varnas were not originally hereditary, nor were there any rules limiting social interaction or marriage between these classes. The scriptures original emphasis was that a person would be categorised according to personal qualities, rather than by birth.
Hinduism

Birth
After the birth of a child a brief ceremony takes place to welcome the child into the family and give thanks for the health of both mother and child. The rite of naming the child is usually carried out by the family priest on the 11th day after the birth according to the horoscope and guidance from an astrologer.

Dress
Many male Hindus choose to wear western style dress. Some orthodox Hindu men wear a clay marking on their foreheads known as a Tilak and wear, at the back of their heads a tuft of hair known as 'Sikha'. Some Hindu women will wear a 'bindi' - a red spot on the forehead denoting membership of the Hindu faith. Most married women wear a necklace known as a 'mangal sutra' which is placed around their neck when they get married and which they would not wish to remove. Some Hindu women may prefer to wear saris or Shalwar Khammeez (baggy trousers and long tunic).

Language
The religious language is Sanskrit. Hindus may speak several languages other than English including Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil and Bengali.

Diet
Hindus are primarily vegetarians due to the principle of not killing. However if they do eat meat, they should refrain from beef. Vegetarian Hindus will refrain from eating meat (including fish), eggs and any product that has been made from non-vegetarian ingredients. Many Hindus do not drink alcohol or smoke.

Many Hindus (and especially women) observe fasts or vrats (vows) as devotion to a deity and on behalf of the well-being of themselves and their family. These vows entail the avoidance of certain foods at certain times, such as on particular days of the week, of the lunar month, and of the year.

Visits In the Home
Traditionally, Hindu women are responsible for looking after the home and family. The man normally takes financial responsibility for the family and goes out to work. However, in Britain today, many Hindu women work. The household will normally have a shrine. This is where 'puja' (worship) is performed. If you are invited to look at the shrine room you should remove your shoes. It is polite to accept refreshments and food offered. During the meal it is polite to take and eat food with the right hand and afterwards give thanks and wash the hands.
Hinduism

Place of Worship
Worship can take place in the home or in the ‘Mandir’ (temple). Inside the temple will be large and colourful images of the Hindu Gods. When entering a ‘Mandir’ shoes must be removed and no one must wear clothing or accessories made of leather or fur. Consider taking an offering of fresh fruit or flowers, it is not expected but it would be welcomed.

Women should cover their heads (although this is not compulsory). Men take their hats off. Seating is on the floor with men and women sometimes seated opposite each other. It is disrespectful to point the feet towards the sacred area at the front of the temple.

Twice a day there is a short ‘arti’ ceremony. This is when light is offered to the Gods. Afterwards a lamp is brought amongst the worshippers who put a coin on a tray, place their hands over the flame and touch their heads as a symbol of accepting the light of God. Visitors may wish to take part in this ceremony or just stand aside and watch.

Names
Depending upon cultural background and tradition Hindus may have three or four names. Where names are required for records it is advisable to ask what is used.

Marriage
Arranged marriages are common, arranged by parents with the consent of the couple. Factors such as similar backgrounds and the preference of the bride and groom are taken into consideration. Most Hindus approve of their children choosing their own partners.

A Hindu marriage can take place in any suitable place. There will be both a religious ceremony and a registry office wedding. The religious ceremony is performed in the ancient Sanskrit language. The bride will usually marry in a red or deep pink sari. During the ceremony the couple's clothes are tied together and they walk around the sacred fire, known as ‘The Seven Steps’. After the marriage, the bride may have a red bindi painted on her forehead by the groom as a sign of her new status. In Hindu religion divorce is not allowed, however, according to the law of India they can divorce if they wish.

Medical
Hindus have no problem in accepting medical treatment as they respect life and health. The ancient practice of Ayurvedic medicine is still followed today by many Hindus. For hospital stays most Hindu women would prefer to be treated by a female member of staff. There are no religious objections to organ donation, transplants or post mortems.
Hindusim

Funerals
Hindu belief is that the soul of the deceased will either be re-born or has completed the cycle of birth and death and re-birth and can rejoin with the Creator. After death the body is washed and covered. It is preferable for the family to handle the body. The eldest son or other senior male relative would be consulted in all arrangements. Under Hindu tradition, close relatives of the deceased observe a 13 day mourning period, during which they may wish to remain at home. White is the colour of mourning and Hindus are generally cremated. Sometimes the ashes of the deceased are sent to family members in India for scattering on the River Ganges.

Festivals
There are many Hindu festivals, listed below are some of the main ones:

Holi
Marks the end of winter and the appearance of spring. Festival of coloured powder and water. Bonfires are also lit at this time.

Rama Navami
Celebrates the birth of Lord Rama.

Janamashtami
Birthday of Lord Krishna. There is fasting till midnight, when a symbolic image of Krishna is welcomed into the temple with flowers and great rejoicing.

Navratri/Durga Puja
Navratri means nine nights and it is the Gujarati name for Durg Puja. It celebrates the victory of good over evil.

Divali
New Years Eve for most Hindus in the UK. The focus of the festival is the celebration of Rama and Sitas return from voluntary exile. The highlights of the festival are the lights and fireworks.

Makar Sankrant
The first Hindu festival of the solar calendar year where prayers are recited and sweets made from sesame seeds are given to signify that the days become longer.

Raksha Bandhan (Rakhi)
Celebration of bonding where a holy thread is tied around the wrist as a ‘bond of protection’ to signify that the strong must protect the weak from evil.

Vasant Panchami (Saraswati puja)
Festival dedicated to the Hindu goddess – Saraswati.

Ratha Yathra
Hindu chariot festival that represents the travels of Lord Krishna.

Mahashivratri
The festival celebrated in the honour of Shiva.

Hanuman Jayati
This is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman Ji, the Monkey God.

Ganesh Chaturthi
This is an eleven day festival which celebrates Lord Ganesh, the God of Wisdom.

Dussera
Marks the day on which Lord Rama liberated his wife from Ravana, the King of Lanka. The festival culminates in the burning of an effigy of Ravana to signify the end of evil.
Islam

Faith
The religion preached by the prophet Muhammad (SAW) 1400 years ago is called Islam. Mohammad being God's messenger, taught that there is only one God (Allah). Believers in one God and Muhammad (SAW) as his messenger are called Muslims. There are different branches within Islam (as with Christianity). The two main ones being the Sunnis and Shi'ites.

The letters SAW are often seen after the Prophets name, this is as a mark of respect. They mean 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. The star and crescent moon is the centuries-old Islamic symbol.

Muslim belief entails submitting one's life to the will of Allah as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through the Qu'ran and to do so through the declaration of faith, regular prayer, almsgiving (Zakat), fasting and pilgrimage. Muslims meet for prayers at a mosque. The main duties of a Muslim are summed up in the Five Pillars of Islam:

The Shahada - testimony of faith
Salah - the obligation to pray five times a day taking place at dawn (Fajar), midday (Zuhur), late afternoon (Asr), after sunset (Maghrib) and late evening (Isha), facing in the direction of the holy city of Mecca;
Zakah - to give a fixed 2.5% of one's income to charity;
Sawm - observe the fasting month of Ramadan;
Hajj - requires Muslims, who are able, to go on pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) once in their lifetime.

Muslims believe that God has sent many prophets throughout history to all the nations. All the prophets preached faith in one God, life after death and a moral code for life. The prophets include Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (SAW). Muhammad (SAW) is considered to be the final prophet and the perfect model of how people are to live. Prayers are obligatory from puberty onwards except for women who are menstruating or in the post-natal period. People who are not fully conscious are also exempted from prayers. Friday is the day for congregational prayers.

Dress
Modesty is very important to Muslims. Men tend to wear western dress and sometimes wear a head covering, and are covered from waist to knee. Women cover their head with a scarf and wear long skirts or loose trousers. Some women may also cover their face in public.

Diet
Muslims do not eat pork or any pork by-products. Alcohol is also forbidden. Muslims are allowed to eat poultry, mutton and beef as long as it is ‘halal' which means killed and prepared by a Muslim according to Islamic law. A vegetarian or fish meal would be acceptable.
Islam

Visits in the home
You may see pictures of Makkah and there may also be a copy of the Qur'an on a shelf covered in a cloth and quotes from the Qur'an on plaques on the wall. Devout Muslims pray five times a day so it may be possible if you arrive unannounced you may interrupt their prayer, wait for them to finish, it only takes a few minutes. Muslim women may not be comfortable in the company of a man who is not a relative. It is best not to offer to shake hands with a Muslim woman. It is polite to accept refreshments if offered. Within Islam, women and men are treated as equals. Traditionally women are responsible for looking after the home and family. Men have the main responsibility for providing financially for the family.

Visits in the Place of Worship
A Mosque is the place of worship for Muslims. It can also be used as a community and educational centre. A Mosque can be a converted house or a domed building; some mosques have a minaret, which is a tower for calling the faithful to prayer. Friday midday is the busiest time as all male Muslims are expected to congregate for prayer at the time of the Zuhr prayer.

On entering a Mosque you are expected to remove your shoes. Women should wear long-sleeved and high necked tops and to cover the head with a scarf and avoid visiting a mosque when menstruating. Muslim men tend to cover their heads during prayer. Outside the prayer room there will be running water for people to ablute before prayer. Women and men enter by separate doors and sit in separate parts of the mosque. Visitors are welcome to sit quietly at a place at the back of the Mosque whilst prayers are in progress but are not expected to join in. The main room of a Mosque is normally empty of furniture except a pulpit. The mihrab at the front is an alcove, which marks the direction of Makkah, which is the direction people face when praying.

Names
Many Muslims use the names of prophets of Islam as their first name. Some Muslim names are based on one of the traditional 99 names of God. A Muslim should not be addressed by their religious name only, but use the personal and religious name. It is best to ask the person what name they would like to be called and what their surname and personal names are.
Islam

Birth
After birth a member of the family will recite a prayer in the baby's ear. All boys are circumcised as soon as it can be arranged. The baby is named about seven days later at a ceremony called the 'Aquiqah' where his/her hair is shaved off to mark the start of a new life.

Marriage
Islam encourages marriage; in many Muslim communities arranged marriages are common. The wedding ceremony doesn't necessarily take place at a Mosque it can take place anywhere. A registry office wedding can also take place. The bride traditionally wears red and deep pink.

The ceremony involves the bride and groom saying out loud three times that they want to marry the other partner. The couple sign a contract which has been drawn up beforehand.

In some countries, where the law allows, Muslim men may have up to four wives but only if the first wife allows, although in British law only the first wife is recognised. The man must treat all his wives equally both financially and emotionally. There should be a good reason to marry another woman, e.g. if a woman is widowed and cannot provide for herself and family then another man will marry her and take her into his family but only on the condition that the first wife agrees.

Medical
Modesty is of the utmost importance. Men and women prefer to be treated by members of staff of the same gender, and would not attend for tests in short gowns.

Funerals
A terminally ill Muslim should have their bed turned towards Makkah. A dying person should be in a quiet place, preferably surrounded by his or her loved ones. Prayers would be recited by relatives or friends. Muslims believe Allah chooses when a human being should be born and should die. Following death Allah will judge that individual's life on Judgement Day. Funerals should take place within 24 hours or as soon as possible after death and are always burials. Muslims believe that the soul leaves the body at the point of death and that unless the body is buried within 24 hours the soul will be unable to progress to heaven. Because of these beliefs, any delay in burial can be very distressing for the bereaved. Muslim graves are plain and donations of flowers, for example, would not be appropriate.
Festivals
There are no festivals as such in Islam, only thanksgiving prayers, as Islam forbids demonstrative 'festivity' and processions etc. However, some Muslims interpret this less literally and may regard some important days such as Eid as festivals. Listed below are some of the main ones:-

Al Hijrah
Islamic New Year begins, a commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) establishment of Islamic social order. A day of celebration of the beginning of the Muslim community.

Eid
Eid (id) means recurring happiness. This is a religious holiday, a feast for thanking Allah and celebrating a happy occasion.

Milad al Nabi
Commemorates Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) birthday.

Eid-Ul-Adha
Marks the end of the time of annual Pilgrimage, a day of thankfulness, marked by feasting and distribution of food to the needy. Muslims wish each other "Eid Mubarak".

Eid-Ul-Fitr
Marks the end of Ramadan. A day of quiet celebration. 'Eid' cards are sent and friends wish each other "Eid Mubarak" (Happy Eid). A special Eid prayer is read in the morning of each Eid at the local Mosque, and is usually very well attended.

Ramadan
The ninth month of the Muslim year. A time of fasting from sunrise to sunset each day. Fasting is seen as an opportunity to deepen a sense of devotion, to acknowledge the blessings of life and to show thanks and gratitude to Allah. The Qu'ran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (SAW) in the month of Ramadan.

Hajj
The annual pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims should complete at least once in their lifetime.

Ashura
Major festival for Shia Muslims which commemorates the martyrdom of Hussein – a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Lailat ul Barah
Also known as the Night of Forgiveness, this festival takes place two weeks before the beginning of Ramadan and is a time for asking and granting forgiveness.
Judaism

Faith
Judaism is the faith of the Jews dating back over 4000 years, originating in the Middle East. The Jewish community in Britain dates back to the Middle Ages.

The Jewish faith believes in one God, they do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God but believe there will be a Messiah in the future. The central belief in God is contained in the Shema, which is recited twice daily "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One". Jews believe that God has revealed his will for them, as revealed by Moses, in the Torah (The Holy Book) which is made up of the first five books of the Bible and sets out the Ten Commandments and the Talmud which is a written collection of interpretations of the Bible and instructs on the Jewish way of life. The Jewish scriptures are known as the 'Tanakh' and worship can take place at a synagogue.

There are many Jewish traditions which can be separated in to two groups:

Orthodox - Orthodox Jewish people believe that the laws and teachings of the Torah must be followed today exactly as God passed them down in the time of Moses.

Non Orthodox - Non Orthodox Jewish people, including those following Reformed or Progressive traditions, believe that some of the Torah's teachings can be adapted to be more relevant to a modern society.

Dress
Dress differs depending on the degree of orthodoxy. Many Orthodox Jewish men keep their heads covered with a kippah or skullcap. Some married Orthodox women cover their heads, body and limbs. Hasidic (Ultra Orthodox) Jews can be recognised by their dark clothing, long coats, wide brimmed hats, side locks and beards. Other Jews do not wear any distinctive clothing.

Language
The main language is English. Hebrew is used in orthodox religious services. Other languages spoken are Yiddish or Ladino.

Diet
Jews are religiously expected to uphold the Kashrut, which refers to 'kosher' food. The laws of Kashrut detail the permitted and forbidden animals, fish and fowl and describe the separation of dairy and meat. Kosher food is food that has been specially prepared, i.e. soaked in water and then salted to remove all the blood. Jews are allowed to eat meat which comes from animals that both chew the cud and have split hooves and farmyard fowl such as chickens. These must be slaughtered by a 'schochet' - specially qualified person. The only kinds of fish Jews are permitted to eat are those which have both fins and scales.

Visits in the Home
In most Jewish households there will be a 'mezuzah' which is a small box positioned on the right hand doorpost of each room except the bathroom and toilet, this box contains a parchment containing part of the Shema (the daily prayer). There may be a Chanukia, a branched candelabra, which is lit when the festival of Hannukkah is celebrated.

The Jewish Sabbath begins at dusk on Friday and lasts until dusk on Saturday. Orthodox Jews spend that time in study, prayer and rest. All work, including driving, is forbidden on the Sabbath. Devout Jewish men pray three times a day and women twice a day either at a synagogue or wherever they are.
Judaism

Place of Worship
If you wish to visit a Synagogue for a visit it is best to telephone ahead of time. For security reasons most synagogues do not welcome visitors they are not expecting. A Synagogue is used for prayer, study and for the Jewish community to gather together. A man is expected to cover his head when entering a Synagogue; women cover their heads in orthodox Synagogues. There will be a ‘mezuzah’ on the internal doors of the Synagogue. In some Synagogues men and women sit separately. In the prayer hall there will normally be an ark containing the Torah scrolls, a bimah from which the scrolls are read and seats for worshippers. Most Synagogues have a Rabbi which means teacher.

Names
Jewish names are often from Biblical sources followed by a family name. If a name is required for records it is advisable to ask first for the surname then any other names. Most married women take their husband’s name.

Birth
Male Jews are circumcised on the eighth day after birth (depending on his birth weight), this is known as Brit Milah. Also at this time the boy will be given his Hebrew name. A Jewish medical practitioner known as the Mohel will carry out the circumcision. The name of a girl child is given by her father at a naming ceremony in the synagogue. At the age of 13 for a boy and the age of 12 for a girl they are accepted as full adult members of the Jewish community. A boy is ‘bar mitzvah’ which means “son of the commandment” and a girl is ‘bat mitzvah’ which means “daughter of the commandment”. There is normally a celebration at this time.

Marriage
Under Jewish law a marriage is entered into by the free choice of both partners. A Jewish wedding can take place anywhere. The ceremony itself takes place under a canopy called a huppah. The groom stands under the canopy, the bride joins him and walks around the groom, usually seven times, a blessing is given and a ring placed on the bride’s index finger. The couple read and sign their written marriage contract and share wine from the same glass, which is then ritually broken under the groom’s foot at the end of the ceremony. When the couple step out from under the canopy, it is customary for the guests to call out “Mazel Tov” which means good luck and be happy. There is usually a reception afterwards.

Medical
Visiting the sick is a solemn duty for members of the Jewish faith, prayer forms an important part of support. An Orthodox Jewish person would prefer to be treated by a member of the same gender. If a patient is terminally ill it is important that the person should not be left alone, a companion will stay with the patient reading prayers. A dying person may wish to say the ‘Shema’ which is a Hebrew prayer known verbatim by many people.

Funerals
Jewish belief is that, after death, the deceased has gone to be with God who will judge the life the deceased has led. Funerals should take place before sunset on the day of the death of the person but not take place on the Sabbath or on a major Jewish festival. Burial is preferred for most Jews although some may choose cremation. Funerals are plain and donations of flowers are not appropriate. Following the funeral, there is a period of mourning lasting seven days for the family of the deceased. During this time members of the family are not expected to return to work.
Judiasm

Festivals
Rosh Hashanah
Celebrated in either September or October this is the Jewish New Year and the beginning of a 10 day period of repentance, which ends on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur
Day of Atonement. Celebrated usually in October. The day is spent in prayer and fasting, looking back over the past years deeds and asking for forgiveness for sins committed and promising to lead a better life the following year.

Hannukah
Festival of Lights. Celebrated in December. This festival is a happy festival celebrated over eight days. A candelabrum is lit which is called a Menorah or Chanuchia. Each night of the festival the number of lights increases until the eighth day when the Menorah is ablaze.

Sukkot
A seven day festival commemorating the fact that the Israelites were living in temporary shelters in the wilderness during their journey to the Promised Land.

Pesach
Festival of freedom which lasts for eight days. Commemorating the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery, both a joyous and sorrowful occasion.

Tu B’Shevat
The 15th day of the Jewish calendar and the beginning of Spring in Israel. It celebrates “New Year for the Trees” and it is customary to eat more fruit on this day.

Simchat Torah
Celebrations in the synagogue which mark “Rejoicing with/of the Torah”.

Purim
Purim is the most festive of Jewish holidays and commemorates a major victory over oppression.

Yom HaShoah
Day to remember the Holocaust and the six million Jews who perished.

Tish B’Av
The saddest day of the Jewish calendar to commemorate the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the years.

Shavout
Festival celebrating the “time of the giving” of Jewish law and the harvest season.

Yom Ha’Atzmut
Israeli Independence Day commemorating the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948.
Sikh

Faith
The Sikh tradition began in the Punjab region over 500 years ago. Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak, the first Guru or teacher of the faith. Sikhism is Britain's 3rd most popular religion with about ½ million Sikhs living in the UK.

The word Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word Sish which means Disciple. The Sikh religion is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak, supplemented by the successive Gurus, enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book). The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh stated that after Him there will be no more human Gurus. Sikhs are ordered to accept Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh scripture) as their Guru. The Guru Granth Sahib is treated as a living Guru and is given the utmost respect. Sikhs meet for worship at the 'Gurdwara'. Gurdwara is a Punjabi word meaning "gateway to the Guru".

For Sikhs, there is only one God. God is without form or gender, everyone has direct access to God and everyone is equal before God. A good life is lived as part of a community, by living honestly and caring for others. Empty religious rituals and superstitions have no value. Sikhs believe in the equality of all human beings and respect all other faiths. Many Sikhs expect to be initiated at some stage in their life. Belonging to the Khalsa involves taking amrit (nectar) and wearing the five articles of faith which distinguish individual men and women as members of the Khalsa, commonly known as "the five Ks" because the Punjabi word for each begins with the sound of "k". The five Ks date from the creation of the Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Upon initiation males take the name Singh (Lion) and females take the name Kaur (Princess).

The five Ks
Kachha - short trousers symbolising sexual restraint.
Kara - A steel bracelet - to show god is one.
Kirpan - A short dagger - to remind Sikhs of their duty to fight evil.
Kangha - A small wooden comb - a symbol of cleanliness and orderliness.
Kesh - Uncut hair that is a symbol of spirituality.

A Sikh initiated into the Khalsa Panth (Brotherhood) believes in Guru Granth Sahib and in one God and always wear the Five Ks.

Keshdhari is the name given to Sikhs who do not cut any of their body hair and wear a turban whether or not they have taken Amrit. Those who believe in Sikhism but have not yet been initiated or who have let their practice lapse are sometimes known as 'sahagdhari' (literally, slow adopters). A Sikh will rise early, bathe then say morning set prayers, whilst evening prayers are said before sleep. These prayers may be said privately, or with the family. The Khanda, is the emblem of the Sikhs. The circle means "eternal God", the double edged sword symbolises the fight for truth, and the sword blades stand for spiritual and worldly power.
Sikh

Dress
Most Sikh men and some Sikh women wear a turban, although not all do. Sikh women may wear a Shalwar and Kameez, these are loose trousers with a long top and scarf. Some adopt western dress. It is important to remember that removal of the Five Ks or the turban is a cause of immense embarrassment for a Sikh and should be avoided at all costs.

Language
Punjabi is the language of the Sikhs. Punjabi language classes are offered by Gurdwaras. Sikh scriptures are written in 'Gurmukhi'.

Diet
Initiated Sikhs are vegetarians. Sikhs are forbidden to eat ritually killed meat (halal or kosher meat). In general they would not take alcohol, tobacco or drugs of any sort.

Visits in the Home
Many homes have pictures of the Gurus. There may also be pictures of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in the Punjab which is the most important place of Sikh worship. Some homes may have a copy of the scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, this is generally kept in a separate room. If you enter this room you should cover your head and remove shoes. If you are offered refreshments, it is polite to accept and to try a little food. A Sikh woman may feel more comfortable if spoken to in the presence of other members of the family.

Visits in the Place of Worship
Before entering the building you will be expected to remove your shoes and cover your head. Visitors are expected to wash their hands, as Sikhs customarily do before prayer. Sikhs will approach the Guru Granth Sahib, take a bow and make a small offering of money then say a short prayer and back away from the Guru Granth Sahib. Men and women sit separately on the floor. It is usual to sit with legs crossed. It is disrespectful to point feet towards the Guru Granth Sahib. At the end of worship, 'Karah parshad' (blessed food) - a sweet made of semolina, sugar and butter is distributed to everyone. Afterwards, people eat in the langar hall, the communal dining room which offers free meals to anyone who wishes to visit. Head coverings should be maintained in the langar hall and all food asked for should be eaten rather than left. Main services are held on a Sunday. Some Gurdwaras are open 24 hours a day and serve meals 24 hours a day. You are not expected to pay for food but a voluntary donation to the Gurdwara would be appreciated.
Sikh

Names
Sikhs generally have three names: their personal name, e.g. Ajit, a community name Singh or Kaur and finally a family name, e.g. Thandi - Ajit Singh Thandi. Where names are required for records it is best to ask what people use as a surname and as a personal name.

Birth
As soon as the baby is born, a member of the family will whisper a prayer in the baby's ear. The naming ceremony takes place several weeks later at the Gurdwara. The child's name is chosen by opening at random the Guru Granth Sahib, the first letter of the hymn on the left hand page will be the first letter of the child's personal (first) name. The baby is then given a little 'Amrit', special blessed sweet water.

Marriage
The marriage ceremony is generally carried out at the Gurdwara in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. The bride usually wears red. The reader of the book, the Granthi (priest), performs the ceremony. The couple walk around the holy book four times in a clockwise direction. After the ceremony a prayer of thanks is given, when they have completed this they are then married. Divorcees and widows are allowed to re-marry in the Gurdwara.

Medical
There are no religious objections to post-mortem, organ transplant or blood transfusion. For illness, in general, home remedies may be preferred in the first instance. For illness involving a hospital stay, women would prefer to be examined by a female member of staff. During medical treatment respect should be observed for a Sikh's desire to have all five symbols of the faith within reach if unable to be worn. The Kachha (shorts) should on no account be changed or removed other than by the individual concerned.

Funerals
After death, the body may be handled by a non-Sikh. It is essential to make sure the five Sikh symbols are in place. The body is washed, dressed and wrapped in a white sheet of cloth by relatives of the same gender. The funeral ceremony will be very simple, no memorials allowed and a deliberate outward show of grief is forbidden. White dress is customarily worn by mourners. Sikhs are usually cremated as soon as possible after death. After the ceremony the ashes can be taken back to the Punjab or scattered over flowing water.
Sikh

The Sikh Calendar

Sikhs follow the Indian lunar calendar to work out the dates of festivals. Each lunar month is the time between two new moons. The lunar calendar is divided into 12 months and as the lunar year is shorter than the solar year, an extra month is added every third year. The first month is called ‘Chaiter’ in Punjabi. It falls somewhere between March and April. The Sikh New Year begins on the first day of Vaisakhi, the second month of the Indian lunar calendar. Except for Vaisakhi festival which has a fixed date of 13 April (on rare occasions 14th April), the dates of all other festivals vary from one year to another.

Festivals

Gurpurbs - These are festivals that are associated with the lives of the Gurus. They are happy occasions which are celebrated most enthusiastically by Sikhs.

The most important Gurpurbs are:
The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh -Founder of the Khalsa
The martyrdom of Guru Arjan
The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur
The birthday of Guru Nanak

Founder of Sikhism. The first Guru, who preached worship of one God and the equality of humanity. The Sikh communal free kitchen ‘langar’ where all could eat together, whatever their status in society, was his idea.

Other festivals celebrated:
Vaisakhi (Birth of Sikh Nation - Khalsa)
Commemorates the birth of the Khalsa, also known as Baisakhi. Processions and feasting follow the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Diwali
For Sikhs, this is a time to light up Gurdwaras as a reminder of the spiritual victory of Guru Hargobind who saved 52 Hindu kings from imprisonment. Highlights of the festival are lights, fireworks and firecrackers.

Hola Mohalla
The word Hola Mahala means ‘mock fight’ and is a three day organised celebration which involves a procession or mock battle accompanied by war drums and followed by music and poetry competitions.
Quick Facts: Baha’i

The Baha’i faith is one of the youngest world religions and was founded in Iran by Baha’u’llah in 1844. Baha’i beliefs promote gender and race equality, freedom of expression and world peace and believe that everyone should work together for the benefit of humanity. Baha’i believe in one God but recognise the validity of all religions including Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad.

Dress
There are no special requirements other than moderation and modesty.

Language
Main language is English but elderly (from Iran) may not speak English.

Diet
Baha’i abstain from alcohol, but can take it in medicine. Baha’i fast for one month (19 days) from sunrise to sunset on 2nd March to 20th March.

Visits
The affairs of faith are in the hands of elected administrative assemblies known as Spiritual Assemblies as there are no clergy.

Names
Baha’i have no specific religious names.

Birth
Baha’i have no particular birthing customs.

Marriage
In Baha’i marriage each partner must freely choose the other and have consent of the parents of both parties.

Medical
Blood transfusions, organ donations, the administration of prescription drugs and the like are all perfectly acceptable. Baha’i believe in the healing power of modern medicine for both physical and mental illness.

Physical contact
There is no objection to being touched or treated by members of the opposite sex.

Death customs
The body is carefully washed and wrapped in white silk or cotton. A special burial ring may be placed on the finger of a Baha’i aged 15 or over. The body is not cremated but is buried in a coffin within an hour’s travelling time from the place of death.

Festivals
Naw-Ruz – Baha’i New Year.
Ridvan Festival – Marks Baha’u’llah’s time in the garden of Ridvan.
Declaration of the Bab – The Bab prepared the world for Baha’u’llah (the founder of the Baha’i faith) and declared the coming of Baha’u’llah.
Ascension of Baha’u’llah – Anniversary of the death of Baha’u’llah in 1892.
Martyrdom of the Bab – Anniversary of the Bab’s execution in 1850.
Birth of the Bab
Birth of Baha’u’llah
Ascension of Abdu’l-Baha – Marks the death of the son of Baha’u’llah.

6,000 Baha’i in the UK - 7 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Buddhist

Dress
Clothing reflects background diversity. Monks and Nuns normally wear robes. Some Buddhists shave their heads.

Language
Generally speak the language according to the country of residence but may speak Tibetan, Cantonese, Hakka, Japanese, Thai and Sinhalese.

Diet
Mainly vegetarian but may eat fish and eggs.

Visits in the Home
May have small shrine for meditation.

Place of Worship
Dress modestly and remove shoes. Offerings of food, flowers and incense are welcomed. A quiet place of meditation.

Names
Ask for surname and personal name.

Birth
No specific ceremony is carried out, but a child may be blessed at the temple by the Monks.

Marriage
Sometimes arranged by parents. Not a religious ceremony. Can take place anywhere.

Medical
Home remedies may be followed. There are no religious objections to blood transfusions or organ transplants.

Physical contact
Home remedies may be followed. Buddhist Monks and Nuns may prefer to be treated by medical staff of the same sex but generally Buddhists may be touched by a person of either sex.

Death customs
Generally cremated.

Festivals
See main faith Section on Buddhism.

152,000 Buddhists in the UK – 376 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Chinese (Confucianism, Taoism, Astrology, Christianity)

Confucianism - K’ung Fu-Tzu (Confucius) is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of ancient times. Confucianism can best be described as a system of moral, social, political and ethical values rather than a religion which promotes honesty, benevolence towards others, loyalty and trustworthiness for the benefit of the community. Confucianism celebrates four key stages in life – birth, maturity, marriage and death.

Taoism - Tao (pronounced ‘dow’) means path or way and Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse who was a contemporary of Confucius. Taoism is an ancient tradition of philosophy and religious belief which embodies the harmony of opposites seen in the well known Taoist symbol Yin and Yang. Yin represents the dark side and Yang represents the light side and this balance is sometimes upset by human intervention in nature. Taoists believe that people are good by nature and that everyone should be kind to one another as this will be reciprocated.

Dress - Men and women prefer shirt/blouse and trousers/slacks.

Language - Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, Hokkien, English.

Diet
Southern Chinese: seafood, fish, pork, poultry, green vegetables, soup, rice, rice noodles and fresh fruit.
Northern Chinese: bread, wheat dumplings, meat dumplings, noodles, pork, lamb, chicken, cabbage, green vegetables. Beef and cheese are least preferred food. Drink: Soya milk is preferred to cow’s milk as some Chinese are allergic to cow’s milk. China tea without milk and sugar. Classical Taoist teaching recommends abstaining from alcohol and meat.

Visits - The place of worship or prayer will depend on the individual’s faith. The Chinese community (like many other communities) can have varying faiths from Atheism, Agnosticism, Confucianism, Taoist, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism.

Names - Chinese names start with the family name first, followed by the generation name and the personal name. Chinese Christians usually have Christian names in addition.

Birth - A small celebration is held to mark the arrival of the new family member one month after birth. There is little attention given to a new-born Chinese baby as this may invite the attention of demons and ghosts.

Marriage - There are many variations depending on whether the ceremony is celebrated traditionally or more conventionally. Traditional Chinese weddings are a cause for great celebration involving the distribution of bridal cakes to friends and relatives, a tea ceremony in the households of both the bride and the groom as a sign of respect and firecrackers being set off during the wedding celebration to keep evil spirits away. The bride will usually wear a red dress and a red veil over her face.

Medical - Injections are preferred in the belief that they are more effective than pills.

Physical contact - Although there is no gender barrier, women prefer to be medically examined by women health professionals.

Death customs - Burial or cremation may take place a week after the person has died. Friends and relatives visit the bereaved family prior to the funeral when gifts of money or flowers are given and help offered. If the deceased is the head of the family, all children and their families are expected to observe a period of mourning for about a month.

Festivals
Chinese New Year
Lantern Festival
Ching Ming
Mid Autumn Festival
Dragon Boat Festival
Quick Facts: Christian

**Dress**
No specific dress code except for modesty.

**Language**
Generally speaks language of country lived in. Christians in the UK may be from any ethnic group and will usually speak the language in which they live.

**Diet**
No special requirements.

**Visits in the Home**
A prayer or grace said before meals.

**Place of Worship**
Normally a church or chapel.

**Names**
Family or surname is preceded by a 'Christian' name.

**Birth**
Birth of a child is normally followed by a Baptism or Christening.

**Marriage**
Takes place at a church or chapel.

**Medical**
There are no religious objections to organ donation, blood transfusions and transplants as these are an individual and family matter.

**Death Customs**
Burial or cremation.

**Festivals**
See main faith section on Christianity.

43 million Christians in the UK – 2.1 billion worldwide
Christian Science is a system of spiritual and prayer-based healing which was founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1866. In 1875 she published the book “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” which explains a means of spiritual care and asserts that disease, sin and death may be overcome by understanding and applying the divine principles of healing based on the Bible.

**Dress**
No specific dress code.

**Language**
People of many diverse cultures and languages practise Christian Science.

**Diet**
Individuals make their own decisions regarding diet.

**Visits**
Generally Sunday mornings in church, where each week set readings from the Bible, as well as “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” are given. Throughout the world Christian Scientists will all read that week’s text when they gather.

**Names**
No specific naming customs.

**Birth**
No specific birthing customs.

**Marriage**
Individuals will often opt for a civil ceremony, but it is up to personal choice.

**Medical**
Christian Scientists prefer not to use doctors, medicine or immunisations. Christian Science Practitioners are used to help people through illness although the individual may accept conventional medical treatment.

**Physical contact**
Individual choice in questions of healthcare is paramount to Christian Scientists as they rely on their own prayer for healing of adverse health conditions.

**Death customs**
Questions relating to care of the body should be answered by the individual’s partner/family.

**Festivals**
See main faith section on Christianity.
Quick Facts: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon)

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were nicknamed ‘Mormons’ because of their belief in The Book of Mormon which is a volume of sacred writings comparable to the Bible. Joseph Smith was the founding prophet of The Church of Latter-day Saints in New York in 1830.

Dress
Mormons are usually always soberly dressed.

Language
Usually English.

Diet
Alcohol, tobacco and other addictive drugs are prohibited in Mormon doctrine.

Visits
Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints attend chapels and temples.

Names
No specific naming customs.

Birth
A blessing or naming ceremony is usual and the child can be baptised after the age of 8.

Marriage
Marriage takes place in a chapel and a “sealing ceremony” can take place in a holy temple to make the commitment and belonging last for eternity. The Mormon Church does not condone polygamous marriage.

Medical
There are no religious objections to organ donation, blood transfusions and transplants as these are an individual and family matter.

Physical contact
No particular customs.

Death customs
Burial rather than cremation is recommended by the Church, but the final decision is left for the family of the deceased.

Festivals
Mormons only celebrate Easter and Christmas. See main faith section on Christianity.

190,000 Mormons in the UK – 13 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Hindu

**Dress**
Men - Dhoti - loose trousers. Women - Saris or trousers and long top (shalwar & khamiz). Both may adopt western dress.

**Language**
May speak other languages other than English - Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi & Tamil.

**Diet**
Do not eat beef. Many are vegetarian. Usually do not drink alcohol or smoke.

**Visits in the Home**
Separate shrine room - remove shoes. Polite to accept refreshments or food if offered. Women may feel uncomfortable (if alone with a man who is not a member of the family).

**Visits in the Place of Worship**
Remove shoes. Disrespectful to point feet towards sacred area at front of temple (Mandir:)

**Names**
Always ask for surname and personal name.

**Marriage**
Arranged marriages. Bride wears red or deep pink. Bindi on bride's forehead.

**Medical**
Women prefer to be treated by female member of staff.

**Physical contact**
No particular customs.

**Death Customs**
Family member to handle the body. White is colour of mourning. Generally cremated but personal choice.

**Festivals**
See main faith section on Hinduism.

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600,000 Hindus in the UK – 900 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Humanist

Belief
Humanism is an approach to life based on humanity and reason. Humanists believe that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone. Humanists' decisions are based on the available evidence and their assessment of the outcomes of their actions, not on any dogma or sacred text. Humanism encompasses atheism and agnosticism, it is an active and ethical philosophy.

Humanists believe in individual rights and freedoms, but also believe that individual responsibility, social cooperation and mutual respect are just as important. Humanists believe that people can and will continue to find solutions to the world's problems, so that quality of life can be improved for everyone. Humanists are positive and gain inspiration from our lives, art and culture, and a rich natural world.

Humanists believe that we have only one life and that it is our responsibility to make it a good life, and to live it to the full.

Dress, diet, ritual
Humanists do not follow any rituals, diet or dress code.

Meetings
Humanists do not have to attend any meetings or make contact with one another. Some Humanists belong to the British Humanist Association (BHA) and may attend local group meetings to discuss aspects of Humanism and topical issues.

Some Humanists represent the BHA in local government and support national campaigns to reduce the impact of religion in society.

Ceremonies
The BHA has a network of celebrants who are qualified to conduct Humanist ceremonies.

Baby Naming
Choosing a name and introducing this new person to the circle of family and friends are important, but christenings and other religious rituals are not the only ways of celebrating the new birth. For parents who do not believe in any god, it is possible to organise your own welcoming ceremony or to plan one with a Humanist celebrant.

Humanist Weddings/Civil Partnerships
Humanist weddings/Civil Partnerships can be as formal or informal as the couple would like, and can take place anywhere. The couple are invited to choose the ceremony and their promises for themselves.

Funerals
At a Humanist funeral there is no suggestion that the person has gone on to another life. It is the life that was lived that is celebrated and the person who is talked about and said goodbye to.

Medical
Humanists do not require any particular medical treatment as a result of their beliefs. Some NHS trusts provide Humanist chaplains.

Celebrations
World Humanist Day - Celebrated on 21st June
Quick Facts: Jain

Jainism is an ancient religion from India where most Jains live and contains similar elements to Hinduism and Buddhism. Jainism is a religion of self-help in which there are no gods or spiritual beings just three guiding principles (called the ‘three jewels’) which are right belief, right knowledge and right conduct. Jains believe that animals and plants, as well as human beings contain living souls and all souls should be treated with respect. Jains believe that through non-violence and calmness that they can achieve liberation from mundane life. Mahavira who was born in 550BCE is the man who gave Jainism its present day form.

Dress
Jain males have adapted the western dress code for everyday use whereas females may be orthodox or modern. The elderly usually wear Indian dresses such as saris and kurta-pyjama, whilst the younger generation wear a variety of dress.

Language
Apart from some of the elderly, the majority of Jains speak and understand English. The majority in the UK are Gujarati but a minority speak Hindi, Rajasthani, Tamil or Punjabi.

Diet
Jains are pure vegetarians and do not consume meat, fish seafood, poultry or eggs. Jains do not consume alcohol.

Visits
Pilgrimage is an important part of Jain life to temples and holy sites such as Shatrunjaya in Gujarat but there are no compulsory pilgrimages like the Hajj is to Islam.

Names
All names are made up of 3 or 4 words in a definite sequence, the person’s given name comes first and the surname or family name is last with the middle name usually the father’s first name.

Birth
The mother or parents usually take the baby for blessings to the temple after 42 days from birth. There are no other rituals or customs.

Marriage
A Jain wedding is a sacred and grand affair. It is a joyful event where family and friends spend several days together to enjoy a whole range of activities.

Medical
Medication for the purpose of saving life is usually accepted without question. Blood transfusions and organ transplants are acceptable if these are not obtained at the expense of another life.

Physical contact
Ideally same-sex contact but there is no taboo where medical or emergency personnel are involved.

Death customs
There are no specific rituals in Jain philosophy for this event. Bodies are always cremated and never buried except for infants.

Festivals
Mahavira Jayanti – celebrates the day of Mahavira’s birth.
Paryushana – eight days of fasting to reflect and repent.
Divali – see main faith section on Hinduism.

25,000 Jains in the UK – 4.2 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Japanese Shinto

Shinto is Japan’s indigenous religion as is derived from the Chinese words “shin tao” which means ‘the way of the Gods’. Shinto has no founder or written scriptures and focuses on ‘Kami’ which are spirits concerned with human beings. Kami can relate to beings or to a quality which beings possess. These spirits may take any form such as wind, rain, mountains, trees, oceans and storms. There are four affirmations in Shinto:

- Tradition and family
- Love of nature
- Physical cleanliness
- Matsuri – worship given to Kami and ancestral spirits.

Dress
Mainly Western dress.

Language
Generally Shintoists in the UK speak Japanese and English as a second language.

Diet
No special requirements.

Visits
Shinto places of worship are called Shinto shrines. There are no Shinto prayers but much like Buddhists, meditation forms an important part of the religion.

Names
Japanese people have two names, first the family name and the second the name they have been given.

Birth
Birth and marriage are the main celebrations in the Shinto religion. Shinto believe that all human beings are born pure. The family is seen as the method of preserving tradition.

Marriage
Marriages will usually involve the bride wearing a white kimono to signify purity. Instead of a veil the bride wears a ‘tsuno kakushi’ headress to veil her ‘horns of jealousy, ego, selfishness’ and become a good wife.

Medical
There are no religious objections to blood transfusions but organ donation is not supported by Shinto tradition. Shinto oppose taking organs from people who have just died.

Physical contact
No particular customs.

Death customs
Japanese usually prefer cremation to burial and may follow Buddhist rites. Shinto emphasises its focus on this life not the next and death is seen as impure so cemeteries are never built near Shinto shrines.

Festivals
Shinto festivals combine
Shogatsu – Japanese New Year
Setsubun
Hina-matsuri
Shubun-sai

Shinto – 4 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Jehovah’s Witness

Jehovah’s Witnesses were founded in the 1870s by Charles Taze Russell under the name Bible Students and adopted the name Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1931 under Joseph Franklin Rutherford who obtained many of his doctrines from Seventh-Day Adventists. They are known for their extensive preaching and publishing activities to spread their beliefs throughout the world with The WatchTower and Awake! being their most well known. Jehovah’s Witnesses are Christians who proclaim that Jehovah is a loving and just God.

Dress
No particular dress code.

Language
Usually English.

Diet
Although Jehovah’s Witnesses are required to abstain from blood there are no religious restrictions on what they can eat. Use of alcohol is a personal matter.

Visits
Jehovah’s Witnesses are organised into congregations and meetings are held in local Kingdom Halls or private homes. Daily bible readings are usual and Witnesses address one another as ‘Brother’ or ‘Sister’ often followed by the first or last name of the individual. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not use religious symbols such as the cross in their worship.

Names
No particular tradition.

Birth
No birthing ceremony.

Marriage
Jehovah’s Witnesses view marriage as a serious, lifelong commitment. They look to the Bible for guidance in resolving marital problems in a respectful way.

Medical
Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that the Bible prohibits the consumption, storage and transfusion of blood however there is a network of Hospital Liaison Committees throughout the UK who practice ‘bloodless surgery’ for Witness patients. Abortion is viewed as the wilful taking of human life. Organ transplant or organ donation is a personal decision.

Physical contact
No particular customs.

Death customs
There are no special rituals to perform for those who are dying. The dead may be buried or cremated depending on personal family preferences.

Festivals
Jehovah’s Witnesses commemorate the Memorial of Christ’s death but do not celebrate traditional Christian festivals, nor do they celebrate birthdays.
Quick Facts: Jew

Dress
Orthodox men wear skull caps. Women may cover their head with a hat in public. Hasidic Jews wear distinctive black long coats, hats, side locks of hair and beards.

Language
Main language is English. Hebrew used in religious services. Yiddish or Ladino is also spoken.

Diet
Pork forbidden. Only eat food which is Kosher.

Visits in the Home
Small box near the door - mezuzah. Jews touch this as a sign of respect. Sabbath is dusk on Friday to dusk on Saturday. All work, including driving, is forbidden on the Sabbath.

Visits to a Synagogue
Visits must be pre-arranged. Men must cover heads. May have separate seating for men and women.

Names
Ask for surname then any other names. Names are usually from biblical sources.

Birth
Male Jews circumcised 8 days after birth - Brit Milah.

Marriage
Can take place anywhere. Ceremony takes place under a canopy called a huppah.

Funerals
Should take place before sunset on the day of death. Period of mourning for family members lasts 7 days.

Medical
Orthodox Jew/Jewess would prefer to be treated by member of the same sex.

Festivals
See main faith section on Judaism.

330,000 Jews in the UK – 14 million worldwide
**Quick Facts: Muslim**

**Dress**
Men - western dress, sometimes wear head covering. Women - head scarf, long skirt or trousers. May cover face in public.

**Language**
May speak several languages other than English including Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Arabic and Turkish. Knowledge of Arabic to read the Qu’ran.

**Diet**
No pork or pork products. Only Halal meat is permitted. Alcohol in any form is forbidden. Food is eaten with the right hand only.

**Visits in the Home**
Pictures of Mecca/copy of Qu’ran. 5 daily prayers. Polite to accept refreshments if offered.

**Visits to a Mosque**
Remove shoes. Friday afternoon customary for prayers. Women must cover head, arms and legs.

**Names**
Muslim names include a religious name, a personal name and an hereditary name. The polite way to address a Muslim is by his personal and religious name.

**Birth**
Boys circumcised. Baby’s hair is shaved off at a ceremony called 'Aquiqah'.

**Marriage**
Arranged marriages are common. Bride usually wears red or deep pink.

**Medical and physical contact**
Men/women prefer to be treated by same sex members of staff.

**Death customs**
Cremation is not permitted and burials should take place within 24hrs of death if possible. Donations of flowers not appropriate.

**Festivals**
See main faith section on Islam.

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**1.6 million Muslims in the UK – 1.3 billion worldwide**
Quick Facts: Pagan

Pagans see Deity to be manifest within nature finding expression as Goddesses as well as Gods. Pagans believe that they are part of nature and not separate from it, or superior to it, honouring the earth and the greater universe within their spirituality, which is why many are actively concerned about environmental issues. The path of paganism is a path of celebration, challenge and personal growth, it is not one governed by fear, duty or external rules. Pagans accept that all actions are personal responsibility of the individual and that they are therefore responsible for the consequences of them.

Dress
No specific form of dress in everyday life. Ritual jewellery is however very common and symbolises the person’s adherence to Paganism. The removal of symbolic jewellery may cause distress.

Language
Mainly English

Diet
For ethical reasons, most Pagans have strong preference for foods derived from organic farming and free range livestock rearing, while any are vegetarian or vegan.

Visits
Pagans have no public buildings specifically for worship and most religious ceremonies are held outside in parks, fields, woodlands or anywhere that promotes a connection with nature.

Names
The naming of the child is important, and many Pagans will have a naming ceremony for their child. It is at this time that parents acknowledge their child is no longer a part of the mother, or an extension of themselves, but a separate individual with its own name and identity.

Pagans therefore take time to find the correct name, believing that a name can influence the way people behave towards you and think about you.

Birth
No specific birthing customs.

Marriage
Pagan wedding ceremonies are called handfastings and mark the coming together of two people in a formal, loving and equal sexual partnership.

Medical
The majority of Pagans are supportive of both blood transfusion and organ donation, although they will whenever possible use natural remedies.

Physical contact
No restraints on types of physical contact.

Death customs
Most Pagans believe in some form of reincarnation viewing a death as transition within a continuing process of existence. Pagans may be cremated or buried, and the accompanying ceremonies generally take the form of a celebration of the life of the deceased rather than a mournful ritual. The ceremony is often followed by a wake. (a gathering of friends and relatives in sadness, laughter and love to honour the deceased.)

Festivals
Imbolc
Spring Equinox
Beltane
Summer Solstice
Lughnasadh
Autumn Equinox
Samhain
Winter Solstice
Quick Facts: Rastafarian

Rastafarianism is a way of life rather than a religion and looks to Haile Selassie I, (formerly known as Ras Tafari and the former Emperor of Ethiopia) as having been a messiah for black people everywhere. The Rastafari movement, which originated in Jamaica in the 1930s, rose from the teachings of Marcus Garvey who spent much of his life fighting for the rights of black people. The Rastafari faith is derived from the Christian bible especially the Old Testament and the Book of Revelations in the New Testament.

Dress
Mainly Western dress although men (brethrens) wear a Tam (head covering) and women (sistrens) wear a head cloth or scarf. The hair is worn in dreadlocks which symbolises a lion’s mane. The cutting of hair is prohibited. Red, gold and green are the significant colours worn which represent the Ethiopian flag.

Language
Distinctive way of speech called lyaric. The vocabulary is largely that of the Jamaican patois of English.

Diet
Mainly vegetarian. Sacred food is called ‘ital’ or organic vegetarian food. Do not drink alcohol, tea and coffee.

Visits
Rastafarians don’t have a specific religious building for worship. Music, chanting and drumming often used during worship.

Birth
New born children are blessed by elders and offered up to Jah (God). They will be encouraged to follow the ‘livity’ (way of life) of Rasta.

Marriage
No formal ceremony. A man and woman who co-habit are viewed as husband and wife.

Medical
Some orthodox Rastafarians may refuse medical treatment of blood transfusions, although more liberal Rastas may take all forms of treatment. Important to remain healthy both in body and mind at all times.

Death customs
Dead and death are considered negative words and are rarely used. ‘Passed’ or ‘Passing’ is more appropriate, reinforcing the Rasta belief that life is eternal. No particular rituals are observed.

Festivals
Ethiopian Christmas Day
Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I
Birthday of Marcus Garvey
Ethiopian New Year
Anniversary of the Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I
Quick Facts: Scientologist

The first Church of Scientology was founded in Los Angeles in 1954 and the first in the UK was in London in 1955. Scientology derives from Latin and Greek words combined to mean “knowing how to know” and provides principles and solutions to improve spiritual awareness, self-confidence, intelligence and ability. Scientology principles can be found in various books written by author and humanitarian L. Ron Hubbard, including 'Dianetics - the Modern Science of Mental Health' and ‘Scientology: Fundamentals of Thought’. L Ron Hubbard dedicated his life to researching the humanities and developed much of Scientology in the UK, first in London and later in East Grinstead, where he set up his home and the worldwide Scientology headquarters in 1959. Scientology has been recognised as a bona fide religion in many countries around the world, including by various UK government bodies, such as HM Revenue, the Independent Television Commission and the Ministry of Defence.

Names
Scientology has its own formal naming ceremonies.

Birth
Hubbard has stated that the delivery room during birth should be as silent as possible as early birth trauma may affect the individual in later life. He also recommended that the mother use as little anaesthetic as possible during birth, though a mother’s birth plan is very much her own choice.

Marriage
Scientology regards the family as the building block of any society and marriage is an essential component of a stable family life.

Medical
Parishioners are encouraged to seek medical treatment for the physical aspects of any injury or illness. Scientology is opposed to any practices within psychiatry and psychology that involve physically damaging, or otherwise harmful interventions – such as electroconvulsive treatment or lobotomies. Treatment and medication is up to the individual but vitamins and exercise are encouraged to help maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Physical contact
No preferences or rituals.

Death customs
Scientology has its own funeral services, which are conducted by ordained ministers of the Church.

Festivals
Birthday of L. Ron Hubbard on 13th March.
Formation of the International Association of Scientologists on 7th October 1984 (celebrated with an international event at Saint Hill, usually third weekend in October).

Dress
Western dress (or local dress in other countries).

Language
Mainly English. Scientology is now in over 160 countries, so many of the Scientology scriptures have been translated in 15 major languages, and some is available in over 60 languages.

Diet
No dietary laws and no restrictions regarding smoking or drinking.

Visits
Churches are sometimes called ‘orgs’ (short for organisations). Scientology fully recognises the existence of a Supreme Being and respects the great spiritual leaders of the ages, including Siddhartha Gautama, Lao-tse, Krishna, Christ and Mohammed. Scientology is all denominational and respects all religions. The writings and spoken word of L. Ron Hubbard on the subject of Scientology are known as the scriptures.
Quick Facts: Seventh-Day Adventists

Seventh-Day Adventists share many basic Christian beliefs but the most obvious difference is that they believe that Saturday, the seventh day of the week, is the biblical Sabbath. Seventh-Day Adventists have a special interest in healthy lifestyles as they see their body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

**Dress**

No special dress.

**Language**

Usually English although there are a number of different language groups within the Adventist Church in the UK, including Filipino, Ghanaian, Russian, Bulgarian, Portuguese etc.

**Diet**

Seventh-Day Adventists do not smoke, drink alcohol or use non-medicinal drugs. Many are vegetarian but those who do eat meat will avoid food considered ‘unclean’ such as pork and shellfish. A healthy lifestyle.

**Visits**

Normally a church.

**Names**

No particular tradition.

**Birth**

A service of dedication is performed to bless new born children and teenage children may be baptised.

**Marriage**

Marriage is permanent and divorce only permitted on the grounds of adultery or physical violence.

**Medical and Physical contact**

There are no taboos on medical treatment or physical contact.

**Death customs**

Cremation or burial is a matter of personal or family preference.

**Festivals**

See main faith section on Christianity.

19,000 Seventh-Day Adventists in the UK
Quick Facts: Sikh

Dress
Initiated Sikhs wear the five Ks. Men wear turbans. Women wear trousers and long tops (shalwar and kameez) and may wear a long thin scarf to cover their head called a chunni. Both may wear western style dress.

Language
Punjabi and English languages are widely spoken and used.

Diet
Many are vegetarian. Beef, halal, kosher are all forbidden. Tobacco and alcohol forbidden.

Visits in the home
Sikhs usually pray three times a day: at sunrise, sunset and before going to bed.

Separate room for worshipping, remove shoes, cover head. Polite to accept refreshments if offered. Women may feel uncomfortable if alone.

Visits at the Temple
There is no set day of collective worship, though in the UK this is usually on Sundays. Congregational Sikh worship takes place in a Gurdwara. Remove shoes, cover head. Polite to bow and make offering to holy book at the front of the room and altar.

Names
Men - Singh (Lion). Women - Kaur (Princess). Ask for surname and personal name.

Birth
Naming ceremony takes place at the Gurdwara

Marriage
Bride usually wears red.

Medical
Women should prefer to be examined by a female member of staff. The Kachha (shorts) should on no account be changed or removed other than by the individual. There are no specific medical requirements and no religious objections to blood transfusion and organ donation.

Death customs
The five K’s should be cleaned and left on the body and cremation is preferred to burial. White dress is usually worn for mourning.

Festivals
See main faith section on Sikhism.

500,000 Sikhs in the UK
23 million worldwide
Quick Facts: Zoroastrians

Zoroastrianism is one of the world’s oldest monotheistic religions and was founded by the prophet Zoroaster (Zarathushtra) in ancient Iran about 3500 years ago. Zoroastrians believe in a single supreme God, Ahura Mazda. Ahura means “Lord” and Mazda means “Wisdom”. Zoroastrians believe that everything he created is pure and should be treated with love and respect. Zoroastrianism is based on “Good Thoughts, Good Deeds and Good Words”. The ideas of heaven and hell, the afterlife and the coming of a saviour all have roots in Zoroastrianism.

Dress
Zoroastrians almost always wear western clothes. Most adult Zoroastrians wear a Sudra or shirt made of muslin and a Kusti or girdle worn around the waist. These garments are considered sacred and although changed daily should only be removed for medical reasons.

Language
Zoroastrians almost always speak English. Those from the Indian sub-continent speak Gujarati and Iranian Zoroastrians speak Persian or Farsi.

Diet
No particular dietary requirements.

Visits
Zoroaster was a family man and most worship happens in the family home however many Zoroastrians pray at fire temples (Agiaries) as fire is seen as the symbol of purity. These sacred fires are never extinguished as they are a symbol of Ahura Mazda and represent the light of God.

Names
Each Zoroastrian has one first name. The father’s name appears as the second name. The family name serves as the surname.

Marriage
There are two stages to a Zoroastrian wedding, the first being the signing of the marriage contract and the second stage is the service followed by feasts and celebrations which last for many days.

Medical and Physical contact
There are no taboos on medical treatment or physical contact.

Death customs
In the UK, Zoroastrians are usually cremated as they see decaying matter such as a corpse contaminating the elements as sacrilege.

Festivals
Jamshed Noruz - Zoroastrian New Year’s Day in the Fasil calendar.
Khordad Sal - The birthday of Zoroaster celebrated in the Fasil and Shenshai calendars.
Farvandigan - Fasil calendar.
Zartusht-no-Diso - Shenshai calendar.
Gahanbars - These are obligatory feasts held throughout the year.

4000 Zoroastrians in the UK - 2.6 million worldwide
Glossary

Agnosticism - Agnosticism is derived from the Greek word “a” meaning “without” and “gnosis” meaning “knowledge”. The definition of agnosticism is therefore “without knowledge”. Agnosticism is not a religion but a belief related to the existence or non-existence of god. A “weak agnostic” is unsure whether god exists whereas a “strong agnostic” believes it is impossible to know whether god exists.

Animism - Animism is considered to be the original human religion and can be defined as the belief in the existence of spiritual beings. It is the earliest form of religious belief and can be practiced by anyone who believes in spirituality but does not follow any specific organised religion.

Atheism - Atheism can be defined differently in two broad ways:
- the absence of belief in the existence of a god or gods;
- the belief that there are no gods, the denial of the existence of a god or gods.

Community Cohesion - A cohesive community is a community that is in a state of well-being, harmony and stability. It is about respecting one another, valuing diversity and celebrating differences of age, religion, faith, ability, culture and other differences. Cohesive communities are where all members feel a sense of place and belonging.

Culture - Culture can be defined as a set of beliefs, values, behaviours, habits, attitudes, traditions, customs, skills, arts, rituals and material objects that constitute or characterise a peoples’ way of life.

Ethnocentrism - Ethnocentrism can be defined as the tendency to look at the world from the perspective of one’s own ethnic culture. Ethnocentrism is common among all cultures and sometimes involves the belief that one’s own race or ethnic group is more important than or superior to those of other groups. Sometimes ethnocentrism is unwitting or unintended and often involves ethnic stereotypes.

Faith - The term faith has many meanings. Faith can mean a strong belief in something as true without using reason.

Humanism - Humanism is the belief that people can live good lives without religious beliefs. Humanists make sense of the world using reason, experience and shared human values. They seek to make the best of the one life we have by creating meaning and purpose for themselves. They take responsibility for their actions and work with others for the common good.

Islamophobia - Islamophobia is the irrational fear and/or hatred of Islam. This manifests as prejudice towards, or discrimination against, Islam or Muslims.

Religion - Religion can be defined as a group of beliefs concerning the supernatural, sacred, or divine and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions and rituals associated with such belief.

Secularism - Secularism is the idea that religion should not interfere with or be integrated into the public affairs of a society.

Xenophobia - Xenophobia is derived from the Greek words “xenos” meaning “foreigner”, “stranger” and “phobos” meaning “fear”. It is the irrational fear and/or hatred of other countries/cultures and the people from those countries/cultures.
Community Fire Safety

Cigarettes
- Put out cigarettes properly
- Always use a proper ashtray
- Never smoke in bed
- Do not leave cigarettes burning when you leave the room
- Do not empty ashtrays straight into a rubbish bin
- Always keep matches and lighters out of reach of children
- Do not leave disposable lighters in sunlight or near heat sources

Cooking
- Take special care when cooking
- Never leave cooking unattended
- Do not fill a deep frying pan more than one third full
- Dry food before putting it in the oil
- If there are flames, never throw water over the pan. It will explode
- Turn off the power or gas, close the kitchen door, leave the building and call 999
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean. A build-up of fat and grease can easily catch fire
- Don’t hang tea towels or cloths on or over the cooker

Candles
- Keep candles away from draughts and anything that can easily catch fire like furniture or curtains
- Never leave candles unattended
- Always place candles in an appropriate candle holder (that won’t fall over). Night lights and tea lights can melt plastic surfaces like TV tops and bathtubs.
- Don’t lean across candles! You could set fire to your clothes or hair.
- Don’t put candles under shelves
- Don’t let anything fall into the hot wax, like matchsticks
- Keep candles out of reach of children and pets
- Always make sure that candles are properly extinguished, especially before going to bed

Electrical
- Keep electrical leads from trailing over or going near the cooker
- Keep electrical leads away from water
- Don’t put pot plants or anything wet on top of an electrical appliance
- Don’t overload sockets –one plug per socket
- Ensure that electrical appliances are serviced regularly
- Don’t leave cables where they can be tripped over
- Don’t trail cables over hot or wet surfaces
- Fully uncoil extension leads
- Always turn off electrical appliances, that do not need to be left on, at the mains socket

Fireworks
- Only buy fireworks from a legitimate retailer
- Read the instructions in daylight
- Don’t drink alcohol if setting off fireworks
- Stand well back and keep others back
- Don’t fool with fireworks –they’re explosives not toys
- Check the fireworks you buy are suitable for the size of garden and conform to British Standard (BS 7114)
- Store fireworks in a metal box
Community Fire Safety

- Keep pets indoors
- Never go back to a lit firework
- Have a bucket of water to hand, to extinguish sparklers and for very minor burns

**Children**
- Always keep matches and lighters safely out of reach of children
- Never leave children alone in the home
- Always place hot drinks out of reach of children
- Keep the handles of pots and pans turned away from the edges of cookers and work surfaces
- Never assume toddlers or infants are incapable of lighting a match or lighter
- Teach your children to “STOP”, “DROP” and “ROLL” if their clothes should catch fire

**Clothes**
Fireworks, bonfires, candles, cigarettes and cooking may lead to clothes catching fire but should be treated as follows:
- Don’t run around as you will fan the flames and make them burn faster
- Lie down as this makes it harder for the fire to spread and helps to stop you inhaling smoke
- Smother the flames with a heavy material like a coat or blanket as this will block the fires supply of oxygen
- Roll around as this smothers the flames
- Tie back loose clothing when cooking

**Bonfires**
- Bonfires should be at least 18 metres (60ft) away from houses, trees, hedges, fences or sheds
- Never use petrol, paraffin or other flammable liquids
- Ensure the bonfire is built safely
- Make sure the bonfire is extinguished safely and thoroughly
- Do not burn aerosols, batteries, bottles, foam-filled furniture and tins of paint as they give off toxic fumes or may explode
- Avoid using tyres as they give off black smoke when burnt, they also may roll out of the fire when alight
- Keep your garden hose laid out and at the ready, so you can douse the flames should the bonfire start to spread

**Escape plan**
- Plan your escape route with everyone especially children, the elderly and disabled
- Ensure everyone knows where to find the door or window keys in a hurry
- Keep the route clear of obstructions
- Don’t delay leaving by collecting valuables and coats or stopping to investigate the fire

**Smoke Alarms**
A smoke alarm is the easiest way to alert you to the danger of fire, giving you precious time to escape.
- Fit a smoke alarm on every floor of your home
- Test the smoke alarm weekly
- Twice a year gently vacuum around the outside to clean the alarm
- Every ten years replace the alarm
- Don’t fit alarms in the kitchen or bathroom, where they can easily be set off accidentally by steam or smoke from cooking

Your local Fire & Rescue Service personnel would like to make an appointment to visit your home and discuss fire safety issues that are specific to you. They will also ensure that you have working smoke alarm(s) within your home and where you do not, they will supply and fit 10 year smoke alarm(s).
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DO you care for someone?
you may recognise their special needs, but can
YOU offer specialist advice and equipment?
At East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service we can and we do.
If you REALLY CARE, why not contact us
for a free Home Fire Risk Assessment

FREEPHONE: 0800 177 7069
Email: homefire.safetyvisits@esfrs.org
Minicom: 01323 462002 Fax: 01323 462044 Website: www.esfrs.org